

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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June 21, 2022
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HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING - COMMITTEE ROOM -
250 BROADWAY, 16TH FLOOR

B E F O R E: Althea V. Stevens, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Aviles
Chi A. Osse
Kristin Richardson Jordan
Kevin C. Riley
Nantasha M. Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S

Randy A. Scott, Assistant Commissioner Department
of Youth and Community Development

Tracey Thorne, Director of Runaway and Homeless
Youth Program

Marie Angela Macchu

Lyndon Chris Hernandez

Lauren Galloway

Samantha Rod

Shaquasha King

Ivan Dudnik

Jordan Bowen

John Sentigar

Bill Torres

2 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: This is the mic test
3 for the Committee on Youth Services. It is June 21,
4 2022. We are in the 16th Floor Committee Room, and
5 this is Owen Kotowski.

6 Welcome to today's hybrid New York City
7 Council meeting of the Committee on Youth Services.
8 Please place electronic devices to vibrate or silent.

9 If you wish to submit testimony, you may
10 send it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that's
11 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

12 Thank you for your cooperation. Chair, we
13 are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good afternoon. I'm
15 Althea Stevens, Chair of New York City Council for
16 Committee on Youth Services.

17 Today, the Committee on Youth Services is
18 conducting an oversight hearing on runaway and
19 homeless youth. The Committee will seek an overview
20 of DYCD's Runaway and Homeless Youth Services and
21 explore the extent to which the services met the
22 particular needs of runaway youth as well as the gaps
23 to be addressed.

24 The Committee will examine also the
25 methodologies and the logistical challenges of

2 conducting accurate annual Youth Count to capture the
3 numbers of unsheltered homeless youth in New York
4 City, which then serves as the basis for funding and
5 services planning. As we will discuss today, there's
6 a clear discrepancy between numbers presented in the
7 official count and the day-to-day experience of
8 providers and youth.

9 Additionally, the Committee will hear
10 from advocates, providers, and members of the public
11 and youth with experience of housing instability and
12 homelessness to better understand runaway and
13 homeless youth needs.

14 I would like to take a moment to
15 recognize we have been joined by Council Member
16 Kristin Richardson Jordan, Council Member Chi Osse,
17 and Council Member Kevin Riley.

18 Runaway and homeless youth experience
19 disproportionately high rates of trauma and family-
20 of-origin rejection, and persistent prolonged stress
21 at critical development stages. As a result, this
22 population suffers from elevated rates of
23 psychological distress which impacts their mental and
24 behavioral health and life outcomes. As many as 50
25 percent of all homeless and runaway youth report

2 mental health problems such as depression, severe
3 anxiety, suicidal ideations, and post-traumatic
4 stress disorders. Moreover, runaway and homeless
5 youth exhibit high rates of substance abuse with 30
6 to 40 percent reporting alcohol abuse in their
7 lifetime and 40 to 50 percent reporting drug
8 problems. Not infrequently, runaway and homeless
9 youth find themselves on the streets as a result of
10 family-of-origin rejection due to youth sexual
11 orientation or gender identify. Nationally, as many
12 as 2 to 40 percent of youth experiencing homelessness
13 identify as LGBTQIA+. Youth of color, partnered and
14 parenting youth, LGBTQIA+ youth, and those are in the
15 intersection of those identities facing homelessness
16 in disproportionately high rates. Rates of
17 homelessness among LGBTQIA+ youth in New York City
18 are particularly high, even in comparison to their
19 disproportionate representation in national data. A
20 survey of community-based services provider
21 highlighted the needs for supportive housing,
22 especially LGBTQI+ affirming resources as one of the
23 primary gaps in New York City's runaway and homeless
24 youth landscapes. In recent years, both state and
25 local law have evolved to better address the unique

2 challenges faced by those demographics through
3 efforts such as increasing funding and reporting,
4 extending the amount of time youth may remain in DYCD
5 shelters, implementing a streamline of DYCD-to-DHS
6 shelter system process, and expanding services to
7 include homeless youth adults up to 25 years old.
8 However, advocates and providers consistently voice
9 concerns over the implementation of those laws which
10 they feel do not reach enough impacted youth and,
11 even when reached, do not adequately address the
12 needs in play.

13 As a result, every year the city conducts
14 a citywide in-time count for homeless adults, youth,
15 and families of New York City based on guidelines
16 issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
17 Development, or HUD. Homeless Outreach Population
18 Estimate, or HOPE, is used to gauge the size of
19 unsheltered homeless population in New York City,
20 including homeless youth under the ages of 24. Youth
21 Count serves as a supplement to the HOPE to capture
22 unsheltered homeless youth who are not counted in
23 HOPE. The resultant numbers are then used to
24 determine how funding is to be allocated towards

2 runaway and homeless youth services, a social service
3 sector that described by advocates as starved.

4 Given the critical role that the Youth
5 Count results play in the decision regarding
6 resources and services to be funded and provided to
7 extremely valued and disproportionately traumatized
8 population, unsheltered youth, it is imperative to
9 ensure that such estimates are accurate as possible.
10 This is even more critical in the environment of
11 COVID-19, which produce even higher barriers to
12 access resources and services by means of financial
13 deficits and a pivot to remote-base in so many of the
14 areas of daily life.

15 Discrepancies in the reported Youth Count
16 numbers are in part due to HUD's restrictive
17 definition of being unsheltered. However, advocates
18 and providers also point to Youth Count as being
19 under-resourced, understaffed as well as being
20 inadequately planned. It is important for DYCD to
21 take the following steps to support runaway and
22 homeless youth population.

23 It is necessary for DYCD to evaluate the
24 resources and staffing that is allocated to Youth
25 Count to ensure that the count is adequately funded,

2 staffed with sufficient number of people for
3 homeless-youth-specific, trauma-informed training.

4 DYCD should work to strengthen in
5 partnership with the NYC Department of Education
6 areas of Youth Count because evidence across the
7 nation indicates that a common factor in successful,
8 effective Youth Count is a strong collaboration with
9 educational systems.

10 DYCD should find ways to incentivize the
11 participation of providers and, most importantly,
12 youth as both Youth Counters and surveys and
13 respondents, another common factor in successful,
14 effective Youth Count.

15 DYCD should work to ensure a greater and
16 more meaningful participation of advocates,
17 providers, and, more critically, youth with lived
18 experience of homelessness in all stages of Youth
19 Count planning, decision, and implementation and
20 process.

21 DYCD should work to gain a greater access
22 for Youth Count surveys to indoor spaces such as
23 abandoned buildings, 24-hour retail establishments,
24 hospital emergency rooms since the annual Youth Count
25 and HOPE are conducted in January on one of the

2 coldest nights of the year when unsheltered homeless
3 youth tend to seek refuge from cold winter weather in
4 such locations.

5 DYCD should seriously consider conducting
6 a supplemental New York City Youth Count in warmer
7 weather and seasons using a broader than HUD
8 definition of unsheltered homeless to reach as many
9 as possible and capture a more accurate picture of
10 this population's size.

11 DYCD should increase the number of youth
12 utilizing the streamlined DYCD-to-DHS shelter system
13 process as well as include drop-in centers to protect
14 those vulnerable populations from additional and
15 unnecessary stress.

16 DYCD should allow service providers to
17 serve more than 21 to 24 years of age which is
18 currently an underserved runaway and homeless youth
19 population as well as advocates for more funding and
20 resources for those services sectors.

21 DYCD should expand resources and services
22 specifically tailored to focus on LGBTQI+ homeless
23 youth.

24 Lastly, DYCD should advocate for
25 increasing the number of housing vouchers available

2 to runaway and homeless youth as well as supportive
3 housing slots.

4 In closing, we are here today to work
5 collaboratively and to ensure that our most
6 vulnerable youth have adequate access to critical
7 resources and services during one of the darkest
8 moments in their lives, especially given the current
9 homeless crisis in New York City. By addressing the
10 issue of runaway and homeless youth, we would be able
11 to reduce the overall homeless problems in New York
12 City as well.

13 I want to thank the staff behind the
14 scenes in making sure this hearing runs smoothly. I
15 would like to thank Youth Committee staff for their
16 work, and that is Committee Counsel Emi Briggs,
17 Policy Committee Analyst Anastasia Zimina, and
18 Financial Unit Head Aliya Ali, and a big thanks to my
19 staff back at the District office and a special
20 thanks to my Chief-of-Staff/Legislative Director Kate
21 Connolly.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you,
23 Chair Stevens. My name is Emi Briggs. I am Committee
24 Counsel to the Committee on Youth Services.

2 Before we begin testimony, I want to note
3 that hearing participants may submit written
4 testimony for the record up to 72 hours after the
5 hearing.

6 Now, I will administer the oath to all
7 members of the administration who will be offering
8 testimony or will be available for questions.

9 To the members of the administration,
10 would you please raise your right hand, and I will
11 read the oath. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
12 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
13 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Members
14 questions?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I will.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you.

17 DIRECTOR THORNE: I will.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you.

19 Associate Commissioner Rattray, you may begin your
20 testimony.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you
22 for the promotion, but actually I'm Assistant
23 Commissioner Randy Scott. Not a problem. Thank you
24 very much.

2 Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and Members
3 of the Youth Services Committee. I am Randy A. Scott,
4 Assistant Commissioner for Vulnerable and Special
5 Needs Youth at the Department of Youth and Community
6 Development. I am joined by Tracey Thorne, Director
7 of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs. On behalf of
8 Commissioner Keith Howard, I thank you for this
9 opportunity to share information about DYCD's
10 programs for runaway and homeless youth.

