

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

JOINT COMMITTEES ON IMMIGRATION
AND WOMEN'S ISSUES

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March 23, 2010
Start: 10:08 am
Recess: 12:38 pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:

DANIEL DROMM
Chairperson, Immigration

JULISSA FERRERAS
Chairperson, Women's Issues

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Council Member Charles Barron
Council Member Margaret S. Chin
Council Member Elizabeth S. Crowley
Council Member Mathieu Eugene
Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez
Council Member Jumaane D. Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S [CONTINUED]

Julissa Ferreras
Opening Statement
Chairperson
Committee on Women's Issues

Daniel Dromm
Opening Statement
Chairperson
Committee on Immigration

Yolanda B. Jimenez
Commissioner
Mayor's Office of Domestic Violence

Monique Imbert
Deputy Commissioner
Mayor's Office of Domestic Violence

High School Students
Salazar, Spain

Young Woman's Leadership and Civic Awareness Tour
Civil Rights School at Thomas Jefferson
Norman Thomas High School at Jane Adams High School
Washington Irving High School
Led by Indigo Washington
Staff member
Council Member Charles Barron's Office

Abiden Musabi
Senior Staff Attorney
Immigration Intervention Project
Center for Battered Women's Legal Services
Sanctuary for Families

Marisola Riala
Staff Attorney, Civil Practice
Legal Aid Society

Su Yi Sen
New York Asian Women's Center

A P P E A R A N C E S [CONTINUED]

Betim Astofi
Immigration Law Project
Safe Horizon

Megan O'Conner
Director of Programs
New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assaults
ARISE Coalition [Action Research for Immigrant Social
Empowerment]

Awali Samara
Outreach Coordinator
Arab American Family Support Center
ARISE Coalition

Beetee Riah
Domestic Violence Program Advocate
Sakhi for South Asian Women
ARISE Coalition

Zeinab Eyega
Sauti Yetu Center for African Women
ARISE Coalition

Submitted written testimony:
Natalie Rubio Toro
Executive Director
Voces Latinas
ARISE Coalition

2 [START 1002.MP3]

3 [Gavel banging]

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet please.

5 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Good

6 morning. I'd like to thank everyone for coming to
7 today's hearing. My name is Julissa Ferreras and
8 I am the Chair of the Women's Issues Committee.
9 Today we are holding a joint hearing with the
10 Committee on Immigration chaired by Council Member
11 Danny Dromm regarding the impact of the Violence
12 Against Women Act on services for immigrant women
13 in New York.

14 Our topic today is vital for
15 Federal legislation that affects hundreds of
16 thousands of people in our City. VAWA is a
17 complex and layered piece of legislation that
18 according to the ACLU is one of the most effective
19 pieces of legislation enacted to end domestic
20 violence, dating violence, sexual assault and
21 stalking.

22 It has dramatically improved the
23 law enforcement response to violence against women
24 and has provided critical services necessary to
25 support women and children in their struggle to

2 overcome abusive situations.

3 The focus of our hearing today is
4 the effect of VAWA on immigrant women. VAWA
5 currently provides legal immigration status to the
6 abused child or spouse of a US citizen or lawful
7 permanent resident. The law also permits the
8 children of battered immigrant women to receive
9 public benefits. These two stipulations have
10 enormous meaning to victims of domestic abuse who
11 rely on immigration status of their partner for
12 shelter and livelihood.

13 Immigrant women frequently come
14 from cultures that do not stigmatize family
15 violence and which frown on seeking outside help
16 for domestic violence. These women may not be
17 familiar with the social services available to
18 battered women or may fear that they are not
19 entitled to such support because of their
20 undetermined immigration status.

21 VAWA takes power away from abusive
22 men who seize their partner's past supports and
23 threaten them with arrest and deportation if they
24 seek assistance. VAWA gives these women and their
25 children the ability to stay in the country and

2 pursue work and education opportunities.

3 Further more VAWA provides funding
4 for a wide range of programs and services
5 targeting abused women and increases the penalties
6 for predators of domestic violence. The Violence
7 Against Women Act was passed in 1994 and renewed
8 in 2000 and 2005 and it expects to expire in 2011.

9 I'd like to introduce my colleagues
10 on the Women's Issues Committee. We have Council
11 Member Barron from Brooklyn. Council Member Chin
12 from Manhattan. And at this time I'd like to
13 introduce the Co-Chair, actually for this hearing,
14 the Chair of the Immigration, Council Member Danny
15 Dromm.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank
17 you very much Council Member Ferreras. Good
18 morning everybody. My name is Daniel Dromm and
19 I'm the Chair of the Council's Committee on
20 Immigration. First I would like to thank my
21 colleague Council Member Julissa Ferreras for
22 organizing this important--for recognizing the
23 importance of this issue. I would also like to
24 recognize the other members of the Immigration
25 Committee here with me today. Ydanis Rodriguez

2 and Charles Barron, both--well one from--Ydanis is
3 from Manhattan and Council Member Charles Barron
4 is from Brooklyn.

5 Today's hearing will focus on the
6 impact of the Violence Against Women's Act on the
7 City's immigrant communities. The Violence
8 Against Women Act has resulted in Federal funding
9 of programs and services that protect victims of
10 domestic violence. Additionally the 1994 Violence
11 Against Women Act and the 2000 and 2005 bills that
12 reauthorized it have resulted in numerous
13 protections for immigrant victims of violence.

14 Today we hope to learn about some
15 of those programs and services provided by the
16 City and by community based organizations that are
17 available for immigrant women who are victims of
18 domestic violence. It is important that we
19 recognize the importance of the community based
20 organizations that provide services directly to
21 immigrants and may be able to provide us with
22 information on the effectiveness of the City
23 services and programs and to point to areas that
24 need improvement.

25 The grassroots efforts of so many

2 of these organizations are crucial to saving
3 immigrant women and their families in New York
4 City. We hope that these organizations will
5 highlight the importance of the Violence Against
6 Women Act as well as the limitations of the act
7 and what Congress needs to consider in a
8 reauthorization bill.

9 We hope that this hearing will be a
10 continuation of what the Committees began last
11 spring on sexual and domestic violence in New York
12 City's immigrant communities. And that this will
13 be just one of many hearings that will look at
14 issues that arise in immigrant communities in
15 relation to sexual and domestic violence.

16 It is important to recognize that
17 the issues faced by this population of domestic
18 violence victims with citizenship status, language
19 and cultural barriers and ignorance of the law are
20 at issue.

21 I would like to thank everyone for
22 attending this morning's hearing and now I will
23 turn things back over to Council Member Ferreras.

24 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.
25 And our first witness will be Commissioner Yolanda

2 Jimenez from the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic
3 Violence.

4 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Good
5 morning. My name is Yolanda Jimenez. I'm the
6 Commissioner for the Mayor's Office to Combat
7 Domestic Violence. And this morning I'm joined by
8 Monique Imbert, Deputy Commissioner for the
9 Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence.
10 Welcome. Good morning again to Chairpersons
11 Ferreras and Dromm and members of the City Council
12 Committees on Women's Issues and Immigration.

13 Thank you for the opportunity to
14 speak with you today about the Violence Against
15 Women Act commonly referred to as VAWA, and the
16 ways in which this watershed legislation has
17 affected the City's provision of domestic violence
18 services for immigrant victims of domestic
19 violence. VAWA has had a profound effect on the
20 safety of domestic violence victims, especially
21 immigrant victims. It was originally passed in
22 1994 as part of the larger Violence Crime Control
23 And Law Enforcement Act and was reauthorized in
24 2000 and 2005 and is slated for reauthorization in
25 2011.

2 The goals of VAWA are twofold.
3 First it is designed to improve the criminal
4 justice response to domestic violence. And second
5 it aims to increase the availability of services
6 for victims of these crimes. To do so the Office
7 on Violence Against Women was created within the
8 Department of Justice in 1995 specifically to
9 administer VAWA grant funds and implement the
10 legislation.

11 Additionally the National Domestic
12 violence Hotline was established by funds
13 authorized by VAWA. Today, trained staff at the
14 National Domestic Violence Hotline answer an
15 average of 21,000 calls a month from victims of
16 domestic violence. The reauthorization of VAWA in
17 both 2000 and 2005 served to strengthen the laws
18 while also adding new protections and programs.

19 For example VAWA 2000 emphasized
20 assisting elder victims, victims with
21 disabilities, and victims of dating violence.
22 Significantly it was VAWA 2000 that also
23 strengthened laws and provided an increased focus
24 on access to services by immigrant victims of
25 domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

2 The 2005 reauthorization of VAWA
3 expanded further the focus on underserved victims
4 and allocated new resources to help victims of
5 sexual assault, Indian women and youth victims.
6 Several VAWA grants awarded to New York City have
7 had a tremendous impact and have allowed us to
8 make systematic changes results in better services
9 for victims of domestic violence. New York City
10 is a city of immigrants. In fact almost 40% of
11 New Yorkers are foreign born and 48% speak a
12 language other than English at home.

13 Accordingly New York City has
14 received several VAWA grants that focus
15 specifically on assisting immigrant victims. For
16 example in 2001 my office received a VAWA grant to
17 implement our Law Enforcement Collaboration
18 Domestic violence and Diverse Community Program
19 through which we partnered with the Police
20 Department and 11 community based organizations.
21 This grant allowed us to do community based
22 research with immigrant communities throughout the
23 City to learn directly from individuals in their
24 own language what barriers they perceived or
25 encountered when trying to access services.

2 To that end between 2002 and 2003
3 we conducted 24 focus groups in 14 different
4 languages including Bengali, Urdu, Korean, Haitian
5 Creole, Spanish and Arabic. Overwhelmingly we
6 learned that language access was a primary barrier
7 to services. Victims explained that their
8 inability to communicate in their own language
9 specifically with law enforcement resulted in a
10 reluctance to come forward to report a crime or
11 seek assistance from the police.

12 These results led us to apply for
13 and receive another VAWA grant to address the
14 findings from this research. Under this grant the
15 City piloted the Language Line program and the 110
16 and the 115th Precincts in Queens in the
17 neighborhoods of East Elmhurst, Corona and Jackson
18 Heights. These precincts cover perhaps the most
19 ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the world,
20 comprised of immigrants from India, Pakistan,
21 Ecuador, Columbia, Mexico, China, Korea, Guyana,
22 Bangladesh, the Philippines, Jamaica and other
23 Caribbean countries.

24 This diversity is reflected in the
25 fact that 83% of residents in these precincts

2 speak a language other than English at home. The
3 Language Line program provides telephone
4 interpretation to allow domestic violence victims
5 who do not speak English to tell their stories to
6 the police in their own language and get the help
7 they need.

8 As a result of this VAWA funded
9 pilot project as of July 2005, all City police
10 precincts have direct instant access to telephonic
11 interpretation, 24 hours a day, to assist with the
12 investigation of any crime. These dual handset
13 phones allow victims with limited English
14 proficiency to communicate with ease in their own
15 language with police officers.

16 In addition to the services
17 established through our initial VAWA funded
18 activities to address language barriers in July
19 2008 Mayor Bloomberg signed Executive Order 120
20 which requires all City agencies to designate
21 language access coordinators, provide
22 interpretation services, and translation of public
23 documents and conduct staff trainings on language
24 access.

25 In implementing the Language Access

2 Plan my office has identified and translated
3 essential documents on our website and at both
4 Family Justice Centers which is where victims of
5 domestic violence can access a myriad of legal and
6 social services under one roof. Documents are
7 translated into Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Haitian
8 Creole, Korean, Russian and Spanish. And by July
9 of this year we will also have French, Hebrew,
10 Hindi, Polish, Turkish and Urdu translations.

11 One of the unique aspects of VAWA
12 is that the law takes a comprehensive approach to
13 violence against women, as it encourages a
14 coordinated community response to domestic
15 violence. The theory behind this is that it
16 forces collaboration between individuals and
17 organizations from a broad spectrum of disciplines
18 within the community to address domestic violence.

19 Specifically VAWA encourages
20 grantees to facilitate coordinated work between
21 law enforcement officers and non-for-profit victim
22 advocates to use their roles to improve the
23 community of response to domestic violence. This
24 is exactly what New York City has been doing. One
25 of the most successful examples of the coordinated

2 community response to domestic violence is the
3 Family Justice Center Initiative.

4 In 2004 my office applied for and
5 received one of 15 grants nationwide chosen from
6 150 applicants from the Office of Violence Against
7 Women to establish a Family Justice Center in
8 Brooklyn, an initiative of my office in
9 partnership with the District Attorney's Office.

10 Under the President's Family
11 Justice Center Initiative, our center in Brooklyn
12 was the first center to open in the country. The
13 One Stop Family Justice Centers are where City
14 agencies and community based organizations have
15 collocated to provide wraparound services for
16 domestic violence victims and their children.

17 A victim of domestic violence can
18 walk into the center and on the same day meet with
19 a prosecutor, speak with a trained counselor and
20 talk to an attorney about immigration remedies or
21 custody issues, all in their own language while
22 the children play safely in the next room.

23 Since the Brooklyn Center opened in
24 2005, it has had almost 63,000 client visits
25 including over 5,500 children's visits. Due to

2 the overwhelming success of the Brooklyn Center,
3 Mayor Bloomberg opened the City's second center in
4 Kew Garden, Queens in July 2008. And it has had
5 almost 15,000 client visits since opening. A
6 third center is currently under the development in
7 the Bronx and will open this year.

8 Each center is tailored to meet the
9 specific needs of persons living in their
10 respective Borough. In Brooklyn 35% of the
11 clients are foreign born. And in Queens 70% of
12 all clients are foreign born. The immigrants who
13 visit the centers come from over 140 countries,
14 speaking over 50 languages. Staff members at our
15 centers who collectively speak 34 languages are
16 able to effectively communicate with clients. If
17 staff does not speak the client's language they
18 can use the Language Line which gives them access
19 to another 140 languages.

20 Additionally the partner agencies
21 at each center are chosen to reflect the
22 population of the Borough. For example the New
23 York Asian Women's Center serves the needs of the
24 larger Asian population coming to our Queens
25 Center.

2 Building on the success of our
3 Family Justice Center Initiative, my office was
4 awarded a VAWA grant in 2007 to launch the Early
5 Victim Engagement Project at the Brooklyn Center.
6 Research indicates that domestic violence victims
7 are more likely to utilize services if they are
8 contacted as soon as possible after a violent
9 incident. In domestic violence cases in New York
10 City a defendant must be arraigned within 24 hours
11 and at arraignment a judge makes bail
12 determinations and routinely issues criminal
13 orders of protection.

14 Victims are typically not present
15 in arraignment and are often unaware of the status
16 of the case. As a result in the past victims
17 often obtained unreliable and even dangerously
18 inaccurate information about the outcome of the
19 arraignment and the existence of an order of
20 protection. For example, this information was
21 often conveyed to the victim directly by the
22 offender.

23 Beginning in April of 2008 EVE
24 staff, consisting of King's County District
25 Attorney's Office paralegal and a Safe Horizon

2 non-for-profit victim advocate based in criminal
3 court began contacting victims immediately post-
4 arraignment to provide information about the
5 outcome of the arraignment including whether an
6 order of protection had been issued as well as to
7 connect victims to vital supportive services at
8 the Family Justice Center.

9 Since the project's inception, the
10 EVE project team have contacted over 14,000
11 victims. This means that EVE's multidisciplinary
12 staff contacted 89% of all victims immediately
13 after the defendant was arraigned. Of those
14 successfully contacted over 5,000 are foreign born
15 and nearly 4,000 have limited English proficiency.

16 The EVE project also receives
17 referral from 3 Brooklyn precincts, the 67, 75 and
18 the 83. After a domestic violence victim has
19 filed a report for a non-arrestable harassment
20 offense against their partner, these precincts
21 were selected in an effort to reach areas with a
22 particularly high concentration of domestic
23 violence reports. Since April 2008 through the
24 work of the nonprofit victim advocates from Good
25 Shepherd Services Safe Homes Project, we have

2 successful contacted 400 domestic violence victims
3 through this portion of the project.

4 Significantly since EVE project
5 began, there has been a 33% increase in clients
6 meeting with the staff of the District Attorney's
7 Office to discuss their criminal case. And EVE
8 has contributed to a 35% increase in clients seen
9 at the Justice Center. This project is
10 particularly key to immigrant communities because
11 it increases direct engagement with the victim and
12 explains the complicated criminal justice system
13 in a person and user-friendly way.

14 From the beginning VAWA recognized
15 that immigrant women face additional barriers in
16 accessing services and that many undocumented or
17 out of status victims feared that leaving the
18 abusive partner might negatively impact their
19 immigration status. Furthermore we often hear
20 from victims that a common threat made by a
21 batterer is that they will no longer support a
22 victim's immigration application or they make
23 false threats to the victim about the threat of
24 deportation if the victim leaves the relationship.

25 VAWA and its subsequent

2 reauthorizations sought to remedy this through
3 legal protections. VAWA established two legal
4 remedies for undocumented or out of status
5 victims: the VAWA self-petition and battered
6 spouse waiver.

7 The VAWA self-petition allows
8 victims who are married to petition for permanent
9 residency if the batterer is a US citizen or
10 lawful permanent resident. The battered spouse
11 waiver applies to a situation in which the
12 batterer started the immigration process for their
13 spouse but then refused to continue it.

14 In 2000 the VAWA reauthorization
15 expanded legal remedies through the U-Visa to
16 apply to unmarried individuals who have been
17 victims of a crime. U-Visas allow victims of
18 certain designated crimes including domestic
19 violence who cooperate with prosecution to obtain
20 legal status irrespective of the abuser's status.
21 Regulations clarifying the application process
22 went into effect in early 2008. After these final
23 regulations were issued one of the first U-Visa
24 applications to be approved for a green card in
25 the country was obtained for a client from our

2 center in Brooklyn.

3 Even before victims receive a green
4 card however, once their U-Visa application has
5 been approved they are immediately eligible for
6 public benefits and can legally work. To date
7 approximately 238 of our clients have had their U-
8 Visa applications approved thus making them
9 eligible for public benefits and a work permit.

10 Due to a high volume of clients at
11 the centers in need of immigration legal
12 assistance, the City now provides funding for
13 attorneys who specialize in immigration matters on
14 site at our centers. At the Family Justice Center
15 alone we have assisted over 2,500 clients with
16 their Federal legal immigration needs including
17 filing 287 U-Visas, 97 self-petitions, and 35
18 battered spouse waivers.

19 These numbers are even more
20 significant when one considers that each VAWA
21 self-petition that is filed requires approximately
22 50 to 75 hours of work by attorneys and paralegals
23 some of whom are funded by VAWA grants at the
24 Family Justice Centers. These Federal legal
25 remedies provide undocumented or out of status

2 victims with a pathway to a self-sufficiency,
3 stability and a life free of violence.

4 Perhaps the best way for me to
5 explain how these legal remedies affect victims of
6 domestic violence, let me tell you about Maria.
7 Maria first came to the Brooklyn Center in 2005,
8 when after years of physical and emotional abuse
9 her partner was arrested for holding her hostage
10 for several hours and making threats on her life.

11 Because attorneys from Sanctuary
12 for Families and the District Attorney's Office
13 were collocated at the center they were able to
14 seamlessly work together to file for a U-Visa.
15 Her application was approved later that year which
16 allowed her to begin working and receiving public
17 benefits.

18 Over the years while attorneys
19 helped her apply for a green card, staff at the
20 center assisted her through counseling and other
21 services in overcoming the trauma she had
22 experienced. On January 28th, 2010 Maria finally
23 became a lawful permanent resident in the United
24 States. She now has a stable job, receives public
25 benefits, and has a life free of violence.

2 Now only did VAWA affect the change
3 in the ways in which we understand and address
4 domestic violence at a Federal, state and local
5 level but this legislation has proven to be
6 exceedingly effective. Since VAWA was first
7 passed in 1994 more victims report domestic
8 violence to the police than ever before.

9 According to the National Crime Victimization
10 Survey, nationally there has been an increase of
11 over 20% in reporting rates by female victims.

12 Furthermore according to the Bureau
13 of Justice Statistics since the passage of VAWA
14 the rate of nonfatal partner violence against
15 women has decreased by 63% and there has been a
16 24% decrease in women killed by an intimate
17 partner.

18 Certainly the national funding
19 through VAWA and in particular the funding the
20 City receives has made a substantial impact on the
21 safety and wellbeing of victims of domestic
22 violence, including immigrant victims. In New York
23 City intimate partner homicides declined by 37%
24 since 2002, declining from 41 in 2002 to 26 last
25 year. Significantly intimate partner homicides

2 involving female victims declined by 47% from 38
3 to 18 during the same period.

4 More victims are reaching out for
5 assistance. The number of domestic violence
6 incidents reports filed by the New York City
7 Police Department increased in 2009 by almost 13%
8 when compared to 2002. But there is more work to
9 be done. We all know that domestic violence is an
10 underreported crime which is why we're pleased to
11 report that there are more victims coming forward
12 than ever. Last year more than 140,000 people
13 called the New York City Domestic Violence Hotline
14 for assistance, an increase of an additional 300
15 calls per month compared to the previous year.

16 New York City Police Department is
17 also assisting more victims. In 2009 more than
18 250,000 domestic violence incidents reports were
19 filed by NYPD, an increase of more than 15,000
20 over 2008. the increase in victims seeking
21 assistance is the exact reason that the
22 reauthorization of VAWA next year is so important.

23 VAWA funds are essentially to New
24 York City in our efforts to continue to provide
25 the best services possible to all victims of

2 domestic violence but especially to immigrant
3 victims of violence.

4 I would like to thank the Council
5 for the opportunity to speak with you today about
6 VAWA and its effects on immigrant victims of
7 domestic violence in New York City. I'm proud of
8 the work that the City has done to provide safety
9 to victims and I look forward to working with the
10 Council on our shared goal to reducing domestic
11 violence for all communities. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.
13 I just wanted to thank you also for the
14 opportunity when we visited the Family Justice
15 Center. I think it was an amazing opportunity and
16 I would invite my colleagues to all go and take a
17 visit. And I'd like to take this opportunity to
18 also acknowledge Council Member Williams from
19 Brooklyn who has joined us. And ironically both
20 the 110 and 115th Precincts are represented in both
21 of our Chairs. So we understand the diversity and
22 the issues that immigrants face in the district.

23 My first question is other than
24 VAWA funding how is this office funded?

25 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well we're

2 funded, most of the staff at our Family Justice
3 Centers come from different City agencies which is
4 really the sense of how we're able to deliver all
5 the services that we're able to provide to
6 clients. We have onsite staff from the New York
7 City Police Department. We have onsite staff from
8 HRA that comes to the centers that have access to
9 the Welfare Management System. We have onsite
10 staff from the Department of Probation. We have
11 the entire unit of the DA's Office that prosecute
12 domestic violence cases. So all of these staff
13 come together and then we have the administrative
14 staff.

15 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: What is your
16 fiscal budget for the year just to be able to
17 operate one of the Family Justice Centers?

18 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: It's an
19 average of \$6 million. That's when you take into
20 consideration the salaries of all of the staff
21 onsite including the District Attorneys, the ADAs
22 that are onsite, the police officers, the
23 community based organizations. We also have
24 contracts through the City to provide, as I
25 mentioned and referred to in my testimony,

2 attorneys for both family law as well as
3 immigration attorneys which is something quite
4 unique quite frankly.

5 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: How much of
6 this budget do you see go to address the battered
7 immigrant women issues?

8 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Of the
9 entire budget?

10 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Um-hum. Of
11 the--how much--I know that you--is it just
12 domestic violence or how much of those \$6 million
13 goes to specifically this population, the VAWA
14 population.

15 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well any, as
16 I mentioned in Queens, 70%, almost 70% of our
17 clients are foreign born. So, you know, we
18 welcome and encourage anyone who is a victim of
19 domestic violence regardless of the language they
20 speak, regardless of their immigration status, to
21 really come to the centers and to really try to
22 get the help they need.

23 Unfortunately so many victims in
24 the community, particularly in immigrant
25 communities are unaware of some of the Federal

2 remedies. Many, as you know, are also afraid to
3 come forward and report crimes to the police for
4 fear that that information will be shared with
5 immigration authorities. And so it's really an
6 ongoing effort both on behalf of my office and I
7 know so many of the advocates who are here today
8 and so many of the community groups and the
9 Council to really share that information with
10 community groups and let anyone who's a victim of
11 domestic violence know that help is available and
12 that language and immigration status should not be
13 a barrier to service.

14 If anything, as I alluded to in my
15 testimony, that there are remedies and we've been
16 able to assist nearly 300 immigrant victims who
17 did not have status with their immigration status
18 because they cooperated with prosecution.

19 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: I have two
20 more questions before we go over to Chair Dromm.
21 One of the issues that the advocates have brought
22 up is the collecting of information initially by
23 the Department. Does your office provide legal
24 assistance when there's challenges or what
25 challenges have you seen in obtaining these visas?

2 For example a barrier between the
3 report that we receive because I would think that
4 the initial report is at the precinct. Now some
5 of our advocates state that if the reporting isn't
6 done from that initial process how difficult is it
7 when someone comes in with a form that's not
8 completed properly at the precinct level?

9 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Are you
10 referring to certification by the Police
11 Department?

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Right. Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Those cases,
14 there's been, I think there was an article on
15 this, excuse me, the other day, 20 cases that have
16 come to the attention of the Police Department.
17 It's my understanding that 13 of those cases have
18 been processed, so 7 are pending. That's in
19 situations where there was no arrest. And so the
20 Police Department has to certify that a crime was
21 committed and they also have to certify that the
22 victim was cooperating with the Police Department.

23 So those cases are going through
24 but, you know, the overwhelming cases are the
25 cases that are being processed through both the

2 community based organizations and through the
3 Family Justice Center where because we have on
4 site, same floor, just office down the hall, we
5 have the ADAs and we have the community based
6 organization and the immigration attorneys, that
7 they're able to coordinate that process. They're
8 able to coordinate the paperwork and are able to
9 literally walk down the hall and make sure that
10 those applications are put forward. And you see
11 the result of that in over 232 applications that
12 have been approved.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: So would you
14 know--I guess this is a question maybe more to PD
15 but what is the backup in filing for the paperwork
16 with PD when it comes to the certification? Is
17 there a backlog or what is the process for
18 certification?

19 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: I'm not so
20 sure that there's a backlog. The Police
21 Department, again, I mentioned in my testimony
22 that the regulations were promulgated in 2008 from
23 the Federal government. And the Police Department
24 developed one of their operational procedures.
25 And they have a system in which those applications

2 come in and they have to go, I guess, through
3 chain of command and are ultimately signed by the
4 Police Commissioner.

5 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay. Well
6 I'm going to give this opportunity for the Co-
7 Chair to...

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very
9 much. Just to follow up a little bit with what
10 Julissa was talking about. So is there a system
11 that tracks women who have applied for the U-Visa
12 from the beginning of the process to the end?

13 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: You mean at
14 the Federal level or?

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No, at the City
16 level.

17 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well at the
18 City level we have that through our centers. I
19 mean clearly a victim can also apply through going
20 through other community based organizations.
21 We're told that nationwide there's been about just
22 a little over 6,000 applications that have been
23 filed with U-Visas, now remember U-Visas is for
24 other crimes not just domestic violence. But the
25 statistics that I shared with you, with the

2 statistics that were the number of cases that have
3 come to the attention directly of the City.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Could you walk
5 me through the process a little bit? Let's say a
6 woman who comes into a precinct not having had
7 contact with a community based organization, but
8 who has been battered, walks into a precinct.
9 What happens from the time they go in, to the time
10 that they have their case processed?

11 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well I'll
12 just summarize briefly. I'm not responding for
13 the Police Department. But, you know, clearly
14 somebody will take their complaint and they'll be
15 referred to a domestic violence officer. There
16 are domestic violence officers in each precinct
17 throughout the City. I think there's nearly 400
18 of them. They are very well aware of, obviously,
19 the services that are available, the community
20 based organizations.

21 They also know that there's a 1-800
22 number that the City has, the Domestic Violence
23 Hotline which really has the list of services for
24 anybody in this City with a particular domestic
25 violence issue, whether it's, you know, resources,

2 counseling, shelter, legal services. And then the
3 precincts in Brooklyn and the precincts in Queens
4 are well aware of the existence of the Family
5 Justice Center where clients can be referred to
6 and where they can obtain that help.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm just
8 curious to know also about women who do not have
9 contact with a community based organization who
10 might just walk into the precinct, don't speak the
11 language, are there police officers there or
12 somebody at the desk or whomever that once they
13 find out that this is a domestic violence case can
14 take the victim, work with that victim, get the
15 language access that's necessary when they walk in
16 the door, when they first walk in that door?

17 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Yes. Every
18 complaint room and the pilot project that I
19 alluded to very early on started in the precincts
20 that I believe your district covers. We're now in
21 each complaint room there is literally a dual
22 handset telephone where anyone can come in and
23 report any crime, not just domestic violence, they
24 can report any crime and have access to
25 translation in 140 different languages. The

2 report is taken and a domestic violence officer
3 will follow up.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: They follow up.
5 So they're not initially there when the woman
6 walks in though.

7 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well they
8 may be. But anybody, obviously, any officer can
9 take the complaint.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: You know we
12 also have officers at the Family Justice Center.
13 If somebody comes in and has never reported and
14 chooses to report at that time, again, they can
15 walk down the hall and they can report to the two
16 officers that are on site.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Would you have
18 an idea of how many people walk into the Police
19 Department versus those who come in through
20 community based organizations?