11 DYCD's Runaway and Homeless Programs are
12 designed to serve youth holistically, enabling them
13 to obtain the services needed to place them on a path
14 to independent living and stability. We are committed
15 to helping young New Yorkers build new skills and
16 flourish. DYCD funds an integrated portfolio of
17 runaway and homeless youth services that are
18 delivered by community-based providers through
19 contracts. The 3 types of services include
20 residential services, drop-in centers, and street
21 outreach.

22 Residential services include crisis
23 services programs and transitional independent living
24 support programs. The New York State Office of
25 Children and Family Services, OCFS, regulates all

2 residential programs provided by youth bureaus across
3 New York state. DYCD is designated youth bureau for
4 New York City.

5 In recent years, we have tripled the
6 number of beds in residential programs for young
7 people ages 16 to 20 for a total of 753 beds. We
8 implemented 2 key program policies, increasing the
9 time young people may stay in residential programs up
10 to 120 days in crisis services programs and 24 months
11 in transitional independent living programs.

12 Following these state and city legislative changes,
13 we also created residential services for youth up to
14 the age of 24, and we now have 4 programs with a
15 total of 60 beds for homeless young adults.

16 Crisis services programs provide
17 emergency shelter and crisis intervention services.
18 Youth have their basic needs met while developing a
19 service plan with short-term and long-term goals. In
20 cases where family reunification is not possible,
21 provider staff work with youth to identify
22 appropriate transitional and long-term housing
23 placements.

24 Transitional independent living, TIL,
25 support programs are a longer term housing option

2 that provides support as youth establish an
3 independent life through educational and career
4 development services, health services, and mental
5 healthcare, counseling, and basic life skills
6 training. Drop-in centers in each borough serve youth
7 ages 14 through 24. At our 8 centers, youth are
8 provided with basic needs such as food and clothing
9 and supportive services such as recreational
10 activities, health and educational workshops,
11 counseling, and referrals to additional services
12 including shelter as needed. At least 1 center in
13 each borough is open 24 hours a day every day of the
14 week.

15 Street outreach focuses on locations in
16 the city where runaway and homeless youth tend to
17 congregate, offering on the spot information and
18 referrals. The goal is to develop a rapport with the
19 youth and connect them to services including shelter.
20 Counselors in RHY programs work with youth to develop
21 individualized service plans to outline short-term
22 and long-term goals. They can receive a range of
23 supportive services both directly and through
24 referrals, which medical and mental healthcare
25 services, intensive counseling, family mediation,

2 education, substance abuse prevention, violence
3 intervention and prevention counseling, and housing
4 assistance. When appropriate, staff members assist
5 young people in reuniting with their families or with
6 moving to transitional or longer-term programs.
7 Through a partnership with the Mayor's Office of
8 Community Mental Health, young people can access
9 high-quality mental health services in drop-in
10 centers and in residents.

11 Earlier this month, we released the final
12 report of the 2021 Youth Count. The Youth Count is
13 New York City's point-in-time count of homeless and
14 unstably housed youth and those accessing services at
15 DYCD-funded programs citywide. For almost 10 years,
16 the Youth Count has supplemented a federally mandated
17 HOPE count conducted by the New York City Department
18 of Homeless Services and offered additional
19 demographic and housing information to help inform
20 policy for runaway and homeless youth. The 2021 Youth
21 Count reported responses from a total of 459 young
22 people. The survey asked questions about where youth
23 had spent the night on Tuesday, January 26, 2021. 237
24 youth reported being in a stable housing including
25 their parents' or relative's home or their own place.

2 214 reported unstable housing such as a shelter or
3 couch-surfing. 7 reported being unsheltered, and
4 representatives offered them shelter at the time of
5 the survey. One was from outside the city. The total
6 number of unsheltered youth reported in the city's
7 point-in-time count for 2021 was 132. As I stated, 7
8 were identified through the Youth Count, and the
9 remaining 125 were identified through the HOPE count.
10 More details are available in the report which is
11 posted on the DYCD website.

12 DYCD along with partners across sectors
13 including Youth Action Board Members, providers,
14 advocates, and other city agencies have completed the
15 planning process for a 15 million grant awarded by
16 the Department of Housing and Urban Development as
17 part of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program,
18 YHDP. The final plan was approved by HUD and will be
19 released publicly this summer. This funding will
20 support a wide range of new housing and service
21 interventions to prevent and end youth homelessness.
22 Implementation of the plan will start in late summer.

23 Last week, Mayor Adams released Housing
24 Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and
25 Homelessness. This plan includes increased services

2 at the 8 RHY drop-in centers. New service at the
3 drop-in centers will include peer navigation programs
4 that will provide employment to youth and young
5 adults with lived experience of homelessness and a
6 new financial literacy program operated in
7 partnership with the Department of Consumer and
8 Worker Protection. Both of these were elevated as
9 priorities by the community during a YDP planning
10 process.

11 We would like to thank the (INAUDIBLE)
12 providers whose work welcomes thousands of young
13 people into safe and healthy environments and who
14 have met the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic with
15 strength and energy. We also thank the City Council
16 for a longstanding commitment to funding RHY
17 services. We look forward to continuing to work with
18 you, advocates, providers, and youth in the time
19 ahead to continue to improve services. We are pleased
20 to answer any question you may have. Thank you very
21 much.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you,
23 Assistant Commissioner Scott. Chair Stevens, you may
24 now begin your questions.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, great. Is DYCD
3 only tracking referrals made by other DYCD programs?
4 Do you capture youth who call on their own in search
5 of shelter beds? If so, how? If not, why? What about
6 non-DYCD referrals such as DOE?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you
8 for the question. We track referrals of contracted
9 programs. It is expectation that the contracted
10 program will track any referral that comes into their
11 sites and report that on a daily and monthly basis.
12 Once a youth contacts a crisis shelter or a drop-in
13 center, they're supposed to help find that youth a
14 bed, and if DYCD-funded programs are unable to find a
15 bed, then they're basically supposed to contact DYCD
16 to help so we have a process in place for any
17 placements and referrals that need to happen with our
18 respective contracting programs.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Do any non-
20 DYCD referrals such as DOE, do those take place as
21 well?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Basically,
23 referrals do not come through our office. They do go
24 directly to the providers, but, however, if one
25 should come to us, then it's basically been elevated

2 to an emergency level, and we make sure that that
3 young person is placed once we receive it. Whether
4 it's from DOE, ACS, OCFS, or some other stakeholder,
5 we make sure that that young person is placed.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does DYCD track bed
7 vacancies in the system based on gender or
8 specialized population like LGBTQI+, kosher,
9 mother/child? If not, why?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We do.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You do?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And could you talk a
14 little bit about what that looks like, like how do
15 you track it?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: You want to
17 speak on the tracking system, Tracey?

18 DIRECTOR THORNE: Yeah. Hi. I can address
19 that question. OCFS certifies our beds based on the
20 different populations that we serve, and so our
21 designations are gender nonconforming, female
22 identifying, male identifying, and parent/child beds
23 so those are the populations that we track the bed
24 vacancies by, based on the type of bed slots that are
25 available.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Those are the
3 categories that you guys track and so culture and
4 things like that isn't taken into place though?

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Basically,
6 what happens is when a young person comes in, they
7 have to trust the setting that they're in so when
8 they come into a site, they're not going to
9 automatically tell a person that they have been
10 commercially sexually exploited or things about them.
11 What we first do in terms of any referral or
12 expectation is that it's based on what they identify
13 so do you identify as a male or do you identify as a
14 female. Once you're in the facility and you go
15 through the proper case management with the staff at
16 the provider site, then that's when more of the
17 information comes out where you share that you may
18 have been commercially sexually exploited then the
19 staff does the necessary case management around that
20 or you may come out and identify and then the staff
21 provides the necessary services around that. Once you
22 put that into the system, there's questions that the
23 providers ask at the sites to get more of that
24 information so through that case management is how
25 staff identifies with the young person in their care.

2 In the initial intake, it's about male, female until
3 that case management intake session is done.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Interesting. Okay.

5 The next question I have is DYCD's definition of
6 vacant beds, what is DYCD's definition of vacant
7 beds? For instance, if a bed is vacant on Monday
8 night but a youth is scheduled to move in on Tuesday
9 morning, is this bed classified and counted as
10 vacant? Please explain in detail.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Great
12 question. A bed is vacant until a young person is
13 intake into that bed so based on the scenario that
14 you just mentioned, if, for example, you have a young
15 person that is expected to come to the bed but I call
16 you and say I have a person who is in need of a bed
17 at this moment, the expectation is that that young
18 person who needs the bed at that moment would get the
19 bed and then when the young person who should come
20 later on, because we don't know if that young person
21 is going to come, that young person may not come or
22 may decide to come the next so we have to make sure
23 we place those young people who are in need of the
24 bed at the moment first and then basically when the
25 other young person comes then we look to find a

2 placement for that young person, whether it's at that
3 same site hopefully, if they have a vacant bed, or,
4 if not, then we look for another vacant bed within
5 the system.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So if a young
7 person, let's say, checks out on a Monday like I even
8 said and someone is told that they can have that bed
9 it's still considered vacant until the person is
10 checked into the site.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Correct,
12 because when we look at it from our end in terms of
13 the database that we have, they can't put that young
14 person in that particular bed until that young person
15 comes on-site so we see it as vacant until a name is
16 actually assigned to that vacant bed.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. When DYCD
18 generates Shelter Access Report, does it cross-
19 reference youth that are trying to get a bed against
20 all of the vacant beds or only against the vacant
21 beds for which the youth are eligible for? For
22 instance, would a single cisgender male be cross-
23 referenced against all the vacant beds in the system
24 including those meant for LGBTQ youth and the
25 mother/child ones or only against those that would be

2 available to him or a single cisgender male? Please
3 explain in detail.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We cross-
5 reference against all vacant beds. Referrals are made
6 based on how the young person identifies. If it's an
7 emergency placement needed, we looked to place the
8 young person a guarantee that they're housed. If, for
9 example, we see that a male should come and we looked
10 at there's no male beds. We will work with a provider
11 who has a single bed, a single room bed versus the
12 multiple room bed, to place that young male until we
13 can find a vacant male bed within the system for that
14 young person, but the goal is never to turn that
15 person away just because there's no gender-
16 identifiable bed.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What does
18 collaboration look like between DYCD and DHS? Please
19 give details on frequency of meetings, collaboration
20 around outreaches and resources.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We work
22 with our sister agency more now than we've ever
23 worked with them before. We are in a lot of meetings,
24 especially around the housing now that we have the
25 Emergency Housing Vouchers and the City-FHEPS so we

2 constantly have meetings with their team to make sure
3 that we are adhering to the specifics of any services
4 that are coming from them for our young people as
5 well as in terms of how we're going to grow whatever
6 we have around policy, especially around the
7 streamline and things of that nature. I would say we
8 meet monthly with our peers. Sometimes, with the
9 housing vouchers, it's what, weekly now, right,
10 because of the fact that we have a workgroup around
11 the emergency housing vouchers and utilization of
12 those vouchers by the deadline so we're constantly in
13 meetings and on the phone as well as using email to
14 communicate with our sister agency.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you have shared
16 goals and metrics?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: From the
18 workgroup, there are goals, but they're broken down
19 by agency because, as you know, each agency has a
20 different allotment of housing vouchers. For us, it's
21 600. We basically work with our sister agencies in
22 terms of understanding prior to the voucher,
23 especially around the City-FHEPS, we work with them
24 in terms of the flow and how the shopping letters
25 would be distributed and how our young people would

2 get them since we don't actually own the shopping
3 letters in-house. They come from DHS.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You said shopping
5 letters?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes,
7 shopping letters for City-FHEPS. That's what the
8 young person would get in order, similar to a housing
9 voucher. Basically, we do create systems and flow in
10 order to make the process easier for the young people
11 as well as our providers because this is a first for
12 us with respect to housing vouchers for our young
13 people. This is something that our providers are
14 learning and managing and getting used to doing on a
15 more consistent basis so we definitely have
16 conversations to make sure that that is a easy
17 process, plus Tracey holds a weekly, daily, weekly or
18 daily? Probably a daily meeting with the providers in
19 order to iron out the kinks, talk about the process,
20 and move forward.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know you said that
22 DYCD gets 600 vouchers. Do you know how much DHS has?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Not
24 offhand, but I know that they've definitely got the

2 lion's share of it, but I don't have the exact
3 number.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you know what
5 percentage the 600 is of the overall vouchers?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Initially
7 when they were trying to distinguish the vouchers, we
8 brought this issue to our providers, and, from that
9 discussion, it came out that we wanted 10 percent of
10 the vouchers, and, at the time, 10 percent issued for
11 us was 600 and that's how we came up with the 600
12 number.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So you're getting
14 about 10 percent of the vouchers?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I think
16 it's 10 percent, I would have to tell you where that
17 10 percent comes from because in the city I think
18 it's 7,888 total vouchers, right, but it's
19 distributed differently to many of the city agencies,
20 but we identified that we needed 10 percent of it,
21 and I think there was an agreement that we got
22 between 8 and 10 so I'd have to confirm.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes. I would love
24 for you to be able to get (INAUDIBLE) after the
25 hearing. I think that that's important. The next

2 question I have, are the youth in the DYCD drop-in
3 centers allowed to be referred for placement in DHS
4 systems using the streamlined process that would
5 enable them to bypass DHS intact and assessment
6 facilities? If not, why not? Please explain in
7 detail.

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes, they
9 are.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Can you explain in
11 detail. What does that look like..

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Basically,
13 it's the same process as the residential where they
14 fill out the form, and the form is then forwarded to
15 DHS for process so that they can be intaked into one
16 of the DHS youth shelters or mental health shelters
17 based on if the young person has a serious mental
18 health issue. One of the things that needed to be
19 confirmed as well as assured with our providers is
20 that if a young person did have a mental health issue
21 that their application went with their
22 biopsychosocial because DHS would rather place them
23 in a mental health facility versus placing them in
24 one of the youth shelters where they may not have the
25 adequate care for their mental health issue.

2 Basically what happens is they fill out the
3 application, the form, the form is then submitted to
4 DHS then DHS works with Tracey in order to make sure
5 that that young person is placed, and, once they're
6 placed, then the case is closed.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That seems like a
8 lot of steps. I'd just like to point that out.
9 Especially when young people, that's how you lose
10 people. It seems like a lot of steps and a lot of
11 hands that young people have to go through.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Just to
13 touch on that. With respect to the young person, most
14 of the work is being done by the case manager so it's
15 almost like filling out the housing information..

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, no, no. I
17 understand (INAUDIBLE) case manager in that process,
18 but that still takes time, which in that process can
19 lose young people because young people need things
20 done quickly because of instant gratification and all
21 those things and so that just, I understand how you
22 can lose a young person in that process.

23 DIRECTOR THORNE: I can add a little bit
24 about the timeframe and also the process. We have the
25 application process so that they don't have to go to

2 the assessment shelter so it is time spent, but it's
3 also time that they can stay in a DYCD residential
4 program instead of going to the assessment shelter so
5 it's worth it. It takes anywhere from a few days to 2
6 weeks to get a placement, and there's constant
7 contact between DYCD, DHS, and the provider serving
8 the young person during that time.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I understand that.
10 It's just a lot of touch points for a young person
11 and also with the transitioning out from one place to
12 another is also very sensitive, right, and so that
13 just seems like a lot. I'm just pointing out what I'm
14 seeing.

15 How many youth utilize the streamlined
16 process in 2020 and 2021 respectively?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: In 2020,
18 81. In 2021, 48.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why do you think
20 there was a decline?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The decline
22 was due to the pandemic.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How long does it
24 usually take for placement for youth to be permanent
25 housing?

2 DIRECTOR THORNE: I'm so glad you're
3 asking about permanent housing.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely, because
5 I just don't understand why we're referring young
6 people from one shelter to the next. That's probably
7 my biggest concern.

8 DIRECTOR THORNE: I hear you on that.
9 Randy mentioned that this is new for us. Last August,
10 like we had no permanent housing in July. All of a
11 sudden we have City-FHEPS and EHV and so the
12 providers have been doing such a great job with this
13 emergency voucher program, learning the Section 8
14 process, the application process, making sure
15 everyone has their documents, and so the application
16 part of the process has been taking anywhere from 3
17 weeks to a month and then there's always outliers
18 that could be longer or shorter, and we work closely
19 with NYCHA to make sure that any applications that
20 are stalled are pushed forward and re-enter the
21 stream of review so that we're able to get vouchers
22 issued as quickly as possible. Once the vouchers are
23 issued, the young people are taking about 2 to 3
24 months to find an apartment and then get linked to an
25 apartment. After they are linked to an apartment,

2 then the landlord and NYCHA work together to do the
3 contractual agreements, housing inspections, and that
4 kind of thing, and that takes about another month.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are we at, 5
6 months?

7 DIRECTOR THORNE: Yeah. Right, so we have
8 about 66 young people with the rental process
9 complete, and we have another 64 who are in the
10 pipeline, they're linked to an apartment and they're
11 going through that.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's 66 that's
13 currently in the pipeline?

14 DIRECTOR THORNE: There are 66 are rent
15 complete, in apartment. Then 64 are linked, which
16 means that their voucher has been accepted but they
17 are going through that process where they're getting
18 contracts and documents together on the landlord's
19 side.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: With those 66, what
21 does the aftercare look like?

22 DIRECTOR THORNE: Another great kind of
23 question. The aftercare is available to the young
24 people, it could be anywhere from a phone call, how
25 are you doing, it could be a home visit to make sure

2 that they're doing okay, it could be a web visit to
3 check in. There's check-in at 15 days, 30 days, 60
4 days, and 90 days just generally to make sure people
5 are okay. Sometimes young people go into their
6 apartments and they don't want to hear from the
7 provider, but the provider is going to follow up a
8 little bit with them.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. Should
10 definitely follow up.

11 DIRECTOR THORNE: Absolutely. Yeah, yeah.
12 That part's happening.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are the
14 barriers to rapidly getting permanent housing for
15 youth?

16 DIRECTOR THORNE: The first one, the
17 housing market is really tight right now, and it's
18 really tight for 1-bedrooms and studios, and so that
19 is our biggest challenge, just finding housing stock
20 for the young folks and then also the Emergency
21 Housing Voucher program allows us to go to different
22 neighborhoods and pay higher rents than where we
23 would normally be able to go and that means that
24 there's some education and discussion with those
25 landlords about Section 8, why it's a good idea, why

2 it's a benefit to have someone with government-backed
3 guaranteed rent moving into your apartment so there's
4 still some learning curves going on, but the
5 taskforce that Randy was talking about, the housing
6 taskforce, is a citywide taskforce that is looking at
7 all the different ways to leverage housing resources,
8 and so I think they have a campaign, I Vouch For
9 Vouchers, to try and get landlords to be interested.
10 I think there was one in the Bronx a couple weeks
11 ago. Also, we are looking at the housing stock,
12 different areas of housing stock, Housing Connect,
13 different ways that we can allow young people to get
14 access to these apartments so we're exploring these
15 different ways as a city collaboratively.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know before I
17 talked a little bit about 6 months being a long time.
18 What do you think is needed to accelerate the
19 permanent housing process?