21 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well I gave
22 the number of DIRs, Domestic Incident Reports that
23 are filed through the Police Department annually.
24 That's last year, this past year, over 250,000
25 incidents. Now that could be, you know, they call

2 911 or a neighborhood calls 911 and they're
3 responding to an incident. How many walk in, I
4 don't know.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Kind of what I
6 was trying to get at in all of my questioning up
7 to this point was that I'm a deep believer in
8 culturally competent organizations providing
9 services. And I would tend to think that those
10 who have made contact with community based
11 organizations and who have been victims of
12 domestic violence probably bring in more domestic
13 violence cases to the Police Department than those
14 who probably just walk off the street because
15 within the immigrant community there is a
16 tremendous fear of just having direct contact with
17 the Police Department.

18 And that's why I was trying to get
19 a feel for what the numbers might be of those who
20 come through community based organizations versus
21 those who just walk in to the Police Department.
22 So I don't know if you have any numbers on that or
23 no.

24 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: I don't have
25 those specific numbers. I don't know that--

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [Interposing]

3 And there's not a way to try for that--

4 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: --anybody
5 has those numbers. I mean again we know the
6 number of incidents the police respond to. We
7 know the number of calls we get to the Domestic
8 Violence Hotline. We know, I alluded to, the
9 number of clients that come to our Brooklyn Center
10 and have come to our Queens Center. You know.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So in the
12 Family Justice Centers there are counselors there
13 who can provide the women, immigrant women, with
14 information about applying for U-Visas.

15 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: That's
16 correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And do
18 they provide that to all or how do they determine
19 those who would be in need of it, their immigrant
20 status or the country of origin, how is that
21 determined?

22 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: When a
23 client comes into the center, there is a list of
24 services that we show them and that's in, you
25 know, different languages that's been translated

2 into different languages. They then meet with an
3 advocate who will assess and who will understand
4 their unique situation. And at that point they
5 will share with them what services are available,
6 let them know that there are attorneys on site who
7 can help them. They will refer them to those
8 attorneys or they'll make an appointment. And
9 they're able to avail themselves of all the
10 services right there and then.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Specifically
12 about U-Visa application?

13 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay great.

15 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Yes.

16 [Off mic]

17 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Yep. We
18 also have, my Deputy just reminded me we also do
19 training on immigration at the centers with all
20 our advocates. So our centers also provide a
21 great opportunity for us to provide information to
22 the different advocates. And remember the
23 advocates that are from the centers come from
24 these community based organizations that you're
25 referring to.

2 So I think we sort of have the best
3 of both worlds in the sense that we're able to
4 have these community based organizations
5 throughout the community representing an assisting
6 a variety of different victims in different
7 communities but we also have the center where they
8 then can also--we also get many referrals coming
9 to the centers from, obviously, these community
10 based organizations. They can then come to the
11 centers and get all the services that they need
12 in, you know, in one location without having to
13 travel to a police precinct, without having to
14 travel to HRA if they're able to make an
15 appointment the day that we have the staff from
16 HRA on site.

17 We bring in the Department of
18 Consumer Affairs. We focus on issues of self-
19 sufficiency for our victims. We also have ESL
20 classes on site for clients. We have two groups,
21 one in Brooklyn and one in Queens that meet on a
22 weekly basis. And they feel that, you know, the
23 centers are a good, safe place where they can come
24 together and they obviously share a common
25 experience in terms of the fact that they're

2 victims of violence.

3 But they also feel comfort in
4 knowing that there are others in the same
5 situation and they have an opportunity to not just
6 get their immediate issues met but we also focus
7 on very real issues that we know victims of
8 domestic violence encounter such as, you know,
9 where do I get a job, what happens next and I
10 can't get a job if I don't speak English and so on
11 and so forth. So we look to address those issues.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's great.
13 I've actually been to but never really took a tour
14 of the Queens Center but I'm aware of the great
15 work that's--

16 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:
17 [Interposing] I--

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --being done
19 there.

20 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: --would very
21 much like to invite you and the other members of
22 the Council to please come and visit us any time.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is VAWA money
24 the only source of funding for that?

25 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: No actually

2 the Family Justice Centers are very unique.
3 They're a private-public initiative. I do a great
4 deal of fundraising. [Chuckling]

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [Chuckling]

6 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: To make sure
7 that we're able to provide services like self-
8 sufficiency. We have great organizations that
9 have funded the Family Justice Center, for
10 example, the Joe Torre Safe at Home Foundation,
11 Joe Torre and his foundation have made a
12 commitment here in New York City both in Brooklyn
13 and Queens and hopefully in the Bronx when we
14 open, to provide funding so that we're able then
15 to provide counseling to children who have
16 witnessed violence.

17 And so those private dollars really
18 do add up and they help us to provide much needed
19 services that go, again, beyond the initial
20 assistance that we provide.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did you say the
22 about of VAWA funding was \$6 million?

23 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: No \$6
24 million is the cost, the average cost to run a
25 Family Justice Center. VAWA monies that we have

2 obtained, that have come directly to my office has
3 been \$4.2 million. You should know that the
4 State, New York State, is the State that gets the
5 second largest award from VAWA. Last year I
6 believe it was awarded \$32 million versus
7 California. So we get a good portion of the VAWA
8 dollars that are coming here to New York City and
9 obviously other monies from VAWA come directly to
10 civil legal organizations that provide support and
11 services to victims.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Of that \$4.2
13 million how much would go to domestic violence?

14 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: All of it.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All of it.

16 Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: All of it.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And for the
19 Brooklyn Center which is not open yet--I mean--

20 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:

21 [Interposing] No the Bronx is not open yet--

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --the Bronx,
23 excuse me, that's not open yet, how are you going
24 to fund that?

25 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Again we

2 have invited and we have the participation of the
3 number of City agencies that I alluded to earlier,
4 the Police Department, the Department of
5 Probation, the Department for the Ageing. We also
6 have a number of partners that are coming in to
7 the Family Justice Center that are citywide
8 partners, Safe Horizon, Sanctuary for Families,
9 civil legal organizations. And we'll do it also
10 through some private dollars as well.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And I
12 guess before I turn it over to my colleagues, on
13 page 3 you mentioned at the top, underserved
14 victims and allocated new resources to help
15 victims of sexual assault, Indian women? And
16 youth services. I was wondering why you
17 highlighted the Indian women.

18 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: I was just
19 referring to what the expansion was, what the
20 protections were nationwide.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

22 [Off mic]

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: If I may just
24 make an announcement, we have some visitors with
25 us here today from a high school in Salazar,

2 Spain. So [Speaking in Spanish, greeting, to the
3 effect of: I wish to say to all the students from
4 Salazar, Spain, good afternoon, thank you for
5 coming]

6 [Applause]

7 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Before we
8 have Council Member Barron ask his questions, I
9 have one quick question. Are there any
10 suggestions in your experience on how before we
11 renew VAWA how we can improve VAWA? What things
12 should be added? Any suggestions that you have.

13 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: I've had the
14 opportunity over the years to meet with officials
15 from the Department of Justice, the Office on
16 Violence Against Women. They have actually
17 visited our Family Justice Centers; have actually
18 been there when we've sort of cut the ribbon.
19 They've looked at what we're doing. They also
20 have heard directly from advocates and from my
21 office the need to, obviously, provide an
22 increased education and prevention to teens and to
23 a broader population.

24 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.
25 Council Member Barron.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you
3 very much. I wanted to focus on the twofold
4 purpose of VAWA. One of course is to deal with
5 the criminal justice response and the other to
6 deal with the services to the victim. But just on
7 the criminal justice response oftentimes and the
8 75th Precinct is in my precinct area in East New
9 York, oftentimes there's not enough punishment for
10 the victimizer.

11 There's a lot of focus on the
12 victims and should be. But oftentimes the men in
13 those situations, you know, some women say what's
14 the sense in getting the order of protection.
15 This piece of paper is not going to protect me, as
16 a matter of fact; they often say we have to wait
17 until he does something to you before anything
18 could happen. And I'm just wondering, I think
19 it's woefully inadequate the criminal justice
20 response.

21 There's not enough fear in men, I
22 mean if we can't counsel them to do the right
23 thing then they should be--some fear should be in
24 their heart to know that there are major, major
25 consequences that's going to occur if they

2 participate in domestic violence.

3 So I wanted to ask you some
4 questions as it relates to the men that
5 participate in that and what do we do or how can
6 we strengthen the criminal justice response so
7 that men think twice before they strike?

8 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well I think
9 from a community perspective we should all speak
10 out and in our respective communities about the
11 fact that we're not going to tolerate violence and
12 violence in the home, in our communities, and
13 thereby hold men accountable. I think that's very
14 important. All too often people think that when
15 we talk about domestic violence that it's just a
16 woman's issue. But it is an issue that obviously
17 affects families, affects communities, tears
18 communities and families apart and we should be
19 vocal about it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well we are
21 vocal but I wonder if there's anything in your
22 services. We speak out. And I think--but is
23 there anything in your services or your advocacy,
24 are there any specifics as it relates towards
25 greater consequences or any legislation we need to

2 be looking at to put in place that would be, that
3 would strengthen the consequences that men would
4 have to pay when they abuse women?

5 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well there's
6 certainly currently some legislation that is being
7 at the State level regarding strangulation and
8 making strangulation a felony. And so clearly the
9 City and my office supports that legislation. And
10 any legislation that increases and then looks to
11 hold batterers accountable.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And the
13 other thing, still staying on the men side for a
14 moment, often men, are there any counseling
15 services, are there any preventive services 'cause
16 men have a strange notion that they should control
17 women or that they should be like sometimes I
18 remember my son saying one time when he was 12
19 years old, he was sitting at the table and this
20 certainly is a little off the topic a bit but just
21 to get to the point of getting men to understand
22 what it is to be a man and how a man should relate
23 to a woman, he was at the table and he was trying
24 to manipulate me 'cause he was very manipulative
25 at 12, he said daddy, he wanted to get some

2 expensive sneakers, and he said daddy, you can
3 make the decisions, right.

4 And I said no. And he said but you
5 are the man of the house, right? And I said I am
6 a man in the house in partnership with a woman.
7 So he said so you can't, you can't just say yes,
8 you have to go to mommy. And I said yes. I have
9 to go to mommy.

10 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: That's the
11 right answer.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Because we
13 don't, we are a partner, equal partners in this.
14 So wanted him early on to get a sense of the
15 power/partnership, the controlled partnership that
16 is not--and I think oftentimes there's not enough
17 manhood training and education in our communities
18 and even from a cultural perspective do you have
19 these kinds of programs, particularly in Black and
20 Latino communities, in all communities 'cause
21 White men also are very, very--need some
22 counseling and educating on that.

23 But in our communities, I just
24 think there's not enough focus. We do some
25 things. We have a group in our district called

2 Man Up, Inc. that really focuses on showing men
3 how to be men and be respectful and be equal
4 partners in a relationship. So is there anything-
5 -

6 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:

7 [Interposing] Yes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --that's--

9 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:

10 [Interposing] And I'm glad to hear about that
11 organization because you're right. We should
12 focus on not only providing the services to
13 victims and holding batterers accountable but our
14 primary goal at the end of the day really is and
15 should be to prevent domestic violence from
16 happening in the first place.

17 And one of the ways in which we can
18 do that is obviously by educating and working with
19 young people. And we have a Healthy Relationship
20 Academy where we have peer trainers so we work
21 with young people. They are the trainers. They
22 go out and they speak to other young people, so
23 young men, young women talking to other young men,
24 young women. Not just about what an unhealthy
25 relationship looks like, but I think something you

2 alluded to and that is what is a healthy
3 relationship.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Um-hum.

5 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: What
6 constitutes a healthy relationship? What is
7 equality? What is respect in a relationship? And
8 so we go through all that and it's a very
9 effective workshop--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON:

11 [Interposing] Excellent.

12 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: --we
13 actually have received support from the Avon
14 Foundation to--and have been highlighted
15 nationwide in this work because we do think that
16 that is where the answer lies. That those
17 discussions need to happen before young men and
18 young women even start to become involved in
19 relationships. So I concur.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you.

21 And on the victim's side, one of the things that I
22 think needs to be explained more to the public and
23 certainly to those in our communities, a lot of
24 people think it's simple and easy for a woman to
25 just leave. You know, they don't understand the

2 emotional challenges, the financial challenges,
3 you know, the social consequences, it's not that
4 easy to just leave.

5 You know, some people say well you
6 put your hands on me, that's it. One time and
7 it's over and I'm out of here. Easier said than
8 done. Even, I was noticing, even in your example
9 of Maria. She stayed in it for a while until she
10 was held hostage. And then finally something was
11 done. She could have not made it to that point,
12 you know, at any point in that story it didn't
13 have to end that positive. And many of them
14 don't.

15 So, you know, what do you say to
16 the public, you know, I think it's important to
17 get it across that it's just not that simple to
18 just say pick up and leave. And people think, you
19 know, like it's just something simple but it
20 isn't. It's very complex, very involved. And how
21 do you get that message across?

22 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Absolutely.
23 And we go into communities and take that message.
24 We recognize and know that it's not as simple as
25 somebody asking well why doesn't she just leave.

2 Because there might be economic, obviously,
3 concerns because there were children in that
4 household, because there's a complexity of issues
5 if there's immigration status as well.

6 But one of the things that we do
7 when we have someone that comes into our center,
8 hasn't reported to the police, is not only explain
9 the services available but also we conduct, and
10 this is something we started about a year and a
11 half ago, started conducting risk assessments with
12 the clients that come in. Because all too often
13 what we also know happens when we take this
14 message into communities as well is that victims,
15 unfortunately, underestimate the level of risk and
16 vulnerability that they're in.

17 And so the risk assessment is not
18 just for the person providing the service, but
19 it's for the individual in that situation to
20 understand the potential risk that they're in.
21 you mentioned orders of protection and yes often
22 people will say well can an order of protection
23 really protect someone. Well it's not--it can't
24 guarantee protection.

25 But it can certainly help. And we

2 know and we've been tracking the number of
3 fatalities, the domestic violence related
4 fatalities over the years and we know that in 80%
5 of the cases where there's been a fatality that
6 that victim not only did not have an order of
7 protection but I'm told that it's as high as 88%
8 of the victims of the homicides here today in this
9 City had no prior contact with police.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: 88%?

11 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: 88%.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Wow.

13 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: And so it's
14 critical, yes, to make sure that people understand
15 the difficulty of leaving a relationship and the
16 fact that at the time that somebody does decide to
17 leave the relationship that that is also a very
18 vulnerable and high risk period of time. So that
19 we encourage someone who's in that situation,
20 obviously, to seek help to make sure they're able
21 to create a safety plan for themselves and their
22 children and to discuss this with an advocate.
23 Because it is not a simple situation.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Not at all.