20 DIRECTOR THORNE: Besides more apartments.
21 I think that the pieces are in place. There's a lot
22 of really excellent communication happening that I
23 don't think was ever happening in the past. Actually,
24 I wouldn't be able to say that since I wasn't part of
25 it. We are able to reach out to NYCHA and get

2 information about inspections, landlord situations.
3 We have a lot of access and insight into that part of
4 the process. We have a citywide salesforce tracker
5 that everyone uses so that we all speak kind of the
6 same language in terms of what phase the rental is
7 in, where are they with the housing contract, all
8 these different things and so the communication is
9 there. I think that it's really just working hard,
10 finding apartments, and kind of exploring new avenues
11 like the higher priced neighborhoods where we can
12 offer more rent to the young people.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many shelter
14 beds are there specifically designated for LGBTQI+
15 youth? If none, why not? Do you plan and have a
16 timeline to increase those numbers?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: As you
18 know, currently we have 813 residential beds, 753 for
19 16 to 20 year olds and 60 for 21 to 24 year olds, and
20 all of these beds can be utilized by the LGBTQIA+
21 population.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So you don't have
23 any designated specifically for that population?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We don't
25 use the word designated. We use the word specialized

2 where certain providers have a specialty in working
3 with the LGBTQI+ population such as the Ali Forney
4 Center and so on so basically we don't designate a
5 bed because we can say anyone can go into any bed at
6 any particular time, but we say that a particular
7 time, but we say that a particular provider has a
8 specialty in working with that population. For
9 example, with the commercially sexually exploited, we
10 know that we have GEMS who has that specialty.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If an LGBTQIA+ youth
12 declined a non-specific LGBTQIA+ bed in fear of
13 harassment or poor treatment, what is in place to
14 accommodate them with more appropriate placements? If
15 nothing, do you have a plan or timeline to address
16 this gap?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thanks.
18 With respect to any concern that comes in or
19 harassment, we definitely want to hear about those
20 particular cases. We have not heard about it, but we
21 do have the 311 as well as our DYCD Community Connect
22 hotline that allows for any of those concerns to come
23 in. If a particular youth should call and say that
24 they have been harassed, we then make sure that that
25 provider does a safety transfer of that particular

2 young person to a safe place so that they are out of
3 harm's way and there's no issues that could arise
4 while they're in housing, residential and/or at the
5 drop-in centers. Basically, we make sure that the
6 providers work on any of those issues, doing incident
7 reports that they then send to us if they are of an
8 emergency nature.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you collect data
10 on LGBTQIA+ youth? If not, do you have a plan or
11 timeline to collect such data?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes, we do
13 collect that data, and sexual orientation/gender
14 identity data is collected at intake.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's the only data
16 that you collect? Okay. If youth are in fact now
17 being turned away due to sufficient bed capacity, why
18 won't DYCD allow programs with contracts for 16 to 21
19 year olds to serve older, 21 to 24 year older youth,
20 if there are vacant beds in such programs as
21 requested by providers and advocates?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Great
23 question. DYCD has taken the stance that we do not
24 want to take one resource away from another group so
25 we feel that youth ages 21 to 24 should have their

2 own resource, own set of beds versus taking away beds
3 from a group that we have not identified as not
4 needing the service. We tend to make sure, even
5 though we can serve that population, plus they have
6 different needs. A 24-year-old may have a different
7 need from a 16-year-old, a 17-year-old, and sometimes
8 you may not want to align those needs because they
9 may impact the road to independence or service
10 delivery so we want to make sure that any new need is
11 analyzed, which we're currently doing, to make sure
12 that if that's what is needed then we'll make sure we
13 communicate that out.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is DYCD advocating
15 for more funding to bring 21 to 24-year-old beds
16 online since there's only 60 beds?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We're
18 currently doing an analysis and evaluation of
19 contractor services, and, from that analysis, we tend
20 to always stay in contact with our partners at OMB in
21 terms of any new needs and new resources that are
22 available, but, in lieu of those new services coming
23 online, we definitely use the streamlined process
24 that we have with our sister agency, DHS, and we also
25 make sure that they're connected to our drop-in

2 centers so that they can receive the services there
3 since the age limit for the drop-ins are 14 to 24.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What efforts, if
5 any, have been made to increase public awareness of
6 youth homelessness as well as services and resources
7 available to this population?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: That's a
9 good question. We're actually working on a lot of
10 things with respect to that now due to the fact that
11 there's been so many new services added to
12 programming. One of the things that we're currently
13 doing is updating our DYCD RHY website to make sure
14 that it's more user friendly and it actually shares
15 with those who are interested in services what
16 services are available, where they can go to get
17 those services, and who they can contact as well as
18 ask any questions of the particular services that are
19 available so we're moving more to accessing and using
20 our social media, whether it's Instagram, whether
21 it's Facebook or Twitter, we're creating more
22 promotional materials that we can display inside our
23 facilities as well as looking at how we can get it
24 out in the open, using the kiosks that they may have
25 in the communities so that folks will have that. One

2 thing that we do yearly is presentations with
3 community partners as well as with our sister
4 agencies to make sure that they're aware of our
5 service because a lot of them don't even know that
6 DYCD has a residential program. A lot of people know
7 about our Summer Youth Program, they know about our
8 Cornerstones, but not many know that RHY exists so we
9 definitely make sure that we do our presentations,
10 share our information, and deputize those folks to
11 make sure that they pass that information out there.
12 Also, Youth Count is a time for a real big social
13 media push that we do.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I have a lot of
15 questions on Youth Count. Don't worry. They're
16 coming.

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I know.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Also, I know you
19 mentioned some social media, and I, myself, am a
20 little older, and all the ones that you said are the
21 ones that I'm on which means that the young people
22 are not so we should be thinking about what are the
23 young people using if those are the people we're
24 trying to get the information to because I think that
25 is a huge disconnect.

2 I just have one more question and then
3 I'm going to share some time with my Colleagues so
4 they can ask questions and then I'll come back to my
5 questions. As a matter of fact, I'll leave it there,
6 and I'll send it over to Emi.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you,
8 Chair. We'll now turn over to other Council Members
9 for questioning before we turn it back to the Chair.
10 I believe Council Member Riley, did you have any
11 questions for the administration?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Chair
13 Stevens. Prior to me becoming a Member and working in
14 government, I used to work for New York Foundling,
15 and I was the Skills Coach there. I just want to talk
16 about residential services that you have, and if you
17 could just please elaborate on the TIL support
18 program for me, how do youth engage in this program?
19 I know a lot of the times when I was working with
20 youth, they would give me 6 months with the youth,
21 they would give me (INAUDIBLE) about the transition
22 out of high school, they're not sure if they want to
23 go into college, they want to go into the work field,
24 but they need housing. That used to be an issue to

2 find housing for the youth so can you just elaborate
3 on the program for me?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you
5 for that question. I'm going to speak both on our
6 crisis services and our transition independent living
7 because they both align. They're the same except for
8 the length of stay. With respect to our residential
9 programming, a young person can go directly to a
10 crisis services program and be intake, but they can't
11 do that for a TIL, a transitional independent living.
12 The reason being is that there needs to be some
13 legwork done by the provider to identify that the
14 young person is actually homeless for the runaway and
15 homeless youth, 16 and 17, and for 18 year olds you
16 need that referral to make sure that they can be
17 reunified first before going into a long-term.

18 For our crisis services, they can stay
19 for 60, up to 120 days, and for our TILs they can
20 stay for 2 years.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Sorry to cut you
22 off. I know you said they have to identify if that
23 person is homeless. How would they identify if a
24 person is homeless?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Correct.
3 For a runaway, they would need to prove that that
4 young person cannot go back home so they would have
5 to work with ACS to make sure that there's no open
6 case and that the parents are actually...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: So not if they go
8 AWOL in the house? Is that what that would be
9 considered?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: If they go
11 AWOL, they can stay at our crisis services. However,
12 the state requires that the provider does the legwork
13 for them to be referred to a longer stay program such
14 as a TIL.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Now a lot of the
16 case managers usually have a thousand cases so having
17 them do the legwork, sometimes the youth get lost in
18 the services and in the overflow of cases. Are there
19 any other measures that we could do to kind of
20 expedite this in making sure that they're not getting
21 lost?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Our
23 facilities are intimate facilities so the most,
24 they're 10 bed and 20 bed facilities, so they're not
25 as big as you may think with the...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay.

3 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Sister
4 agencies so they don't get actually lost because of
5 the fact that they're in-house so they come back to
6 this place and the caseworkers see them and can work
7 with them on a regular basis through that
8 relationship building that they've done.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay. I'm going to
10 move over to drop-in centers real quick. There are 8
11 drop-in centers in New York City?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: There are
13 8, 5 that are 24 hours, 7 days a week.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay. How many are
15 in the Bronx?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The Bronx,
17 1.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Just one.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Mmhmm, and
20 it's a 24-hour drop-in center.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Where is that
22 located?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: That's
24 located on 149th Street and 3rd Avenue, and it's
25 operated by Cardinal McCloskey Services.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Can you give a
3 breakdown for the other boroughs, please?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Say it
5 again, please.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Can you give a
7 breakdown for the other boroughs?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Sure. The
9 Bronx has 1, Cardinal McCloskey is a 24-hour drop-in
10 center. Staten Island has 1, it's a 24-hour drop-in
11 center run by Project Hospitality. Queens has 2
12 operated by Sheltering Arms, 1 is a daytime drop-in
13 center and 1 is a 24-hour drop-in center. Brooklyn
14 has 1, and it's operated by SCO Family of Services,
15 and it's a 24-hour drop-in center. Manhattan has 3,
16 they have 2 daytime drop-in centers, 1 run by The
17 Door, 1 run by Safe Horizons, and then they have a
18 24-hour drop-in center run by Ali Forney Center.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Can you describe the
21 difference between the day and the 24-hour drop-in
22 centers?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Sure. The
24 daytime closes at a certain time, where they can
25 identify, so it may close at 6, 7, or 8 p.m. where a

2 24-hour drop-in center does not close. They operate
3 throughout the night.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: It's not different
5 services they provide?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: It's not
7 different services. It's just based on timing. One is
8 throughout the night, and one closes at 6, 7, 8
9 o'clock.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So the young person
11 would have to be in the facility by that time for
12 that drop-in center?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The drop-in
14 centers are not residential facilities. They're just
15 locations where young people can come and receive
16 services on 5 key indicators, but there's more, and
17 the 5 indicators are housing, employment, education,
18 mental health, and basic life skills which can
19 immigration or legal services and so on, but, with
20 respect to the drop-ins, for the 24 hours, there is
21 no shutting of the door. If a young person comes up
22 to a 24-hour, they're supposed to come in and receive
23 care throughout the day and night. For the daytime,
24 they close at a certain time so the young person
25 would have to get into the facility before it closes

2 to receive services, and, if for some reason it
3 closes and they still need assistance, then they can
4 go to one of our 24-hour drop-in centers.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: My last question is
6 just wanted to go on the street outreach. I know you
7 talked about social media. I did see something
8 interesting that you actually go where homeless or
9 runaway youth congregate. How do you indicate where
10 they usually congregate?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We actually
12 leave that to the expertise of our contractor because
13 they know better. They're on the ground on a daily
14 basis (INAUDIBLE) experience so they know the areas
15 where youth congregate.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Thank
17 you, Chair.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you,
19 Council Member Riley. I would also like to
20 acknowledge Council Member Nantasha Williams who is
21 available remotely.

22 We will also have questions next from
23 Council Member Osse, Council Member Richardson
24 Jordan, and then followed by Council Member Williams.
25 Council Member Osse.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you. Thank
3 you, Chair and Assistant Commissioner.

4 The first question that I have is what is
5 DYCD doing to ensure that youth are able to have
6 financial stability and job training/professional
7 development as they age out of the system? I think a
8 question that wanted me to ask this was this emphasis
9 on youth being pushed from shelter to shelter, and I
10 think we want to see more of an emphasis on permanent
11 housing but obviously something that would yield
12 outcomes of permanent housing is financial stability,
13 job training, things of that nature so I just wanted
14 to ask what DYCD is doing in that department?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you
16 very much for that question. As mentioned before, one
17 of our key indicators is around employment so the
18 goal is for that provider to work with the young
19 person, create an individualized service plan around
20 that particular issue if they identify that as their
21 key issue where they help them in terms of any
22 trainings that they may need, any connections that
23 they may need, and a lot of our providers, some of
24 them even have workforce programming embedded in
25 their services because of the fact that they're large

2 organizations. One of the great things that we're
3 doing now with the Homeless Demonstration Project is
4 around financial literacy and creation of services
5 embedded into our drop-in centers where we will be
6 working with the Department of Consumer and Worker
7 Protection to bring staff to our drop-ins who will
8 focus solely on that particular initiative and moving
9 folks along in that process. One of the great things
10 that we have right now is that 1,184 young people who
11 identified as being runaway and homeless youth have
12 received jobs via our summer youth employment
13 program.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you. Does DYCD
15 have stats on how many youth are able to gain
16 employment post signing out?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Our
18 providers are responsible for putting information
19 into our database system on the individualized
20 service plan that they have created with the young
21 person so if employment was identified as a key
22 initiative then we would be able to pull that
23 information out. It probably be more (INAUDIBLE) of
24 how many young people may have part-time, full-time

2 jobs, but the more critical key information would be
3 embedded in their case management file.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Another question I
5 have is what supports are being given to youth who
6 use drugs and other substances, especially when it
7 comes to harm reduction efforts? Is it usually in a
8 cursorial approach or is it more addiction services
9 that they're referred to?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Another key
11 thing, as I said before, indicator was around mental
12 health. That is something that the providers also do
13 in terms of working with the young person. If it's
14 something that cannot be addressed on-site with the
15 staff that are hired, then they make the necessary
16 referrals. One of the things that our contract
17 requires is that our providers have linkages with the
18 various health clinics, hospitals, and so on in their
19 neighborhoods so that if a person should come in with
20 a substance abuse issue then they can make that
21 necessary referral. Through the investment that we
22 get from the Office of Community and Mental Health,
23 those are some of the metrics that are focused on by
24 our providers, especially around how many have been

2 hospitalized during a particular month and/or fiscal
3 year so those are services that are provided on-site.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Does DYCD ever
5 report these individuals that consume substances to
6 the NYPD?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: You're
8 speaking specifically about RHY or DYCD in total?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: DYCD in total.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I would
11 have to get back to you because I believe that is,
12 because we do have a partnership with the NYPD in
13 regards to how we collaborate on various initiatives
14 and the services and the information that's shared so
15 I would need to get back to you on any specifics.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: I guess one last
17 followup question. What are some other instances, and
18 you may not know all of them off the top of your
19 head, in which homeless or runaway youth are reported
20 to the NYPD while being in a shelter system?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Being
22 reported to NYPD? That is not a requirement that they
23 need to report to the NYPD for any particular young
24 person unless it's something major, if the police
25 come on-site then the providers require a subpoena

2 before they can give out any information or allow the
3 person to come into the shelter so I don't think any
4 information is willingly given out unless it's a real
5 emergency situation where all protocols are in place.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you.

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: You're
8 welcome.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you.
10 Council Member Richardson Jordan.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Hi.
12 Thank you for the testimony. I had a couple of
13 questions. The first is that I really wanted to ask
14 about the link between foster care and runaways, and
15 I don't know if that's something that's being
16 tracked, but is there any data on youth running away
17 from foster care? If so, what are some of those
18 numbers if you have them?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: No youth
20 should leave foster care to come to a shelter. That's
21 the number one goal. If a young person comes to our
22 facility and we ask that question, if they have a
23 foster care history, then it's upon the young person
24 to share that. Some may not share that information
25 because they may be of age. However, if they're

2 underage, 16 and 17, the provider will then contact,
3 like I said, ACS to see if there's an open case on
4 that particular person, and, if there's an open case,
5 then ACS will guide the next steps in terms of
6 whether returning that young person or closing the
7 young person out to where they can stay within the
8 contractor system that we have. I think it depends on
9 the age as well as it depends on how forthcoming the
10 young person is with sharing that history.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Do you
12 have any stats on how often youth are returned where
13 that does come up and youth are sent back?

14 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: To be
15 honest with you, the number of young people who are
16 16 to 17 within our system is about 6 percent of the
17 population so 93 are 18 and older, and, of that 6
18 percent, it changes, it fluctuates, but of that 6
19 percent we haven't had many. I don't recall one that
20 was returned to be honest with you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. I
22 hear you. You're saying it's like older youth but
23 then there's only the 60 beds for ages 21 to 24 so
24 the bulk of youth is 18 to 21.

25 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. I
3 don't know if this is something centralized, but I
4 was wondering if you could tell me about the training
5 that providers give to counselors, what type of
6 training and skillset, what type of metrics are used
7 to evaluate the staff that are working with runaway
8 youth?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Okay. Thank
10 you for that question. One of the key requirements
11 for the state is that each staff person is required
12 to do 40 hours of training on many different topics,
13 so topics on youth homelessness, topics on mental
14 health, topics on commercially sexually exploited
15 youth so many different things, LGBTQ+ training so
16 that is a requirement. One of the things that we do
17 at DYCD is regular site visits, and we do
18 administrative site visits. During those
19 administrative site visits, we review and evaluate
20 things such as training at the respective contracted
21 sites to make sure that the staff are close to that
22 40 hours or meeting that 40 hours depending on the
23 time that they started. Training is a key
24 requirement. We also have various technical
25 assistants that we work with internally such as

2 Vibrant Emotional Health, WPTI, we work with Ramapo
3 for Children who provide technical assistance to our
4 various sites when we identify that they're in need
5 of that particular training so they send staff to our
6 sites to actually provide TA, do trainings, and so on
7 and so on so training is very key to our work, and we
8 make sure that it's done.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: How
10 often do you have the administrative site visits?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We do the
12 administrative site visits quarterly.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. I
14 did have another question just around pregnant and
15 parenting youth. Do you have stats around that? Do
16 you have a sense of how many of our youth are...