25 Another thing I would like to ask is what are some

2 of the signs, you know, some of the early signs
3 'cause sometimes you can see it coming, you know,
4 you--it's there and you might ignore it or excuse
5 it or play it off as something that's not that
6 serious. Could you just speak a little bit about
7 some of the early signs that a woman could see in
8 a relationship that is dangerous and should be
9 taken very, very seriously and can lead to some
10 serious domestic violence?

11 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well first
12 we--if we need to define what domestic violence
13 is. And so it's a pattern of behaviors where one
14 person in a relationship is looking to control
15 another individual. And it can constitute
16 emotional abuse. It could be physical abuse. It
17 can be financial abuse. It can be sexual abuse.

18 And so patterns of control might
19 be, you know, I'm not going to perhaps the husband
20 or the boyfriend is not going to allow the victim
21 to go to an English class or go to work or they're
22 looking to isolate the victim.

23 They would prefer that they not
24 have contact with family members or friends.
25 They're telling me what to do, where to go, what

2 to wear. They're constantly checking up on them,
3 calling them 30, 50 times a day. And, you know,
4 initially somebody might construe that as, you
5 know, he really cares about me. He's calling me
6 30 times wanting to know where I am and what I'm
7 doing.

8 If that pattern continues that's
9 clearly the signs of an unhealthy relationship.
10 Then it can escalate to something much more
11 serious where there is emotional abuse, where the
12 individual is being humiliated in front of family
13 and friends. There's name-calling. And so all of
14 these are signs that clearly something is
15 happening in that relationship that's not healthy.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: What does
17 a--

18 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:
19 [Interposing] And we list these--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON:
21 [Interposing] Right.

22 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: --on our
23 website.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: On your
25 website. And I find this very interesting because

2 this is some of the basic knowledge that needs to
3 be shared in our communities and when those early
4 signs happen, what do you suggest, and I know it's
5 hard to do that 'cause every case is unique and
6 particular. And, you know, it's very difficult
7 'cause you don't want to say anything that's going
8 to exacerbate the situation. Yet at the same time
9 you don't want to not say something and have the
10 person lead to something very, very dangerous.

11 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: You can, you
12 know, the thing that you can certainly do is
13 listen and not be judgment if you know if a friend
14 or family member is in this kind of a situation
15 which is why it's so important to understand what
16 services are available, again, level of risk. And
17 just simply provide something say, you know, you
18 may want to speak to a trained advocate. You may
19 want to speak to a counselor. You might just want
20 to call 311.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Hum.

22 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: You were
23 reminding me of a campaign that we're about to
24 launch in communities through the City entitled,
25 you know, Everyone Has a Right to a Health

2 Relationship. And we--

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON:

4 [Interposing] Right.

5 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: --list out
6 and we're going to put these in supermarkets and,
7 you know, Laundromats, salons all throughout the
8 City, and we list out some of the things that, you
9 know, if you recognize that that is happening to
10 you, you might be in an unhealthy or potentially
11 abusive relationship and you might want to think
12 about seeking help.

13 And so yes, reminding communities
14 and anyone who may potentially be in this
15 situation is critical. So I appreciate your
16 comments.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well I want
18 to thank you very much for the work that you're
19 doing. And I just wanted to, Madam Chair, Mr.
20 Chair, if you will, I want to introduce a group of
21 young women that are here. And this is Woman's
22 History Month so I think this is a timely
23 discussion on domestic violence for young women
24 who are growing and developing.

25 They're the Young Woman's

2 Leadership and Civic Awareness Tour that they're
3 on that's being led by my staff member, Indigo
4 Washington and they're from the Civil Rights
5 School at Thomas Jefferson, the Norman Thomas High
6 School at Jane Adams High School and the
7 Washington Irving High School. And they're
8 intelligent, sharp and they're tough. They do not
9 play. They are tough. They are no-nonsense. So
10 please give them a big hand, if you all would
11 stand. Stand up and let them see you.

12 [Applause]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And thank
14 you so much for joining us. And I just wanted the
15 Madam Chair to know that some of them have future
16 political ambitions so you'd better show your best
17 side because you have some future competition.
18 Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Excellent,
20 thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: I welcome
22 competition. And I only have one good side so.
23 Thank you ladies and I'm very proud to see you
24 here. And I actually was just thinking we should
25 all have something like this going on in our

2 offices 'cause it really is a great thing for
3 women. I'd like to now call on Council Member
4 Chin.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you
6 Madam Chair. Commissioner, based on your
7 testimony, you have a lot of great statistics and
8 programs, so my question is how do you get this
9 information really out to the ethnic community,
10 immigrant community that need it, this information
11 and this service. I mean do you utilize the
12 ethnic media in the different community to do the
13 public education and to let people know about the
14 services?

15 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: We do. And
16 I'm thinking particularly of the Borough of Queens
17 where we have done a great deal of outreach both
18 with the local newspapers as well as the ethnic
19 media. The fact that we have so many of our
20 brochures and so much of our literature translated
21 into different languages so that we're able to
22 take that information directly into communities is
23 something critical.

24 You know, we welcome, obviously,
25 your assistance and the assistance of the Council

2 here today to get into communities and to bring
3 this message. And I would hope that when we're
4 ready to launch our grassroots campaign that we
5 will look to you for your support as well in
6 making sure that we're able to reach all
7 communities in the City.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: The other
9 thing too is also in your partnership with
10 community organizations, do you do outreach events
11 in the community, workshops so that community
12 stakeholders, community organizations get to know
13 about the services that are available?

14 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: We do. At
15 each of the Family Justice Centers we have an
16 outreach coordinator that goes out and makes sure
17 that we are able to reach all communities. We
18 also, you alluded to statistics and numbers, we
19 use that so that we're able to track, for example,
20 we know where the complaints are coming from.

21 We map those in the different
22 precincts and then in the different zip code areas
23 but when we match that to the clients that come to
24 our center we may see that there is a gap. For
25 example the 115th Precinct, the 105 Precinct, those

2 are some of the precincts with some of the highest
3 incidents of domestic violence.

4 Yet perhaps we may not see that
5 many clients coming into our centers. So
6 therefore we will go out, not only do roll call
7 with the officers in the precincts so that they
8 can get the word out but we'll also go into those
9 communities to make sure that they're aware that
10 we're there and that we exist and that everybody
11 has information on what services are available.
12 We do tours all the time.

13 We, you know, faith based, we've
14 had a faith based day where we opened our centers
15 so that members of the clergy can come in and tour
16 the centers because we find that, you know, before
17 a victim of domestic violence will tell the police
18 or call the police or call any government agency,
19 quite frankly, they are more likely to tell a
20 friend or they are more likely to share this
21 information with a member of the clergy or
22 somebody in the congregation that they attend to.
23 And so making sure that we're able to reach out to
24 those organizations is critical.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Now you do

2 not have a Justice Center in Manhattan. So are
3 there plans to open one up in Manhattan?

4 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well I've
5 had a very preliminary introduction with the new
6 District Attorney and I know that he supports the
7 Family Justice Center concept. And, you know,
8 we're certainly willing to sit down and to further
9 discuss and see what we can do for the Borough of
10 Manhattan. I've had similar discussions with the
11 District Attorney from Staten Island as well.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah because
13 based on, I mean your testimony there are all
14 these wonderful services but in Manhattan where
15 our districts are in, we don't have the service.
16 So in terms of getting people to travel to another
17 Borough to access the service is going to make it
18 so much more difficult.

19 And as you said in your testimony a
20 lot of people still have not come forward. And so
21 we wanted to really get the community involved,
22 get people to feel safe enough to come out. We
23 need those services in every Borough. And I hope
24 to assist you in that and really talk with the
25 Manhattan District Attorney to really get

2 something going in Manhattan.

3 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Excellent.

4 I look forward to working with you and to working
5 with the new District Attorney on that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Madam Chair I
7 just want to raise one point when the Commissioner
8 was talking about the programs that help teenagers
9 and high school students, when I visited a local
10 high school during the Respect for All Week, I was
11 told by the students on the Lower East Side that
12 the RAPP program that deals with trainings on
13 relationships are being cut by the Administration.
14 So I hope that you will make sure that fundings
15 are available and can continue to be available for
16 those important programs for our young people.

17 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: I think
18 that's a critical program and I agree that
19 obviously reaching out to young people is of
20 utmost importance so we'll continue to advocate.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you
23 and I would like to call on Council Member
24 Rodriguez.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank

2 you Commissioner Jimenez. In addressing the issue
3 of young people, one of my questions is what data
4 do we have on how many cases of domestic violence
5 do we have among students?

6 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: What I have
7 is a statistic that was reported by the Department
8 of Health on a survey that they conduct where they
9 went out into the community and asked young people
10 whether they had in fact experienced any level of
11 violence. And it's a concern because, you know,
12 while I don't have exact numbers but the report
13 came back clearly indicating that there was an
14 increase in the number of young people reporting
15 being involved or being hit or being slapped by a
16 boyfriend or a girlfriend. So that is of concern
17 to us and I can get that statistic to you. I
18 don't have that here.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But the
20 DOE should have the number, right on how many
21 cases of domestic violence has been reported,
22 right?

23 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: It's
24 approximately 1 in 11.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But we

2 can get that number right?

3 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Yes.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

5 So I think it's good that we know the number of
6 how many cases were reported in 2009.

7 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Okay.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: And what
9 about in the City, how many cases of domestic
10 violence did we have in 2009? Do we have that
11 number?

12 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well. We
13 know that there were over 250,000 incidents
14 reported to the New York City Police Department.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: In 2009.

16 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: In 2009,
17 yes. You know, I mean I can get you the exact
18 figure but it's over 250,000. We also know that
19 about 140,000 people called the City's Domestic
20 Violence Hotline.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: By
22 cases, they say that they were reported in the
23 Police--

24 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:

25 [Interposing] Reported cases is 250,000. Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: And what
3 about do you all have a number let's say in the
4 last four years. How many cases did we have in
5 2008?

6 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: I can get
7 that to you but it was--it was about 240,000
8 because as I alluded to we had a 13% increase.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: So there
10 was--

11 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:
12 [Interposing] From 2008 to 2009.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Is that
14 the same pattern for let's say the last four
15 years? Have we like an increase for the last four
16 years?

17 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: It's been
18 230,000, 240,000 and last year 250,000, so we've
19 seen about a 10%, 13% increase over the years.
20 Now, you know, one might say well does that mean
21 there's more domestic violence or does that mean
22 that more people are reporting.

23 Well I would like to think that
24 more people feel comfortable in coming forward and
25 reporting domestic violence which is what we just

2 talked about, right? We all want someone who is
3 in that situation to get the help that they need.
4 And if they are obviously being abused physically
5 or in a situation in which a crime is being
6 committed against them that they report that to
7 the authorities.

8 So, you know, maybe an increase--
9 the increase in numbers may also be the fact that
10 we have, that the State law expanded the
11 definition of domestic violence so that now it's
12 boyfriend/girlfriend that is included in that
13 definition.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Have you
15 looked to another city as a role model that you
16 can say these other cities in the nation; they've
17 been able to reduce their number of domestic
18 violence like in a number that we can look at it
19 as a role model that we can say we would like to
20 be as?

21 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well when we
22 initially, when we opened up and were awarded the
23 grant for the family Justice Center we traveled to
24 San Diego because they were the ones that actually
25 started this concept of this Family Justice Center

2 and they were able to show that it had an impact
3 in terms of the crime rate and the number of
4 homicides that were taking place in that city. We
5 have seen, and I alluded to that, that we have
6 seen particularly as it relates to intimate
7 partner homicides, a substantial decrease since
8 2002.

9 And we in fact have many
10 jurisdictions, not just from throughout the
11 country but quite frankly throughout the world
12 that come to New York City to see what we're doing
13 in terms of trying to manage the volume, the
14 numbers and what impact we're able to have in
15 delivering services here in New York City.

16 And, you know, ever year we attend
17 and participate in an international conference to
18 obviously be able to learn from other
19 jurisdictions to see if there's something that
20 somebody else is doing somewhere else that we can
21 obviously implement and copy and be able to bring
22 that to the City.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: And my
24 last comment is that I think that domestic
25 violence as everyone knows is not a woman's issue.

2 It's an issue that everyone who cares for justice
3 and for the society that we should have, I think
4 that we should--and I know that many of us have
5 been working together but I think that definitely
6 we have be more creative. I think that the number
7 that we have is too high and I think that we
8 definitely have to look on anything that we have
9 done in the past and it is clear that what we have
10 done is good but it's not enough.

11 I believe that we have to be more--
12 bring more resources. I think that especially
13 addressing the issue of domestic violence among
14 teenagers it should be like one priority. I don't
15 think that we've been putting enough resources
16 especially in high school.

17 I mean as a former high school
18 teacher for 14 years I know that it's so limited
19 what we're doing. And then we blame them when
20 they do anything. And so I think that I hope that
21 for in the next four years we can look at the
22 resources that we've been investing on dealing
23 with the domestic violence and see how much more
24 can we just...

25 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you
3 Council Member Rodriguez. I'd like to now call
4 upon Council Member Williams.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you
6 Madam Chair, Mr. Chair. Thank you Commissioner
7 for your testimony. I don't always agree with the
8 Mayor and the DA but I've got to give credit where
9 credit's due. I think both the Mayor and yourself
10 and the DA Hines in my Borough have really tried
11 to highlight this issue.

12 One thing I wanted to echo was that
13 this is definitely not a women's issue per se.
14 One of the unsung victims are the children--

15 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:
16 [Interposing] Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: --are the
18 families that often are not spoken about and the
19 trauma that they are going through. Also, you
20 know, I went to a domestic violence workshop that
21 I spoke at maybe a month or a couple of weeks ago
22 and what very much struck me was kind of what
23 struck me here, most of the people there were
24 women, unfortunately. And it always strikes me
25 because my mother happens to be a women and my

2 sister happens to be a woman.

3 So it really does affect everyone.
4 And I think everyone should participate in trying
5 to deal with this issue. And I do know that if it
6 were perceived as a men's issue there would be a
7 lot of other things changing. I think there would
8 be a lot more resources and there definitely would
9 be some criminal circumstances that would change
10 in terms of what happens to the person who is
11 committing these crimes. So I just wanted to say
12 that.

13 Also I noticed it said in Brooklyn
14 35% of the clients are foreign born and in Queens
15 70% are foreign born. And so out of the 140,000
16 cases that were called into, was it called in the
17 New York City?

18 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: The Hotline?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: The
20 Hotline. How many--and the 250,000 that were
21 reported, how many of those were foreign born?

22 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: I don't know
23 that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Can you
25 get that breakdown for me?

2 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: We can see
3 if we can do that, yes.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank
5 you. And how many of those actually go onto
6 something more serious? Of the 140,000 that are
7 calls or the 250,000 reports?

8 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: When you say
9 go onto more serious?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Well I
11 know the cases are called in but I don't know what
12 the follow-up is. Are there actually trials or
13 orders of protection, what happens after those
14 cases, just 'cause they're called in what happens
15 after that?

16 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: No. The
17 140,000 are people calling the Hotline to get
18 information. So what they're getting there is
19 just information. They're getting information
20 about resources. They may also be looking to get
21 information potentially about entering shelters.
22 So it's just information. They're not reporting
23 anything at that time. They are told that if
24 they'd like to report they'll be connected
25 directly to 911.

2 The reports are the 250,000
3 domestic violence incidents that I talked about.
4 Now not all of those incidents ended--were
5 arrestable offenses. The police officer could
6 have responded to a household where it was a
7 dispute or where whatever was alleged that
8 occurred does not arise to the level of an arrest.
9 And so but I don't have the breakdown; I would
10 have to get that from the Police Department.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: We would
12 be able to get that also?

13 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: We will try.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: All
15 right. And I know you talked about the media in
16 Queens, what media, so-called ethnic media, in
17 Brooklyn is used to get this information in?

18 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Some of the
19 smaller papers in Brooklyn are always covering the
20 center. I know they've come to many events at
21 both my office and the District Attorney's Office
22 has coordinated.

23 We do the same thing in Brooklyn as
24 we do in Queens in terms of visiting some of the
25 precincts, doing roll call, attending workshops,

2 presenting in some of the conferences that you
3 alluded to, letting people know that we're
4 available. And it must be working because we are
5 averaging about 400 clients a week in Brooklyn.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So when
7 you say they're covering, they're probably doing a
8 story on the workshop or the event. What about
9 advertising dollars spent in the so-called ethnic
10 media?

11 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Advertising
12 dollars, you know, we're doing, I mentioned that
13 we're about to launch a grassroots campaign that's
14 being supported through funding from Verizon
15 Wireless. We'll go directly into the community to
16 place flyers and posters and letting the community
17 know in both English and Spanish that if someone
18 is in a domestic violence situation, that there is
19 help available and they can call 311 or they can
20 call the Domestic Violence Hotline.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I'm sorry
22 let me rephrase, is there advertising dollars
23 spent in those papers now?

24 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: No.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: There

2 isn't. Will there be after this grant comes?

3 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: No. No. I
4 mean we don't--I don't have funding--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS:
6 [Interposing] Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: --
8 discretionary funding for advertising so we go out
9 and we'll talk to the, you know, the grocery store
10 down the hall, down the corner or the Laundromat
11 and we've been able as I said to get some monies
12 through Verizon Wireless to print our materials
13 but we'll get it distributed through some of these
14 outlets. And I have to tell you that many of the
15 food stores and the supermarkets and the banks,
16 Pay-O-Matic and others have been very, very
17 receptive to this message and really do want to
18 support our efforts and get that message out. So,
19 you know.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Perhaps
21 we can, maybe we can reach out to my office and
22 some of the other Council Members that may have
23 connections, maybe we can find a way to get some
24 advertising in those papers that are highly read,
25 maybe severely reduce, maybe they can donate a

2 couple of spaces 'cause I think it's really
3 important information. And a lot of people read
4 those papers and I think that's an outlet that's
5 not being used to its fullest ability--

6 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:

7 [Interposing] We very much appreciate that and we
8 will certainly follow up with your office on that.
9 And I thank you for that and I thank you for
10 lending your voice to the issue.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: The last
12 question I've been asking every Commissioner I've
13 had the pleasure to speak with what is the
14 breakdown of the staff in the office and in
15 managerial as well, in terms of racial breakdown.

16 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Well I have-

17 -

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS:

19 [Interposing] That's - - .

20 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: --I have 27
21 staff members. And I have a diverse staff. I
22 don't have the breakdown but I can get that to
23 you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Please,
25 also, and in management also.

2 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Um-hum.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you
4 very much.

5 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: We have some
7 follow up questions that we're going to kind of
8 give a second round to. My follow-up question is
9 the EVE project; I know that it's something that
10 was kind of a pilot program--

11 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ:

12 [Interposing] Um-hum.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: --when is it
14 set to expire. Is it something that we can keep
15 and how can we keep it and what do we need to do
16 'cause it really seems like a very important
17 project for us to be able to support?

18 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: It is. It
19 is. And I actually was in criminal court last
20 week to see for myself and to talk to the
21 paralegals from the DA's Office and then the other
22 staff that are housed there, and to hear them
23 directly speaking to the victim after the
24 arraignment and providing them with the essential
25 information and faxing them the order of

2 protection and making sure that they know what's
3 happening in their case. It is crucial.

4 We have just reapplied for funding
5 and we hope that with the results that we have
6 been able to get through this program that we will
7 be refunded by VAWA.

8 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Chair Dromm.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I
10 guess my follow-up question has to do with
11 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered couples who
12 also experience domestic violence. And I know the
13 name of the centers of Family Justice Centers.
14 Are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered families
15 include in those centers? Do they have LGBT
16 organizations that are there?

17 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Yes. Yes.
18 And we actually work with the Anti-Violence
19 Project as an offsite partner, onsite partner.
20 And so we do have staff. We have attorneys that
21 are, you know, that see cases of victims in same-
22 sex violence situations, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And for the
24 campaign, Everyone Has a Right to a Healthy
25 Relationship Campaign, are they going to be

2 included in that or is it a little more generic or
3 how is that going to be done?

4 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: I think it's
5 very generic. It's a very generic campaign, sort
6 of generic and subtle yet hopefully alluding to
7 some of the issues that Council Member Barron
8 talked about. So that if you sort of recognize
9 that these things are happening in your
10 relationship that you really need to sort of think
11 about that and get help. And just reinforcing the
12 message that everybody really does have a right to
13 a healthy relationship. Nobody should be in a
14 situation where they are being abused.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I actually do
16 police sensitivity training sessions, or I did, at
17 the 115th Precinct. And a number of officers would
18 come to me and say that they've encountered that
19 especially in the Jackson Heights area. And so I
20 just think it's important that we don't forget
21 about that.

22 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Absolutely.
23 And, you know, we're very lucky in Queens that the
24 Family Justice Center that the detective that we
25 have on site, Detective Cheko [phonetic].

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: He is one of
4 the officers in the department who has had the
5 most experience as a domestic violence prevention
6 officer and so he has great context obviously as
7 the liaison of the center with the other
8 precincts, not just in the 115 and the 110, but
9 throughout Queens and so his experience is vital
10 and he knows the community.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

12 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you
14 very Commissioner for your testimony today and I'm
15 looking forward to working closely with you and
16 following up on some of the things that my
17 colleagues had mentioned. Thank you again.

18 COMMISSIONER JIMENEZ: And thank
19 you for all of your support and I really will be
20 following up to see that we're able to get the
21 message out into all communities. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thanks.

23 Thank you. I'd like to call up the first panel.

24 Safe Horizon Immigration Law Project, the
25 Sanctuary for Families, Legal Aid Society and the

2 New York Asian Women's Center.

3 [Pause]

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Can the
5 representative from Sanctuary please start 'cause
6 we have your testimony in hand now?

7 [Pause]

8 MS. ABIDEN MUSABI: Okay thanks.
9 Good morning. Sanctuary for Families wants to
10 first thank you for the opportunity to present to
11 the distinguished members of the Committees. So
12 thank you on behalf of our organization. My name
13 is Abiden Musabi [phonetic] and I'm a Senior Staff
14 Attorney with the Immigration Intervention Project
15 at Sanctuary for Families Center for Battered
16 Women's Legal Services.

17 Sanctuary is the largest nonprofit
18 in New York State serving exclusively victims of
19 domestic violence through our legal, shelter and
20 social service programs. And in the last year
21 alone we've served 8,000 clients directly and
22 reached approximately 30,000 individuals through
23 our outreach, training and public events.

24 We serve an overwhelmingly foreign
25 born population; over 70% of our clients are non-

2 citizens. So we really feel that we have our
3 finger on the pulse of the diversity of New York
4 City's domestic violence victims. We have the
5 ability to serve those clients through staff
6 that's able to speak fluently in 30 foreign
7 languages and our Immigration Intervention Project
8 has 16 full time attorneys and paralegals working
9 specifically to provide immigration remedies for
10 battered immigrant women and children.

11 We actually just recently
12 celebrated our 20th anniversary of our legal center
13 and so we feel that this reflects our years of
14 direct service and our unique ability to really
15 present to you both the successes of New York
16 City's ability to serve immigrant victims of
17 domestic violence and to really highlight for you
18 some of the ongoing challenges that we've had in
19 serving those clients.

20 We've actually appeared before you
21 in the June 2009 Joint Oversight Committee hearing
22 that you held. And so some of the things that
23 we'd like to discuss today really reiterates some
24 of the successes that we recognized at that
25 hearing. Number one, we are very proud and

2 applaud all of the City agencies ongoing
3 commitment to Mayor Bloomberg's Executive Order 41
4 and prior to that Executive Order 34 which
5 protects the rights of victims of domestic
6 violence as well as all crimes and witnesses to
7 crimes to come forward. It sort of recognizes
8 that a crime against one community member is a
9 crime against the whole community.

10 And that really encourages safe and
11 confidential access to City services, most notably
12 the police but also of course hospitals, food
13 pantries, shelter services and many of the
14 services that we are allowed to refer our clients
15 to.

16 The second thing I'd like to
17 highlight that we also recognized at that last
18 hearing is the success of the Family Justice
19 Centers in Brooklyn, Queens and in the coming
20 weeks the Bronx and Commissioner Jimenez'
21 leadership in really bringing that comprehensive
22 holistic one stop service center to immigrants in
23 New York City who are victims of domestic
24 violence. We have offices in both the Brooklyn
25 and Queens Family Justice Centers and we will be

2 part of the Bronx Family Justice Center as well.

3 And thirdly, I wanted to recognize
4 the Administration for Children's Services for its
5 increased sensitivity in working with domestic
6 violence victims and immigration domestic violence
7 victims and better understanding the dynamics in
8 the home and that when a mother or any parent is a
9 victim of domestic violence they need intervention
10 services as well, not to have their children
11 removed from the.

12 I'd like to sort of abbreviate some
13 of the testimony 'cause I know I have very
14 informed co-panelists here as well. So I may just
15 get straight to the point and the heart of the
16 matter that really motivated us to participate in
17 today's panel. You've heard a little bit about
18 the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in
19 1994 and its expansion and widespread support in
20 Congress in 2000 and 2005. One of the changes
21 that happened in the Violence Against Women Act in
22 2000 was the creation of the U-Visa that you've
23 spoken about earlier this morning.

24 And the U-Visa is a Federal law
25 that creates a remedy for victims of serious

2 crimes, not just any crime but very serious
3 crimes, who overcome their fears of being reported
4 to immigration and come forward and they say I
5 want to cooperate in the investigation or the
6 prosecution of the crime that occurred against me.

7 And one of the requirements for
8 qualifying for this special status is that you
9 must submit a certification from a law enforcement
10 agency or a judge. So while many types of crimes
11 might be the basis for a U-Visa, overwhelmingly US
12 Citizenship and Immigration Services report that
13 about three-fourths of the U-Visa applications
14 that they receive are for people who are victims
15 of domestic violence.

16 So it's a law enforcement tool
17 meant to protect victims--many crimes but mostly
18 we're seeing that it's domestic violence victims.
19 To date our agency has represented successfully
20 over 450 victims of domestic violence who have
21 filed for and received a U-Visa and have been able
22 to include over 200 family members as part of
23 those petitions. So they've been able to
24 regularize their status and stay here with their
25 families.

2 In order to assist the victims who
3 qualify for U-Visas, we've built very strong and
4 successful collaborations with the District
5 Attorney's Offices in all five Boroughs, with the
6 Administration for Children's Services. Both of
7 these agencies have very clear, centralized
8 processes for issuing U-Visa certifications. So
9 when we go to them and present them with a case
10 they have a very organized manner for vetting the
11 eligibility of that victim and to determine
12 whether or not they will certify.

13 And in fact of that 450 case load,
14 successful case load that we filed with US
15 Citizens and Immigration Services overwhelmingly
16 they're almost all based on certifications from
17 the District Attorney's Office. And obviously the
18 District Attorney's Office gets those cases before
19 them because the NYPD makes those arrests and
20 takes the domestic violence incidents seriously
21 enough to make that arrest.

22 We've also recently had success in
23 working with the chief family court judge for New
24 York City Family Courts, Judge Edwina Richardson
25 Mendelssohn who has reached out to many legal

2 service providers in New York City serving
3 domestic violence victims and is--we're working
4 with her to try to educate and collaborate more
5 with the family court judges to issue these
6 certifications since they are also authorized to
7 sign them as well.

8 Unfortunately in stark contrast,
9 our City's largest law enforcement agency, the
10 NYPD, has been fairly slow in setting up a
11 mechanism for issuing U-Visa certifications. The
12 regulations for the U-Visa went into effect in
13 September of 2007, so over 2.5 years ago. And to
14 our knowledge, we're only aware of one
15 certification being signed by the NYPD, a recent,
16 just the past Sunday, a recent Daily News article
17 that highlighted this problem and Sanctuary for
18 Families had a client that was profiled in this
19 case. And in that article the NYPD said that they
20 have 13 requests that they have signed. To our
21 knowledge we only know of 1 that's been signed.

22 The most common scenario in which
23 we would approach the NYPD to sign a certification
24 would be in a situation where a victim comes
25 forward, she files a complaint, she cooperates.

2 She does everything that she possibly can to
3 provide information to further the investigation
4 but unfortunately the perpetrator eludes arrest.
5 He may have fled the scene of the crime. He may
6 continue to have contact with our client but
7 unfortunately he eludes arrest and the NYPD's
8 ability to take that case to the District
9 Attorney's Office.

10 And while we absolutely recognize
11 that the New York Police Department has proudly
12 promoted our local confidentiality policy
13 reflected in Executive Order 41, unfortunately,
14 this slow implementation of a U-Visa certification
15 process has effectively stood in the way of our
16 clients' ability to apply for that U-Visa and to
17 regularize their status. And the intent of
18 Congress in creating the U-Visa was that it's a
19 law enforcement tool.

20 It's intended to make all victims
21 feel comfortable in safely reporting crimes that
22 were committed against them. That allows the
23 police, prosecutors, judges, child protective
24 services, all these other agencies to investigate
25 these activities and to better protect the entire

2 public.