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We actually
18 have mother/child sites so we can pull information
19 based on those respective sites and those beds
20 identified in the system.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay.
22 Thank you. Do you have father/child sites as well?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: No, but
24 that's one of the things that when we put out our
25

2 RFPs we've encouraged but no provider has ever
3 submitted for a father/child program.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Are those all
5 your questions, Council Member?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Yes,
7 thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you.
9 Before we return to the Chair for her questions, I'd
10 just like to take a moment for any of the Council
11 Members who are here remotely to use the raise hand
12 function on Zoom if you have any questions for the
13 administration.

14 All right. Seeing no raised hands, we'll
15 now turn to the Chair for her questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the current
17 level of staffing and funding dedicated to the Youth
18 Count and what specific budget dedications to the
19 Youth Count are present?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The Runaway
21 and Homeless Youth team at DYCD is made up of 14
22 staff people that dedicate time to the Youth Count.
23 Of this is 2 part-time Youth Count coordinators that
24 have been identified as mainstays within this
25 particular work. We also collaborate with many

2 internal DYCD staff from IT, legal, (INAUDIBLE), and
3 fiscal who lend their support to the Youth Count.
4 There is no specific budget as the Youth Count has
5 evolved over the years so the costs have changed and
6 grown so there's no specific budget to it, but we do
7 provide micro-purchases to our contracted drop-in
8 centers in order to provide services to the young
9 people.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just want to make
11 sure I'm hearing this correctly. There's 2 part-time
12 people and no budget for the Youth Count?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I didn't
14 say there was no budget. I said there's no dedicated,
15 no dedicated budget. I can't say we have 155...

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If it's not
17 dedicated, then there's no budget.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We work
19 with what is identified. We have stakeholder meetings
20 where we have evolved from the first year that we did
21 the Youth Count. We did it out of 7 locations. Now,
22 we're doing the Youth Count of maybe close to 40, 50
23 locations.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Which means that you
25 should have a budget that is specifying that and you

2 should have full-time people working on this because
3 2 part-time people to count all the young people
4 across the city, I understand now why it's so under-
5 represented and under-counted.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I just
7 wanted to correct something. Two people do not do it
8 by themselves.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know, but you said
10 you had 2 part-time people dedicated to the Youth
11 Count.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We have 2
13 part-time people who are Youth Count coordinators.
14 They have that title, which are included in the 14
15 that I was...

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I understand. I
17 know how it is. I understand. I worked in Youth
18 Services forever. You do everything. You are the
19 janitor, you are the director, you are the teacher,
20 you're all the things so I understand, but what I'm
21 saying is that means we should be advocating for more
22 because that is not adequate.

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Correct.
24 That's one of the things that we do every year from
25 the evolution that we've had from the first Youth

2 Count where we've communicated this need to our
3 Colleagues at OMB and funding was made available to
4 make sure that the Youth Count was done.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Since we're talking
6 about staffing, do you think that you guys need
7 additional staff for the Youth Count, because I do. I
8 don't know if that's what you guys are thinking.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Actually,
10 like I said, we've evolved over the years, and we've
11 been able to manage and address all the needs of the
12 particular Youth Count from stakeholder meetings and
13 so on. Would I love additional staff? Who's going to
14 turn down additional staff? Never would I turn down
15 additional staff.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Exactly, so we need
17 more staff.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I think
19 that what we have now definitely meets the needs of
20 the Youth Count as it is today.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, I'm advocating
22 for more. I don't like the 2 part-time. I think there
23 should at least be a minimum of 2 full-time and a
24 budget.

2 Is there a reason why a supplement New
3 York City Youth Count could not be conducted during a
4 warmer season to access youth and using a barrier
5 other than HUD's definition of homelessness in order
6 to improve our understanding and size of the
7 population and the scope of the need? For example, we
8 have a supplement to the federal poverty line, New
9 York specific poverty measures, and have reports of
10 poverty in the city published using it which allows
11 us to have a more accurate picture. Why can't we do
12 the same with the counting of unsheltered homeless
13 youth?

14 DIRECTOR THORNE: Thanks for that
15 question. Randy mentioned the Youth Homelessness
16 Demonstration Project, it's called Opportunity Starts
17 at Home, and we also have feedback sessions for Youth
18 Count. We just had one in May, and, during both of
19 those sessions, all of the planning and discussion
20 from the community and from young people, they raised
21 that issue about having a warm weather Youth Count,
22 and there seems to be a lot of energy and support
23 around that right now and so it's definitely
24 something that would be really good also to use to
25 promote the services that the providers offer, make

2 sure everyone knows about the drop-ins, make sure
3 everyone knows about the crisis centers. It's
4 definitely something that's gaining support for sure.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, it's
6 definitely gaining support which is why I'm
7 advocating for more staff and money.

8 What youth homeless specific training is
9 provided to Youth Count staff and is it trauma-
10 informed training?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes. As
12 mentioned earlier in the question about training, we
13 definitely make sure that staff and providers all
14 have the necessary training to address these issues.
15 We work with the Tas as I mentioned before, Vibrant
16 Emotional Health, Ramapo for Children, CRE, WPTI to
17 make sure that any specific trainings are happening.
18 We also work with our Colleagues over at ACS on
19 commercially sexually exploited and human trafficking
20 training so that they are aware of those things and
21 can participate in those specific trainings.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But is there any
23 training specifically around the Youth Count?

24 DIRECTOR THORNE: In January, we have our
25 training for Youth Count surveying, and we go over

2 the survey. In part of that training, we talk about
3 how to talk to young people, make sure that they're
4 able to end the survey whenever they want to, they're
5 being asked questions in an appropriate manner, and
6 that they feel heard and without judgement. For the
7 2021, a member of the Youth Action Board gave a
8 training specifically on how to work with young
9 people and how to ask questions and make sure that
10 the survey's being done in a trauma-informed way.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So there's typically
12 like one or two trainings?

13 DIRECTOR THORNE: Yeah. There's the same
14 training held 2 times. That was last year. The year
15 before, we had one training.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

17 DIRECTOR THORNE: I also wanted to add
18 that most of the people who are doing the survey work
19 at the drop-in centers or other youth programs in the
20 community so they already have access to a lot of the
21 training that Randy was describing so they're youth
22 service people so they do have a fundamental
23 knowledge of the needs for the young people that
24 they're serving.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, no,
3 absolutely, but one of the things they're saying they
4 feel overstretched and they feel like young people
5 should be more a part of that process, and so the
6 young people need to be trained and that becomes a
7 lot for the providers who are also providing services
8 and probably the other 10 million things that they're
9 doing as well.

10 What is the planning implementation
11 timeline presently in place for Youth Count?

12 DIRECTOR THORNE: Generally, the
13 timeframe, we do a kickoff in October, and we keep
14 rolling through until the end of April where we have
15 our feedback session. This year started last year, we
16 had our feedback session in June I believe, and, from
17 that point forward, we took a lot of the
18 recommendations that were offered and integrated them
19 into the new survey and into the planning. For
20 example, increased social medial and increased street
21 outreach were 2 of the things that we really wanted
22 to incorporate from the feedback the previous year so
23 during our kickoff, which was November 29th, we
24 created committees and goals to make sure that
25 there's a social media goal timeline and a street

2 outreach commitment from the stakeholders. That
3 happened all during December. We started with our
4 social media marketing push. People were starting to
5 do, every other week, they would do some blast-outs.
6 We would give some language from our comms team and
7 some logos and promotional items, and then, as it got
8 closer, they would do weekly social media. Then on
9 January 21st and 24th, there was the training that I
10 mentioned before for the people who were doing
11 surveys and Youth Count. Youth Count was the last
12 week of January then we're doing our data collection
13 and review and creating the reports. In May, we had
14 our feedback session where people were able to take
15 an online survey and also respond to questions and
16 give feedback during the feedback session meeting.
17 This year, a lot of the things, we still are going to
18 promote the social media, we're still going to work
19 hard on the street outreach, especially outreach done
20 by young people, and we have a few other asks that
21 we're going to work on as well between now and the
22 next kickoff meeting in October. It's kind of a full-
23 year, continuous cycle.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do providers get
3 paid for the time spent doing the youth count, and is
4 this part of their current contracts?

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Youth Count
6 is not part of their current contract, but it's
7 something that we will be looking into for future
8 RFPs and contracts that we do. What we give out is a
9 micro-purchase to the drop-in centers so that they
10 can hire staff, they can provide incentives, they can
11 pay for food on the days of the Youth Count, and
12 those micro-purchases are for daytime, 2,500, and for
13 the 24-hours, 3,500.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I think we
15 should definitely make this part of the contract,
16 especially folks should not be required to do work
17 for free because it takes work to implement that.

18 What efforts have been being made to
19 meaningfully and consistently engage young people
20 with lived experience of homelessness in planning and
21 designing and implementation of the process of Youth
22 Count? How many youth have been engaged in this
23 process?

24 DIRECTOR THORNE: I started doing Youth
25 Count in 2019 was the first one that I was working

2 with, and we worked really closely with the Youth
3 Action Board. The Youth Action Board participated in
4 the planning meetings and gave feedback, gave
5 experience, a lot of good information and were part
6 of the, this is the most important question and I
7 have like...

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's okay. Take your
9 time.

10 DIRECTOR THORNE: This is the most near
11 and dear to my heart. The Youth Action Board was a
12 really big part of shaping the way that the Youth
13 Count was structured, especially for, I'm getting
14 there.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If you want to take
16 a minute, you can. It's okay.