3 We've seen in comparably large and
4 cities with heavy immigrant populations such as
5 Los Angeles, such as Chicago, such as San
6 Francisco, those police departments are issuing
7 certifications for U-Visa crime victims and they
8 have a much more streamline process set in place
9 which I think reflects their commitment to not
10 just domestic violence victims at the stage of
11 making the arrest or filing the report but also
12 saying, yes, this person did in fact cooperate in
13 the investigation so that that person can continue
14 on in stabilizing their situation, freeing
15 themselves from financial dependence from their
16 abuser and being able to get status in the United
17 States which also opens access to many other
18 benefits.

19 So this is sort of a central source
20 of frustration and puzzlement, frankly, for us
21 that the NYPD reflects in so many ways its
22 commitment to serving and protecting domestic
23 violence victims but we haven't yet successfully
24 been able to set up a mechanism with them to sign
25 these certifications. We have, Sanctuary for

2 Families, alone has currently 7 pending requests.
3 As I mentioned before we've had over 450 cases
4 successfully filed based on the District
5 Attorney's Office certifications.

6 Therefore this volume that we
7 presented the NYPD is a low volume. We started
8 submitting requests last spring, almost a year
9 ago, in collaboration with many of the groups here
10 today, the Legal Aid Society, the City Bar Justice
11 Center, Safe Horizon; we have represented a
12 consortium of legal service providers. We have
13 twice met with the New York Police Department,
14 with representatives from the Domestic Violence
15 Unit, from the legal department, in order to
16 identify any questions, any concerns.

17 We've even had a representative
18 from US Citizenship and Immigration Services in
19 the DC office reach out to the NYPD to say, you
20 know, do you have any questions, what can we do to
21 eliminate some of the backlog or the bottlenecking
22 of the process.

23 But unfortunately at least for
24 Sanctuary for Families, seven requests, we've only
25 received a response at the very initial stage on

2 two of those cases. The response has not been
3 that they will be approved. In fact one case
4 initially we were told it wouldn't be approved and
5 then it turned out to be there was a misspelling
6 of our client's name and that clarified the
7 situation. But were it not for that ability to
8 speak with the officer in the precinct we wouldn't
9 have been able to resolve that issue. And we were
10 told to expect it could be several more months
11 before we even get a final certification signed.

12 For a lot of our clients, as you
13 know from Commissioner Jimenez' testimony, the
14 added fears that come with reporting crimes when
15 you lack immigration status, it really creates an
16 overwhelming barrier for our clients to have to
17 overcome. And when they do, the fear of
18 retaliation is intense.

19 And when we protract the period in
20 which they don't have any stability and they have
21 a lot of uncertainty about their options, our
22 clients are really in limbo during this period.
23 And so while it may sound like an administrative
24 backlog or a clerical backlog, that lag period of
25 submitting a U-Visa certification request almost a

2 year ago and then not having any movement on the
3 case is really destabilizing for many of our
4 clients some of whom may end up having to feel
5 like they have no other choice but to reconcile
6 with their batterer.

7 I wanted to just briefly highlight
8 a case that was profiled in the Daily News article
9 that came out on Sunday about our client Maria.
10 She's a mother of four from Mexico and for a
11 period of over 19 years she suffered severe
12 physical, sexual and emotional abuse at the hands
13 of her children's father. Fearful of her abuser,
14 a man she knew to be involved in gang activities
15 in the Bronx and who used weapons against her, she
16 first reported abuse to the police in 2008.

17 By then she had obtained a 2-year
18 order of protection from the Bronx Family Court
19 and she called the police on at least 4 separate
20 occasions in 2008 and 2009. In all the incidents
21 she reported, they clearly constituted violations
22 of the order of protection that was still valid
23 and in place against her batterer.

24 And in fact police officers from
25 the 49th Precinct in the Bronx responded to each

2 incident, established the abuser had in fact
3 violated the order of protection, found him at the
4 apartment on one of these incidents but still ever
5 arrested him.

6 So there were opportunities to
7 arrest the abuser but they passed. And this
8 severely jeopardized Maria's safety and that of
9 her children as the police's inaction only
10 reinforced her abuser's conviction to be above the
11 law. Maria eventually took matters into her own
12 hands and moved into shelter with her children.

13 Though Maria and her 19-year old
14 son are eligible for U-Visa status they remain
15 undocumented because the NYPD is the only law
16 enforcement agency involved in the case and they
17 have not yet issued this required U-Visa
18 certification.

19 So this is just one example of the
20 many that we are seeing in the population that
21 comes to us for assistance with the U-Visa
22 applications. We estimate and I believe that the
23 Police Department doesn't dispute this estimation
24 that to date there are approximately 20 requests
25 that have been submitted to them. Again this is

2 not an overwhelming number of requests that we've
3 submitted though we do believe that there will be
4 many more victims who will come forward once they
5 realize they're eligible and we would like to be
6 able to assist them.

7 What we would like for the Police
8 Department to do and what we would ask of you as
9 Council Members today is we think that this is a
10 very resolvable problem. We think that signing
11 the U-Visa certification is directly in line with
12 the spirit of Executive Order 41 but unfortunately
13 the process right now is very decentralized.

14 And we have recommended to the
15 Police Department that they centralize the process
16 just as the District Attorney's Offices have in
17 each of the Boroughs, just as the Administration
18 for Children's Services has, by designating a
19 small number of people, two to three people, who
20 become expert in understanding the U-Visa
21 certification process, what the requirements are,
22 to focus exclusively on the fact of whether or not
23 our client was a victim and in fact they
24 cooperated in the investigation of that crime that
25 was committed against them.

2 That's the sole role of a
3 certifying agency. There are many other
4 requirements to be eligible for a U-Visa such as
5 showing that you suffered substantial harm but the
6 certifying agency's sole role is to just focus on
7 the fact of victimization and our client's
8 cooperation.

9 So that's our primary
10 recommendation for the NYPD. We understand that
11 they have a policy that they authored in February
12 of 2009 which we were only able to see in July of
13 2009. It's what we believe is a very onerous,
14 multi-tiered, approximately 20-step process. The
15 sole certifier at the NYPD is Commissioner Raymond
16 Kelly. We understand that that is going to
17 bottleneck the process when we only have the very
18 top person in the agency as the exclusive
19 certifier. So that's our main recommendation for
20 what the NYPD can do to help better serve
21 immigrant victims who are U-Visa eligible.

22 I wanted to very briefly also raise
23 another issue in terms of services that are
24 available to victims of domestic violence and
25 sexual violence. We also raised this issue at the

2 last Committee hearing in June of 2009 with
3 respect to trafficking victims in New York City.
4 In November of 2007 we applauded the passage of
5 New York State's Anti-Trafficking Law, arguably
6 the strongest and most comprehensive of its kind
7 in the nation when it went into effect.

8 The law created new crimes of sex
9 and labor trafficking, clarified that running a
10 sex tourism business is committing a crime of
11 promoting prostitution and it increased the
12 penalties for those who purchased sex from
13 prostituted people, many if not most of whom are
14 victims of human trafficking and are also
15 vulnerable immigrants.

16 The trafficking law also provided
17 for services for immigrant trafficking victims but
18 unfortunately the new statutory provisions have
19 been grossly under enforced statewide and there
20 have been a dearth of arrests, prosecutions and
21 convictions.

22 Instead what we're seeing is that
23 law enforcement officers continue to arrest
24 potential trafficking victims for prostitution
25 while ignoring those who are preying on them such

2 as buyers who make up the demand side of this
3 brutal industry and the criminals on the supply
4 side. So pimps and brothels and escort service
5 owners and managers, many of whom are clearly
6 committing felony level crimes of sex and labor
7 trafficking but are not being arrested and
8 prosecuted for that.

9 One of the major reasons for lack
10 of enforcement we believe is that police
11 departments statewide including the NYPD have
12 failed to develop a comprehensive strategy for
13 addressing this human rights violation that are
14 inherent in the purchasing and selling of sex with
15 women and children. Just as the NYPD has
16 developed a comprehensive and effective strategy
17 for fighting domestic violence we feel that they
18 have to develop an equally comprehensive strategy
19 for fighting sex and labor trafficking as well as
20 the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

21 Its strategy to combat human
22 trafficking needs to include both an intensive
23 department-wide training of all police officers,
24 the development of effective tactics to
25 investigate the perpetrators of human trafficking

2 and related prostitution crimes, a shift in focus
3 to investigating and arresting buyers, promoters
4 and traffickers instead of on the women and
5 children that they prey on, a specialized
6 investigatory unit composed of well-trained and
7 dedicated detectives and an increased attention to
8 corruption within NYPD in light of the well
9 publicized cases of police officers who have
10 purchased, harassed or assaulted exploited women,
11 men and children who are in prostitution.

12 We have another case that I would
13 like to highlight for you that we feel exemplifies
14 some of the problems in the lack of enforcement.
15 Our client, Lydia, from Mexico walked into a
16 police precinct in Queens several months ago after
17 she'd been forced to work in prostitution for over
18 two years. She was trafficked into the United
19 States by a highly organized criminal network and
20 she was forced to work in brothels in Queens, Long
21 Island and North Carolina, serving an average of
22 20 men a day in forced sexual acts.

23 Walking into the precinct that day
24 she was covered in bruises and identified her
25 boyfriend as her perpetrator. There was

2 unfortunately no Spanish speaking officer
3 available that day and the NYPD failed to use
4 translation services through Language Line. And
5 Lydia therefore was not asked any additional
6 questions. As a result the officers never learned
7 that in fact Lydia's boyfriend was a trafficker
8 and a pimp. And instead he was arrested on lesser
9 charges of domestic violence and tipped off to the
10 fact that he was now being investigated, he fled
11 and was not able to be prosecuted for more serious
12 crimes.

13 Had the right questions been asked
14 when Lydia first connected with law enforcement,
15 her trafficker would most likely have been
16 arrested on much more serious trafficking and
17 prostitution charges and he wouldn't have been
18 released so easily from the NYPD's custody.

19 I'd like to conclude by urging that
20 the NYPD dedicate more resources to training its
21 officers in effective enforcement in the area of
22 human trafficking and to equip them with the
23 screening tools that they need to be able to
24 better respond to this practice that's
25 unfortunately plaguing New York City. And with

2 that I would just like to conclude by thanking all
3 the members of this Committee for their attention
4 and their interest and their ongoing engagement in
5 these very important issues that are affecting
6 immigrant victims of domestic and sexual violence
7 in New York City.

8 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.
9 I'm going to ask the other panelists if you could
10 summarize your testimonies because we have to give
11 this room up in an hour. So we have a couple of
12 people that want to testify. And I know that we
13 have made mention on several occasions of this
14 Daily News article.

15 And I just wanted to acknowledge
16 the article, there's two articles, titled NYPD
17 Bureaucracy Thwarts U-Visa Law Giving Immigrants
18 Help and the writer is Heidi Evans. So thank you
19 very much for your story. And also the other
20 article is Illegal Immigrant Mother from the
21 Dominican Republic Needs U-Visa For Protection
22 From Her Abuser Husband.

23 So the next person, thank you so
24 much.

25 MS. MARISOLA RIALA: Good morning.

2 My name is Marisola Riala [phonetic]. I'm a Staff
3 Attorney for the Legal Aid Society Civil Practice.
4 As you know the Legal Aid Society is the oldest
5 and largest provider of legal assistance to low
6 income families and individuals in the United
7 States.

8 The Society's Citywide Family Law
9 Practice includes a domestic violence project that
10 provides legal representation regarding custody,
11 orders of protection, child support, divorce,
12 economic justice and immigration remedies for
13 undocumented survivors of domestic violence. We
14 are grateful for the opportunity to testify before
15 the Subcommittees on Immigration and Women's
16 Issues regarding how the Violence Against Women
17 Act impacts services for immigrant women in New
18 York City.

19 We would like to focus on the
20 NYPD's U-Visa certification protocol today. And I
21 won't repeat much of what Abiden from Sanctuary
22 has already mentioned because we concur with a lot
23 of that. But I want to hit several important
24 points about the NYPD's U-Visa certification
25 protocol and the U-Visa more generally.

2 I think it's important to emphasize
3 that the U-Visa is a law enforcement tool but it's
4 also even more important to emphasize that much of
5 the Congressional intent behind the legislation
6 was to provide humanitarian relief for victims of
7 crimes. I'm a little sad that Ms. Jimenez has
8 left the room because I think she did a great job
9 of talking about one of the key areas where the U-
10 Visa has expanded protections to survivors of
11 domestic violence who were either neither married
12 to their batterers or whose batterers themselves
13 were undocumented by providing a path to legal
14 status for them and ultimately securing a green
15 card.

16 We agree that the District
17 Attorney's Office as well as the Administration
18 for Children's Services have embraced this
19 important humanitarian relief and that they
20 understand that it is a useful law enforcement
21 tool. Both routinely provide certifications for
22 U-Visas in an efficient and timely manner but as
23 you have heard already we cannot say the same of
24 the NYPD.

25 I want to hone in on specific

2 issues with the operations order number 10 which
3 was already mentioned. The most notable problem
4 with the protocol is that it requires the NYPD
5 detectives responsible for completing the law
6 enforcement certifications to determine whether
7 the victim has suffered substantial harm as a
8 result of the crime.

9 Under the Federal Immigration laws
10 all the detectives should be assessing is the
11 victim's helpfulness. Whether the victim has
12 suffered substantial harm is something only the
13 United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
14 can determine in deciding whether to confer a U-
15 Visa.

16 By not eliminating the substantial
17 harm language from its protocol, the NYPD is
18 performing an improper assessment that is reserved
19 for an immigration adjudicator. More importantly
20 this language goes against the spirit of Executive
21 Order 41 which promotes the basic idea that police
22 officers are not immigration officers and erects a
23 substantial barrier for crime victims seeking to
24 apply for a U-Visa.

25 Another significant problem which

2 also has already been mention is that the only
3 person authorized to sign these certification
4 requests is Commissioner Kelly. A certification
5 request must go through too many steps before
6 reaching his desk for signature, leading to
7 extensive delays that inevitably leave immigrant
8 victims more vulnerable.

9 In contrast each of the District
10 Attorney's Offices has designed more than one
11 point person for each Borough who is authorized to
12 sign these certifications. We understand that
13 Commissioner Kelly is an extremely busy man. And
14 for that reason we unequivocally believe that he
15 should delegate this responsibility to other key
16 individuals within the Police Department in order
17 to helps streamline the process and create more
18 accountability.

19 As far as we know to date the Legal
20 Aid Society is the only legal service provider
21 with a certification request signed by
22 Commissioner Kelly. We made this request in April
23 of 2009. Our client was a survivor of domestic
24 violence who had endured over eight years of
25 physical violence and sexual assault by her

2 partner. Violence that was unknown to the NYPD
3 until her abuser finally stabbed her in front of
4 their 5-year old son.

5 The NYPD was the only possible
6 certifying law enforcement agency in her case
7 because her assailant absconded to Mexico and was
8 never apprehended nor brought before the District
9 Attorney's Office for prosecution. She did
10 whatever she could to help the NYPD locate her
11 batterer but they still have not found him.