17 DIRECTOR THORNE: For outreach. Do you
18 want to share the success with the outreach... For
19 example, one of the young people who ran the Youth
20 Action Board was committed to being part of the
21 outreach and went overnight in the van and counted
22 many, many people in the street-work outreach van,
23 and that was upheld as one of our best practices.
24 Unfortunately, we haven't been able to replicate it
25 because of COVID, but that's one example of the value

2 of the Youth Action Board has influenced Youth Count.
3 The Youth Action Board is always invited to every
4 meeting I described before, they attend. You
5 mentioned all the social media that you're familiar
6 with. They mentioned TikTok, and I was like I don't
7 know how to do TikTok.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't either.

9 DIRECTOR THORNE: But it definitely
10 highlights the fact that we need young people at the
11 fore, and so the Youth Action Board participated in
12 our feedback session, and we're working closely with
13 the YAB during the Opportunity Starts at Home, the
14 Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project. I'm hoping
15 that we will be able to continue our relationship. It
16 started out very strong, and I'm hoping that through
17 these collaborations we'll be able to continue our
18 relationship because there's a lot of value to be
19 added from their knowledge and expertise.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Are the young people
21 on the Youth Action Board, do they get paid or a
22 stipend or anything?

23 DIRECTOR THORNE: Their payment
24 arrangement is through the Coalition for Homeless
25 Youth, and then there's also opportunities in the

2 micro-purchases that Randy mentioned to pay youth
3 with lived experience to do outreach or to
4 participate in the Youth Count so that they are paid
5 for their efforts.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They get about like
7 25 for that, right?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: 2,500 for
9 the daytime and 3,500 for the 24-hour.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What efforts, if
11 any, have been made to incentivize for greater youth
12 participation, both Youth Count survey and
13 respondents?

14 DIRECTOR THORNE: We have the micro-
15 purchases. We have discussions about what type of
16 food cards are the best ones to use, but really what
17 we have, sometimes providers have chosen to create
18 special sweatshirts or sweatpants for Youth Count. In
19 the past, DYCD has created hats that say I Count and
20 that kind of thing, but basically that's what we've
21 been offering.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This just came into
23 my head. How do you guys leverage your other programs
24 to help to support some of this? DYCD has
25 Cornerstones, After-school (INAUDIBLE) how are you

2 leveraging those programs to actually help and
3 support this work as well?

4 DIRECTOR THORNE: We've made some inroads.
5 We have the older youth employment programs like Earn
6 and Learn and Trade and Earn and Cornerstone. They
7 have networks of providers who we ask to participate
8 in Youth Count and then we also have a Youth Council
9 at DYCD. In 2021, they participated, and they also
10 gave us feedback.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's the truth.

12 DIRECTOR THORNE: Yeah. They're also part
13 of the youth voice that we tap into and they also are
14 surveyed so they come, they get surveyed, and then
15 they offer us feedback on the survey process and ways
16 to improve it.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I bring this up
18 because one of the things I've said in multiple
19 hearings is just how I feel like we're not using the
20 resources that we have and even collecting data that
21 we should be, even when I think about SYEP, we should
22 be asking this question, are you a homeless youth, do
23 you need other services, and giving out this
24 information and using what we have but it just seems
25 like everything is so disconnected and even in the

2 hearing, Commissioner, you talked about how some
3 folks don't even know that DYCD has shelter programs
4 and so I think that it's a disservice and we really
5 should think about and brainstorm afterwards on how
6 are we making sure that everyone is aware of all of
7 the programs that are going on and how are we making
8 sure that we're using and leveraging all the
9 resources that we have because I think it's also a
10 missed opportunity when I think about some of the
11 programs. People are always looking for community
12 service activities and things like that that could
13 probably participate in the Youth Count but we're not
14 even thinking about that because you wouldn't even
15 know. I worked in youth development for 20 years, and
16 I heard about this but we were never involved because
17 it wasn't our sector or my agency didn't have
18 shelters so I would definitely make sure after this
19 we spend some time to brainstorm to think about how
20 do we close some of these gaps.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I just want
22 to add to that because there have been some strides.
23 I'm not going to say that there hasn't been. For
24 example, with the SYEP, when we first started, there
25 was only 500 slots or less for vulnerable youth or

2 youth who identified as being in a shelter and now I
3 think it's close to 5,000 or something like that...

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Which isn't enough.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Understood.

6 We hear you on that. (INAUDIBLE) talk about the
7 increase that has occurred.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You can. I'm going
9 to always refute you because there needs to be more.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Okay. I'm
11 not going to argue with you on that, but I'm just
12 talking about how we have evolved in regards to
13 working with our Colleagues and making sure that we
14 are being seen and with the presentations, going to
15 places that we know they may not know about us and
16 making sure that we get in the door and tell them
17 about our service. We are making some strides.
18 There's a lot more work that needs to be done, but,
19 while I'm here, that's definitely things that I will
20 be doing.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What efforts have
22 been made to access more areas where unsheltered
23 homeless youth tend to congregate as refuge from the
24 cold and winter weather, because I know especially
25 during Youth Count, it's January, right, and so even

2 when I met with some of the providers there were a
3 lot of stories like our kids are very savvy and so
4 they use hospitals or 24-hour stores or places to
5 keep warm, couch-surfing, and all those things,
6 that's how they start to engage in sexual trafficking
7 because they're looking for shelter. How are we
8 looking at all of those places during this count?

9 DIRECTOR THORNE: Do you mean in terms of
10 Youth Count or you mean in general?

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You can do both.

12 DIRECTOR THORNE: For Youth Count, we
13 definitely have probably 60 locations from the Youth
14 Action Board on where people can be found during the
15 colder months, and we also have a street outreach
16 team that's contracted through Street Works, Safe
17 Horizon, and they have the vans that go to the places
18 where young people are congregating outside and offer
19 products like safe sex products, safe substance use
20 products, and food, and clothing, and information
21 about where to get services and try and create that
22 rapport with the young people so that they'll come
23 and access our services. It's just such a big deal so
24 we keep mentioning the Youth Homelessness
25 Demonstration Program, street outreach was one of the

2 programs that was elevated by the young people as
3 being one of the top priorities and so that's one of
4 the programs that was requested from HUD to fund
5 separately to ensure that the work continues and that
6 we increase the efforts there.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What efforts have
8 been made to strengthen the Youth Count methodology?

9 DIRECTOR THORNE: The Youth Count
10 methodology, and Randy mentioned this before in his
11 testimony, we measure unsheltered young people by the
12 HUD definition which you've already cited which is
13 very narrow, and then we have the unstable youth and
14 that is most of the people that are in our program to
15 people who are in the shelters at DHS, and we have
16 the stable designation. The methodology, young people
17 are selecting where they stayed the night of the Hope
18 Count, the point-in-time count, and also where they
19 stayed in the past month and how many locations did
20 they stay in. They give us a number. They also give
21 us some examples of places that they stayed in so we
22 use all that information to figure out the frequency
23 of homelessness and where people stay. It turns out
24 that even the unsheltered and unstable young people
25 frequently switch, unsheltered young people can stay

2 in unstable places and vice versa over the course of
3 a month, and that information that I'm talking about
4 is in the Youth Count report that we sent to you.
5 That is, to me, like a really good way of determining
6 how young people are moving through the system and
7 it's very fluid. Part of the methodology is also to
8 make sure that we're asking the right questions,
9 we're reaching the right people so that's why we've
10 increased our stakeholder group to include almost 40
11 people in our stakeholder group and we get
12 information from probation, from Department of
13 Education, from DHS, other non-DYCD programs like HMI
14 also offer support for Youth Count, a tremendous
15 amount of support for Youth Count so when we're
16 asking followup questions and asking the stakeholders
17 to talk to us about how to improve the Youth Count,
18 most people agree that the questions that we ask and
19 the length of time for the survey is adequate. Most
20 of the things that people are interested in are the
21 summer hours and more money and things like that. We
22 haven't heard as a community, as like a Youth Count
23 community, we haven't heard about the key methodology
24 factors that have to be improved besides more
25 outreach, more partnerships, more places where we can

2 reach more people. COVID really, like I said, put a
3 big damper on a lot of our efforts to get outreach
4 done so I would say trying to reach as many people as
5 possible is our number 1 methodology improvement.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What mental health
7 services are provided specifically to HRY population,
8 and are mental health services included in the
9 contract? If so, please provide details on this
10 service. If not, please explain why?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you.
12 Yes, mental health services are embedded in our
13 runaway and homeless youth contracts, both at our
14 residential programs and at our drop-in centers. We
15 have received an investment from the Office of
16 Community Mental Health where we were able to create
17 newly formed mental wellness hubs out of drop-in
18 centers where providers were able to hire
19 credentialed staff, psychiatrists, LMSWs,
20 (INAUDIBLE), and so on to deal with those serious
21 mental illness that the young people face so we
22 definitely have an investment embedded in our drop-in
23 centers and our residential programs, and this is
24 some that the providers brought to our attention and
25 we worked with, at the time it was Thrive NYCD, and

2 they gave us our first investment and now under the
3 Office of Community Mental Health, the change, we've
4 got an additional investment for mental health
5 services so yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We were just joined
7 by Council Member Alexa Aviles. Thank you for joining
8 us.

9 I know before we said that the 21 to 24
10 year olds, we know that they have 60 beds. How many
11 beds do we have for mothers and children?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I couldn't
13 tell you exact numbers at this time, but I definitely
14 can get that back to you, but we have, I think,
15 definitely more than 20 beds but I can't give you an
16 exact number.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Are they part of the
18 60 for 21 to 24...