12 Commissioner Kelly signed her
13 certification on December 27th, 2009. Obtaining
14 the certification took eight long months of
15 follow-up letters, phone calls and advocacy with
16 the NYPD. There is no acceptable reason for such
17 delay in responding to any certification request
18 let alone one for a case that was clearly right
19 for U-Visa certification.

20 We live in New York, a city that
21 prides itself on its contribution of its immigrant
22 and we have a Mayor that has recently openly
23 advocated for the need for comprehensive
24 immigration reform. The NYPD U Certification
25 protocol and its implementation should set the

2 standard. A New York Times article recently
3 published in January of 2009 profiled the U-Visa.
4 In that article it stated that the Oakland Police
5 Department signed 153 U-Visa certifications last
6 year. Again as far as we know the NYPD has only
7 signed 1.

8 We strongly encourage the City
9 council to look into this issue and advocate for
10 the survivors on whose behalf we are all here
11 today. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.
13 And we're definitely going to be looking into that
14 and trying to see how we can coordinate better.
15 Next testimony, thank you.

16 MS. SU YI SEN: Thank you. Good
17 morning. Thank you to the City Council members
18 and Committee on Immigration and Women's Issues
19 for the opportunity to testify today.

20 [Off mic]

21 MS. SEN: Oh sorry. I'm Su Yi Sen
22 [phonetic] from the New York Asian Women's Center.
23 Our agency provides comprehensive support services
24 for women survivors of domestic violence and their
25 children and human trafficking victims. We have

2 been working to increase community awareness of
3 the relationship between culture and domestic
4 violence in Asian families.

5 Although our emergency shelter is
6 open to survivors of DV and human trafficking from
7 all cultures and nationalities, we cater mostly to
8 immigrant women of Asian descent who comprise
9 about 80% of our clientele. Our counselor
10 advocates collectively speak 18+ Asian languages
11 from Urdu to Cantonese which makes our agency
12 unique in its ability to accommodate the
13 particular cultural and linguistic needs of Asian
14 immigrant women. Last year we fielded 3,000
15 hotline calls, provided crisis counseling and
16 advocacy services to over 500 women and children
17 and housed 100 clients in our residences.

18 Approximately 35% of our clients
19 are either undocumented or conditional residents.
20 Conditional residents have a green card that's
21 valid and renewable for two years at a time. Most
22 of these women are married to their US citizens
23 who are also their abusers. The abuser will often
24 threaten to jeopardize the woman's immigration
25 status to control and manipulate her.

2 As a result many immigrant women,
3 victims of DV falsely believe that the United
4 States government would deport them if they call
5 the police or that no one would believe them
6 because they are illegal. Enacted in 1994 VAWA
7 allows victims of DV who are either married to a
8 US citizen or to a US permanent resident to file
9 green card petition on their own. Obtaining
10 permanent residency and work authorization gives
11 women better opportunities for self-sufficiency.
12 Financial independence from their abusers give DV
13 victims a real opportunity to leave their abuser
14 and start a life free of violence and fear.

15 Approximately 85% of the New York
16 Asian Women's Center's clients who file VAWA
17 petitions successfully receive their permanent
18 residency. And VAWA's impact on our services has
19 been direct and positive. On account of the
20 provisions supplied by VAWA, many of our clients
21 who filed VAWA petitions receive comprehensive
22 legal services from legal providers such as Legal
23 Aid Society, Sanctuary for Women and many others.
24 Filing an attorney's fees are usually waived for
25 our clients, many of whom have little or no income

2 of their own.

3 Continue and increase funding for
4 these legal service providers as well as DV
5 providers is crucial in enabling immigrant women a
6 means to free themselves from domestic violence.
7 Also a more efficient processing time for VAWA
8 petitions is essential in helping DV victims to
9 begin their lives sooner, as my colleagues have
10 mentioned.

11 For the aforementioned reasons we
12 recommend that New York City increase its funding
13 to support these legal service providers who
14 assist DV survivors and increase advocacy to the
15 US Citizenship and Immigration Services to
16 expedite the VAWA petition processing time.

17 We also recommend to the Committees
18 present to hold a future hearing for immigration
19 remedies available to human trafficking survivors
20 and their impact on service providers here in New
21 York City. Human trafficking is a fast growing
22 social problem and relevant to your Committees'
23 interests.

24 Therefore thank you very much for
25 spotlighting this topic today and welcoming our

2 recommendations.

3 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.
4 Thanks. I'd like to also acknowledge Council
5 Member Elizabeth Crowley from Queens who has
6 joined us.

7 MS. BETIM ASTOFI: Good morning.
8 In the interest of time and not being redundant
9 and I have a severe cold, I'm going to be very
10 brief. Thank you to Chairman Ferreras and
11 Chairman Dromm and the other members of the
12 Committee today for the opportunity to testify on
13 the impact of VAWA on immigrant women. My name is
14 Betim Astofi [phonetic]. I work with Safe
15 Horizon's Immigration Law Project.

16 As many of you know Safe Horizon is
17 one of the nation's leading victim assistance
18 organizations and New York City's largest provider
19 of services to victims of crime and abuse and
20 their families in the communities.

21 I'm going to jump briefly, I think
22 my colleagues have done a tremendous job of
23 discussing some of the hurdles that we've had with
24 the U-Visa certification processes and other
25 concerns that we have moving forward in properly

2 assisting our clients.

3 One thing that I'd like to
4 emphasize and no doubt we're not the only agency
5 that has felt this is the tremendous need our
6 programs have in continued funding and assistance.
7 Our office strives to serve everyone that comes in
8 our door but due to limited funding and an
9 overwhelming amount of a case load, we lost a
10 staff member last year and have been unable to,
11 through our budgetary needs, actually replace her
12 which means that currently we have 3 case workers
13 handling approximately 2,000 cases.

14 Among those 2,000 cases we have
15 over 400 U-Visa cases alone, with 235 approvals
16 which is tremendous but those that are now
17 approved require additional services because many
18 of these people become eligible for their
19 residency or seek to provide assistance or bring
20 over derivative children who benefit from the U-
21 Visa approvals as well. Moreover since the
22 issuance of the U-Visa regulations in September of
23 2007 we have already been faced with 205 requests
24 for additional evidence from Citizenship and
25 Immigration Services. This puts an enormous

2 strain on our program as we struggle to complete
3 these tasks while seeing new clients and providing
4 them with the array of legal services that we wish
5 to.

6 With our funding levels, as I
7 mentioned, at the lowest that they've been in
8 previous years, we've been forced to limit our
9 intake from what was at one point 10 new clients
10 per week to 8 per month, addressing victims of
11 domestic violence. This means that we turn away
12 approximately 5 new crime victims each day.

13 Some of these clients either called
14 us or walked into our offices who have self-
15 identified as immigrants with domestic violence
16 issues, something that takes an enormous amount of
17 courage to do. And additionally the model of our
18 agency is such that we strive to provide a more
19 holistic and immediate response to our clients
20 through interagency referrals in our shelters, in
21 our case workers, in our counselors, as well as
22 our domestic violence legal services program.

23 We do provide referrals to these
24 clients to other agencies that provide this type
25 of work but many of our fellow colleagues have

2 also had to limit their intake. So it's across
3 the board that we're all really feeling these
4 constraints and sadly the needs of domestic
5 violence victims throughout the City persist.

6 And we really hope and are
7 encouraged by the fact that you're taking this
8 seriously that you look quite seriously into
9 funding that we know is being provided but that
10 truly the need persists. And as much as possible
11 to take serious some of the concerns that we've
12 raised today, we would really appreciate it.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you
14 very much. And you have my commitment on that.
15 Thank you again for your testimony. We are--I'm
16 very grateful for all the work that you do and
17 especially as we hear about the wonderful
18 resources in the Boroughs of the Bronx with the
19 new center being opened and Brooklyn and Queens
20 but we still have Manhattan and Staten Island who
21 are also I'm sure need as much services as the
22 other Boroughs. So I thank you for your
23 commitment and all your work and thank you for
24 testifying today.

25 MS. ASTOFI: Thank you.

2 MS. RIALA: If I may ask a question
3 of the Council Members who are here. In light of
4 the fact that we've identified the specific issue
5 with the NYPD and we feel that certainly the NYPD
6 has taken steps towards saying they want to
7 participate in issuing U-Visas certifications by
8 developing a protocol, while we have criticisms of
9 the protocol they have still issued that and it's
10 in place.

11 And given the fact that we feel
12 like it's a resolvable problem I wanted to ask the
13 Council Members what they think might be possible
14 in order to encourage the NYPD to prioritize this
15 more seriously than they have to date. We've
16 obviously made efforts to reach out to the NYPD.
17 We've had more than one meeting with them over the
18 course of the last year. We've written them, I
19 believe, three letters that have been signed by
20 the various organizations represented here today.
21 And we've also reached out to both ethnic and
22 mainstream media including the Daily News article
23 that's been referenced.

24 We're now asking the members of the
25 City Council what further steps might we take or

2 might you assist us in taking in order to change
3 this policy in terms of making it focus
4 exclusively on whether or not victims cooperate
5 and also expediting it so that our clients are not
6 facing a wait of possibly a year.

7 We're also concerned about the fact
8 that once a decision is issued, how do we as the
9 attorneys find out about it? When we work with
10 ACS or when we work with the District Attorney's
11 Office, there's a dialog. I made the example of
12 our client who because of misspelling in her name
13 might have been denied. I believe I was lucky
14 that I was contacted by the NYPD.

15 I would hope that that kind of
16 communication is consistent and that there is some
17 kind of written decision that's issued when they
18 do make an adjudication on the U-Visa
19 certifications. But in light of all that we've
20 presented with you today, I'm certain that we
21 would be most grateful if you have any thoughts or
22 responses to what we might be able to do in
23 addition to what we've already done.

24 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Well one of
25 the things that I was speaking here about is we're

2 definitely going to be reaching out to the NYPD.
3 And we want to have more information on the
4 process and also bring up the suggestions that
5 you've made. And then we're going to look at the
6 next step as to exactly what we can do here and it
7 might be about doing a future joint hearing and
8 seeing the processes of what we can do. But
9 definitely an initial conversation on this
10 specific topic with NYPD will be something that I
11 will take care of in my office.

12 And also to address the other very
13 important issue that--well the other very
14 important issue is the not enforcing of the
15 trafficking laws. And we're looking forward to--
16 and the still arresting of prostitutions who are
17 trafficking victims, of prostitutes, and the need
18 for the department-wide training of the officials
19 on this topic. And we're looking forward to
20 hopefully getting a hearing specifically to that
21 topic also within this year, we hope.

22 But yes, we're definitely going to
23 follow up and we should be in contact and we'll
24 let you know what those conversations are, what
25 the results are. Okay? thank you. I'd now like

2 to call Arise Coalition, New York City Alliance
3 Against Sexual Assault, Megan O'Conner, Natalie
4 Rubio, Tuvio--I'm so sorry if I'm not pronouncing
5 your name properly, from Voice--oh Voces Latina.

6 [Pause]

7 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Oh.
8 Excellent, excellent. Awali Samara from Arab
9 American's Family Support Center.

10 [Pause]

11 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Ms. Sauti,
12 yeah, too, Center for African Women. Selma
13 Donahue and Denabi Diega, I'll try. Thank you.
14 Oh I did well, good. And the Saqulu Far South
15 Asian Women, Bieti Roy. Okay. And Rosanna
16 Conforme from Sakhi Yetu South American Women--
17 South Asian Women. Thank you. And again if I
18 could just remind you if you can just summarize
19 your testimonies because we're going to be having
20 the next hearing walking in shortly. And I
21 appreciate you waiting and taking the time to
22 testify today.

23 MS. MEGAN O'CONNER: Ready? Good
24 morning. I want to thank you again both Chairman
25 Ferreras and Chairman Dromm for hosing this

2 hearing. My name is Megan O'Conner. I'm the
3 Director of Programs at the New York City Alliance
4 Against Sexual Assaults. I'm pleased to be here
5 today to represent the Action Research for
6 Immigrant Social Empowerment Coalition, also known
7 as the ARISE Coalition.

8 And my colleagues here that will
9 also be speaking after me are a part of that
10 coalition. Our coalition was formed in response
11 to the findings from the Alliance's research
12 report Bringing the Global to the Local which was
13 actually generously funded by the City Council in
14 2008.

15 Our coalition seeks to engage
16 immigrant communities in developing strategies to
17 reduce sexual and domestic violence through
18 research, education and advocacy. My colleagues
19 on this panel today, as I said, are members of
20 ARISE and we--our coalition has offered a platform
21 for small community based organizations to pool
22 resources, share knowledge and collectively
23 advance the rights and protection of immigrant
24 women.

25 We are also all Federal grantees of

2 the Department of Justice's Office of Violence
3 Against Women funding for providing culturally
4 competent services to victims of sexual and
5 domestic violence. So obviously the
6 reauthorization of VAWA is incredibly important to
7 continuing our work.

8 As some of our colleagues
9 mentioned, we were actually all here a little less
10 than a year ago to talk about how New York City is
11 addressing the needs of immigrant women who have
12 been victims of sexual and domestic violence. And
13 I'm really glad to see that the Women's Committee
14 and the Immigration Committee are committed to
15 continuing discussions and dialog about this
16 issue.

17 I'm going to get straight to the
18 point here. My colleagues will talk about
19 specifically in their agencies, the challenges
20 that their clients are experiencing. And, you
21 know, also some of the successes that VAWA has
22 granted their clients. And we've also heard from
23 the previous organizations about the challenges
24 with the U-Visa process.

25 What I'd specifically like to

2 recommend is some improvements in the law that
3 should be considered in terms of reauthorization.
4 Really to look at reducing the documentation
5 needed to show proof of abuse in order to be
6 protected under the Violence Against Women Act.
7 Right now women are required to produce a number
8 of documents like people have referenced, police
9 reports, letters from therapists, anyone who has
10 witnessed abuse and can attest to the fact that a
11 certain amount of harm has been caused.

12 And many times the populations we
13 serve, these documents are not readily available.
14 And furthermore providing proof of mental and
15 emotional abuse which is often even more life-
16 threatening but more difficult to prove is a
17 challenge for our clients in actually getting
18 protection under the U-Visa.

19 In addition, I, you know, know
20 Commissioner Jimenez had mentioned earlier that
21 women may not be coming forward because they don't
22 know about protection under the U-Visa. And I
23 think, you know, from our experience and with the
24 organizations that are part of ARISE, women do
25 know but the challenges in actually getting

2 protection that's really what seems to be part of
3 the problem is that women know what protection and
4 services are available but the challenge of
5 actually getting that is really more of the
6 obstacle and the barrier.

7 In addition to improving the law, I
8 think we also need to be looking at more training.
9 So I really would encourage the Council to
10 recommend to NYPD and District Attorney's Offices
11 that immigrant women's organizations really be the
12 people providing that training, perhaps in
13 conjunction with some of the legal agencies that
14 spoke earlier.

15 The community based organizations
16 are the ones that really know, often know clients'
17 needs and obstacles the most and can often reach
18 the women that remain most invisible in the
19 community because of the grassroots approaches
20 that they use. So I really would like us to see--
21 the City see engaging smaller organizations in a
22 better manner.

23 In addition to more training I
24 think providing resources for developing a system
25 of community based advocates, we heard a lot about

2 the challenges that women face and also the
3 challenges that agencies are facing in terms of
4 cutbacks on representing their clients. By
5 developing a system where community organizations
6 have advocates that can actually walk their
7 clients through the process, I think that that
8 would be really helpful for many of our clients
9 that experience or are afraid to go through that
10 process.

11 Lastly I really would like to
12 recommend investing in and developing a data
13 collection system that allows the City to document
14 not just the quantity of services that are
15 provided to immigrant women under the Violence
16 Against Women Act but also the quality. You know,
17 Commissioner Jimenez was not able to provide us
18 with the statistics in terms of the number of
19 women that have applied for U-Visas.

20 But we also, we have to do more
21 than just knowing the numbers, we need the numbers
22 sure but we need to also be looking at the quality
23 of services and protection that are provided to
24 immigrant women. And currently in the City there
25 is no such system like that. Thank you for the

2 opportunity to testify and we look forward to
3 continuing to working together.

4 MS. AWALI SAMARA: Thank you for
5 the opportunity to speak with you today. My name
6 is Awali Samara and I am the Outreach Coordinator
7 at Bate Amal [phonetic]. It's a program with the
8 Arab American Family Support Center in Brooklyn.
9 The Arab American Family Support Center is a
10 member of the ARISE Coalition which was created at
11 address the challenges that immigrant women face
12 when they are victims of domestic violence or
13 sexual assault.

14 I'm here today to discuss how the
15 Violence Against Women Act has impacted the lives
16 of Arab American and immigrant women. In February
17 2010 through funding provided by the US Department
18 of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Bate
19 Amal was created. Bate Amal with the support of
20 Tam-Keen a subsidiary of AAFSC, it's also based in
21 the Family Justice Center, was created in order to
22 provide comprehensive services to victims of
23 domestic violence, sexual assault, teen dating
24 violence and stalking in the Arab community.

25 VAWA has provided more funding to

1 states to ensure that batterers are held
2 accountable for the violence that they unleash on
3 their partners. For immigrant women it also
4 provides them with the ability to break free from
5 abusive relationships without the fear of loss of
6 their immigration status or deportation which
7 would also mean losing their children. In the
8 last four years approximately 30 Arab American
9 immigrant women have been able to flee their
10 abusers and create the safe and stable home for
11 themselves and their children which would not have
12 occurred without VAWA.

14 Although a number of our clients
15 have benefited by adjusting their immigration
16 status under VAWA stringent requirements and lack
17 of legal resources has hindered many other victims
18 from benefiting from VAWA. Each year
19 approximately 25 victims of abuse come to AAFSC
20 and Tem-Keen seeking to acquire immigration status
21 without the hindrance of their abusers. And only
22 30% of them are able to adjust their status under
23 VAWA. This is only a small percentage of Arab
24 American victims of domestic violence seeking to
25 adjust their immigration status.

2 Many Arab immigrant women are too
3 terrified to even call the police when a violent
4 incident occurs because they think that they
5 themselves will be arrested and deported because
6 of lack of status. Sorry. They often, which
7 means most of these women lack the written
8 document that is required to apply for relief
9 under VAWA.

10 In addition many of the victims do
11 not disclose the abuse to family or friends
12 because of the belief that they will shame their
13 families but immediate and extended if they air
14 their dirty laundry to the community. Even if a
15 victim has the required written documentation
16 needed to apply for an adjustment of status under
17 VAWA the lack of free legal representation remains
18 an obstacle in their path to freedom from their
19 abuser.

20 There are free legal services for
21 victims of domestic violence throughout New York.
22 But only a small handful are able to provide
23 victims with immigration services. With a large
24 influx of immigrant victims of domestic violence
25 and few lawyers many victims are left either

2 without representation or placed on extremely long
3 waiting lists not knowing where they stand and
4 fearful of deportation.

5 In addition to ensure that the
6 immigrant women are afforded that same light--
7 sorry same rights and resources it's imperative
8 that community based organizations serving this
9 population are included in the New York State
10 Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In order to
11 gain membership of such a coalition, you must be a
12 state-funded program which prohibits many
13 community based organizations from joining the
14 coalition.

15 Lastly we recommend that the City
16 allocate funds to organizations that are able to
17 provide immigrant women with culturally and
18 linguistically specific services to ensure that
19 they can live safe and healthy lives. Members of
20 the ARISE Coalition strive to provide underserved
21 immigrant populations with culturally and
22 linguistically specific services.

23 On a final note we would like to
24 thank New York City Council Members for allowing
25 us the opportunity to discuss how VAWA has

2 impacted the lives of immigrant women in New York
3 City. We hope that you will take note of the
4 recommendations that we have provided and it will
5 have an impact on the services afforded to
6 immigrant victims of domestic violence in New York
7 City.

8 MS. BEETEE RIAH: Good afternoon.
9 Thank you for giving me the... oh. Good afternoon.
10 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to
11 testify, challenges that our clients experience.
12 My name is Beetee Riah [phonetic]; I am a Domestic
13 Violence Program Advocate at Sakhi for South Asian
14 Women. Sakhi is a community based organization in
15 New York dedicated to ending violence against
16 women of South Asian or Asian. We provide a range
17 of services to survivors of domestic violence
18 including case management, legal advocacy and
19 legal referrals, co-accompaniments [phonetic],
20 translation services, counseling and shelter
21 referrals. We have also economic employment
22 programs that essays to survivors to become self-
23 sufficient.

24 Some of the challenges that Sakhi
25 South Asian immigration community face while

2 accessing power is it has been difficult for
3 survivors to collect the necessary documents such
4 as apartment leases, employment verifications,
5 police reports, medical reports, due to their
6 limited English proficiency.

7 It has been difficult to provide
8 residency during the period when the survivors
9 have lived with their abusers. It is unsafe for
10 the survivors to ask their abuser to verify that
11 they lived with them.

12 It has been difficult for survivors
13 to prove that they were in a good faith marriage.
14 Is a marriage certificate sufficient proof to
15 confirm this? Many abusers have taken important
16 documents away from survivors including marriage
17 certificates. So how can she then prove she was
18 married without this document? Survivors
19 experience trauma as a result of being abused.
20 Many of them do not seek help because the fear of
21 the repercussions of accessing social services and
22 of criminal justice institutions.

23 Therefore it is difficult for them
24 to prove that residency card if they do not have
25 any supporting documentations. Now I'm going to

2 talk some of the successes that VAWA has. VAWA
3 has been a great law to pass and survivors have
4 been able to secure their immigration status, get
5 better jobs and enroll in school, receive public
6 assistance, apply and secure subsidized housing
7 and other state assistance. Without legal
8 residency survivors are only more isolated and can
9 become completely dependent on their abusers.

10 With VAWA survivors can look to
11 having a better future, secure future, for
12 themselves and for their future generations.
13 Thank you.

14 MS. ZEINAB EYEGA: Good evening.
15 Thank you very much for having us. Today I won't
16 take your time because I know we are running late.
17 My name is Zeinab Eyega; I'm the Director of Sauti
18 Yetu Center for African Women. We're based in the
19 South Bronx. We're a community based organization
20 that works with African immigrant women and
21 families. Our services are throughout New York
22 City although we're based in the south of Bronx.

23 Sauti Yetu last year alone served
24 women in almost 55 African languages. Our staff
25 and interns including volunteers collectively

1 speak at least 25 African languages. The strength
2 that Sauti Yetu brings to is the meeting the
3 specific cultural, religious and linguistic needs
4 of the most isolated up and coming new immigrant
5 communities.
6

7 We are honored to be a part of the
8 ARISE Coalition. And, you know, 2010 is the first
9 year that Sauti Yetu has become a grantee of, you
10 know, Violence Against Women at the Department of
11 Justice. So for that I think it has strengthened
12 and helped us expand our services to women and
13 families who ordinarily do not actually even call
14 911 or walk into Family Justice Center or even call
15 the Legal Aid Society.

16 These are the populations of people
17 that we work with. The majority of the women
18 that we work with are not only just English
19 proficient, are also not literate. So when you're
20 dealing with, you know, proof of documentation,
21 providing an order of protection, writing a police
22 report for someone who's not literate, the
23 challenges are doubling confounding.

24 I will take a minute to share with
25 you with two of our clients, experiences of two of

1
2 our clients; both had had different benefits and
3 challenges regarding VAWA. One of our first
4 clients, her name I'll call for lack of a better
5 word is Jennifer. Jennifer is married to US
6 citizen who never filed for her. For five years
7 kept telling her that he would--the papers, he's
8 filed them, they're waiting, they're waiting. In
9 the process as he was, you know, terribly abusing
10 her, beating her almost all the time.

11 And one day she decided to leave
12 and go into a shelter. She didn't speak English.
13 She didn't know how to read and write. And in the
14 shelter she was there for three months without an
15 interpreter. Until someone gave her our number
16 and we went and we found an interpreter for her.
17 And unfortunately for Jennifer she spoke a
18 language that was not available in the language
19 bank, the telephonic language bank. So she's one
20 of our clients.

21 And through working with us she was
22 able to get her VAWA and she was able to get, you
23 know, employment. She's now working. She is in
24 ESL class. And she's learning how to speak
25 English very well. And she wants to adjust, you

2 know, raise her kids here.

3 Our second client is Amanita
4 [phonetic]. Amanita, you know, was also domestic
5 violence victim but unfortunate for her, since she
6 filed the VAWA application 2007, we recently got
7 message that her file is being reviewed because
8 she didn't have order of protection. She didn't
9 have, you know, a police report but yet there was
10 a lot of evidence from, you know, the community
11 that really provided affidavits that she indeed
12 was a domestic violence victim. And now Amanita
13 is stuck in a limbo without ability to get
14 employment, without ability to prove her English
15 proficiency and, you know, and get employment so
16 that she can be economically self-sufficient.

17 Yesterday she came to our office
18 with the idea of saying why did I leave. I could
19 have stayed with my husband and my life would have
20 been--I would have suffered but I wouldn't have
21 been, you know, where I am today, not knowing what
22 will happen to me and my children tomorrow.

23 So these are the two contrasting
24 cases that I wanted to share with the Council to
25 let you know that yes, we have incredible work

2 from Commissioner Jimenez and the Family Justice
3 Centers and the police work, the language banks,
4 however I would reiterate that there is a large
5 number of the underserved communities that we
6 really need to reach out to.

7 We need to begin to identify. And
8 we need to work with. Not all the system has been
9 able to serve everybody in New York City. And
10 that's one of the reasons why the ARISE Coalition
11 exists because we're serving the most vulnerable
12 who are often not visible in our data. Who are
13 not often the ones who have the courage to go out
14 there and seek services.

15 What Sauti Yetu has been able to do
16 is do grassroots home to home, peer to peer,
17 outreach which is not--many of our women, they
18 can't read the newspaper. They don't listen to
19 the news. So how do you reach them? Many of us
20 come from countries where we were afraid of the
21 police because the police were the ones that would
22 actually, you know, destroy you and your family.
23 How do you break that barrier to say okay we're
24 here to serve you?

25 And, you know, our experience in

2 the South Bronx, the police hasn't been our
3 friend. It hasn't been the friend of our clients.
4 We've had many cases where the police has come and
5 the husband has spoken to the police and the
6 police left without even talking to the woman who,
7 visibly, is distressed. Thank you very much.

8 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you
9 very much for your testimony. I actually have a
10 question. In the instance of illiteracy, you
11 know, clearly a woman can't pick up a document and
12 read that that is her marriage certificate or that
13 this is her lease or whatever the case. Is there
14 anything anywhere in VAWA that stipulates that
15 there's any type of exemption or what is a woman
16 to do in that case when she really just can't
17 understand the documents that she needs to
18 collect?

19 MS. EYEGA: Well not to the best of
20 my knowledge if there's anything in VAWA that
21 stipulates that, you know, if she is not literate
22 she can use other forms of, you know, affidavit or
23 testimony. But we know that that has been a big
24 impact for many of our clients who are not
25 literate. You know, first of all in getting them

2 to begin to document, you know, what is going on
3 with them. I'm sure that proof has been very
4 difficult and challenging.

5 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Okay thank
6 you very much. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

7 MS. O'CONNER: Sorry. Can I just
8 share also, 'cause Natalie Rubio Toro is the
9 Executive Director of Voces Latinas and she was
10 very sick this morning so could not attend. But I
11 just want to--a lot of the things that I said in
12 my testimony were things that also are in
13 Natalie's testimony and you have a copy of it.
14 But I just want to sort of reiterate something
15 that I know is important to Natalie and something
16 that our other members have shared is that, you
17 know, in addition to the literacy component, this
18 idea of really using community based advocates.

19 One of the programs that is really
20 important to Voces Latinas and has worked very
21 well is something called the Promotora Peer
22 Education Program. You know, I think what we
23 would like to advocate is programs like that to
24 really be used as a resource in terms of not only
25 explaining the process to immigrant women but also

2 in helping it be a less overwhelming experience.
3 And, you know, using a peer educator who can sort
4 of hold someone's hand through that process, that
5 can explain it in their language, that can explain
6 it in a way that's going to be sensitive, and, you
7 know, these are women in the community that are
8 volunteers. And I think, you know, a lot of the
9 members of this coalition are using similar
10 programs like that. So I think really making sure
11 that those programs are recognized and supported
12 is really important. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.

14 I actually have visited Voces Latinas and seen the
15 great work that they're doing there. And I'm sure
16 you're all doing fantastic work. The Promotores
17 initiative is something that really is inspiring
18 when you see peers, you know, oftentimes you think
19 women speaking to women, but something as simple
20 as age, when you have woman who is the same age
21 and kind of grew up in the same community and the
22 same experiences how communication really is
23 improved when you have a peer.

24 Thank you very much for your
25 testimony. And I will adjourn the hearing. Thank

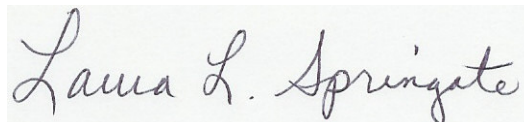
2 you. Let me gavel out.

3 [Gavel banging]

4 [END 1002.MP3]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Laura L. Springate certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura L. Springate". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Signature _____Laura L. Springate_____

Date _____April 7, 2010_____