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: For the 21
20 to 24, there are no mother/child beds in the 21 to
21 24. The breakdown is 20 female, 15 LGBTQ+ beds, and
22 35 male beds.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What homeless youth
24 engagement approach would you recommend given this
25 population's heartiness to stay hidden as a survival

2 strategy? I'm sorry. I jumped back to the Youth
3 Count. What recommendations do you have for providers
4 around that?

5 DIRECTOR THORNE: Could you say that one
6 more time?

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What homeless youth
8 engagement approach would you recommend given that
9 this population tends to stay hidden as a survival
10 strategy?

11 DIRECTOR THORNE: There's 2 really
12 important things about Youth Count. The first one is
13 that we want people to know about our services. We
14 want people to come to the drop-in centers, come and
15 look at them, get a food card, get a sweatshirt, get
16 some candy, take a survey, look around, realize that
17 if I need help, yeah, I probably could come here,
18 this seems like a safe place, it seems like a fun
19 place, I could get my laundry done, I could get a hot
20 meal, I could rest in a cot so by opening up the
21 doors to the drop-in centers and allowing young
22 people to come in and see, especially young people
23 who haven't been there before, to come in and see
24 what's available as a first step is one of the ways
25 to reach the folks who are couch-surfing because I

2 think, they're couch-surfing but one night they just
3 may end up without a spot at that night and so
4 instead of riding on the train, come into the drop-
5 in, you were there before, it's friendly, it's a good
6 place where you can have some rest. That's, I guess,
7 one of the most important parts of Youth Count in
8 terms of advertising the services and making sure
9 that people are aware, no longer our best kept
10 secret, make sure everyone is aware of the services.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Just so I
12 can add to that. We don't want to focus solely on
13 Youth Count. We don't want to do it on a specific
14 period when we're trying to get folks to understand
15 or realize the services. We want to do it all year
16 around. This is our bread and butter in terms of
17 making sure that not only young people but agencies,
18 CBOs, advocates, everybody in the community knows
19 about the services so one of the great things is that
20 we never had 24-hours before and we got that and we
21 started to promote that. We're working internally to
22 get our messaging out there so folks know of this
23 particular service and can make sure that people are
24 connected. We're adding more enrichment to these
25 drop-in centers. Before, we never had mental health

2 services in there. Now we do. They're identified as
3 mental wellness hubs. We're going to have the
4 financial literacy. We have housing embedded with the
5 emergency housing vouchers and the City-FHEPS so these
6 are things that we're hoping when we do our big
7 outreach and our big pitch to the community of
8 services that are embedded we can make sure that they
9 know that it's almost like a one-stop shop where
10 people can come and receive these particular
11 services, and, if they don't have them on-site, they
12 can get a referral for that particular service. For
13 us, it's a lot about, I don't want to say rebranding
14 but getting the word out there to folks that we have
15 this. From having palm cards that can now be
16 electronic palm cards versus something that they can
17 fold and carry in their wallets or they can have it
18 on their smart phones so that they can access the
19 services as well as make sure that if they go to our
20 DYCD Discover, all the information is there, it's
21 easily accessible, and they know how to get our
22 services, but these are things that we're doing to
23 evolve the communication and the contact with the
24 communities.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I love those cards,
3 and I have a huge suggestion that at every
4 Cornerstone, every after-school program, every SYEP
5 site provider should have those cards and be making
6 them available to young people because I have never
7 seen that card in my life.

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The reason
9 why you probably haven't seen that...

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Because it's new?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: It's not
12 new, but what happens is, this was pre-pandemic when
13 we had these and then when the pandemic shut us all
14 down we had to grow with the virtual world...

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I was in youth
16 services for 20 years, and I've never seen that card
17 before. Never.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Really?

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I've worked in
20 multiple programs, in DYCD programs funded, all those
21 things, I have never ever seen that card so I think
22 that they should be in every program and it does not
23 make sense that providers are not cross-using this
24 information. I know providers who literally scramble
25 when it's time for a kid to be placed or they're

2 having difficulties or whatever because they just
3 don't have this information. That would be one of my
4 suggestions and hopes that I see when I'm on my world
5 tour this summer.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: If you can
7 also share with us any providers that do not have it,
8 I'll guarantee that they get it.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Or we could just
10 send an email out and ask who doesn't have it and
11 send it to them, tell them to pick it up.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We tend to
13 send ours out so I'll definitely connect. Not a
14 problem.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How much money is
16 allocated to the mental health hubs, and what mental
17 health services are offered at the residential
18 programs?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The mental
20 health services that are covered are basically, like
21 I said before, we have staff who are more seasoned in
22 the mental health field. They do youth engagement.
23 They focus on individual sessions. They provide
24 individual sessions. They do group sessions. They
25 also do case consultations, and they do outreach in

2 the community with respect to making sure that folks
3 know about the hubs being in the drop-in centers. The
4 budget right now for the hubs I don't have currently
5 with me, but I can get that information to you.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I do want to
7 create space just in case Council...

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you,
9 Chair Stevens. I believe we are now done with
10 questions and administration testimony so we'll be
11 moving on to public testimony. We'd appreciate the
12 administration staying around to listen if they can.

13 Members of the public, you will be called
14 up in panels. Each panelist will be given 3 minutes
15 to speak. Please begin your testimony once the
16 Sergeant announces that your time is starting.

17 Our first panel of public testimony in
18 order of speaking will be Marie Angela Macchu
19 (phonetic), Lyndon Chris Hernandez, and Lauren
20 Galloway. We will now call on Marie Angela Macchu to
21 begin.

22 MARIE ANGELA MACCHU: Hello. Good
23 afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak
24 today. My name is Marie Angela Macchu. I'm a Fellow
25 Advocate for the (INAUDIBLE) Coalition of Homeless

2 Youth and a Youth Action Board Member of New York. I
3 am testifying in favor of meeting the needs of older
4 youth. As a youth member who has gone through the
5 challenges of homelessness and finding shelter, I am
6 here to represent my LGBTQIA+ youth and young adult
7 peers. Today, I want to bring the attention of the
8 total beds runaway and homeless youth programs
9 provide. At 813 in total, 753 go to youth ages 16 to
10 20 while 60 beds go to young adults 21 to 24. I would
11 like to highlight that assuming the care stops at 24
12 is putting young adults at risk of finding a
13 permanent solution for housing. As someone aging out
14 of youth resources myself, I am urging you all that
15 we expand the amount of beds that go out for young
16 adults currently looking for a temporary plan because
17 no one should be insecure about housing. A safe plan
18 for youth and young adults is being part of the
19 decision-making process on the board for a better
20 future and a clear understanding of the different
21 needs youth and young adults need to end homelessness
22 including immigrant individuals who are the most
23 disadvantaged with resources and permanent housing
24 solutions. Thank you all for your time today.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for
3 your testimony. We will now call on Lyndon Chris
4 Hernandez.

5 LYNDON CHRIS HERNANDEZ: Thank you,
6 Council Member Stevens, for having me here. I
7 appreciate your time. I want to center my testimony
8 around meeting the needs of older youth, street
9 homeless and the Youth Count barriers for older
10 youth, access to mental health services that support
11 entry into PSH housing, obtaining an EHV voucher and
12 not enough time to get housed into an apartment
13 before losing the voucher, landlords lacking trust of
14 21 to 24 year olds, seen as a liability to rent to
15 younger households, lack of access to NYCHA housing,
16 Housing Connect units require tenants to make the
17 double the rent in order to qualify for affordable
18 housing making it non-affordable, putting at risk due
19 to lack of beds in drop-in centers, forcing 21 to 24
20 year olds to be referred to out DHS shelter, putting
21 youth at risk for their safety. What can be done?
22 Allow easier access to mental health services for
23 youth in RHY systems, more training and awareness to
24 landlords on vouchers and RHY systems, and more
25 training and awareness on vouchers and RHY youth to

2 prevent youth being turned away from housing, fine
3 landlords 1,000 dollars for turning away runaway and
4 homeless youth from housing if (INAUDIBLE), allow
5 extensions for use of emergency housing vouchers and
6 other forms of housing placements to allow time for
7 proper housing search, proper support for aftercare
8 services for youth up to 1 year that promotes
9 independence, skill-building, career goal-setting to
10 prepare a young person with transition into permanent
11 placements before leaving a youth to be fully
12 independent on their own. Street homelessness and the
13 Youth Count. To properly support youth facing
14 chronically street homelessness, we need to bring
15 public awareness to resources designated for RHY
16 youth across the 5 boroughs, support youth on the
17 street by hiring outreach workers to engage and refer
18 youth to safety off the streets, look at the street
19 homelessness and how it's being addressed in other
20 states and communities such as Texas and California,
21 overlooking their strategy on how they are addressing
22 homelessness in their communities. Improving the
23 Youth Count. To improve the Youth Count and collect
24 accurate data, we need to prepare for the Youth Count
25 earlier than previous years have done, hire youth

2 with lived expertise to help effectively develop the
3 Youth Count and listen to their suggestions, bring
4 more awareness by using multimedia and campaign
5 strategies similar to the Unity Project and Hope
6 Count... Can I finish my statement?

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely.

8 LYNDON CHRIS HERNANDEZ: Hire youth with
9 lived experience to help support with the Youth Count
10 during development, implementation, and incentivize
11 youth to provide feedback for how the Youth Count was
12 conducted before and after the count, provide youth
13 with proper information on how the count can benefit
14 the RHY community and bring more resources to RHY
15 youth directly impacted by homelessness or at risk of
16 homelessness, ensure we are providing an accurate
17 count by surveying our youth in drop-in centers,
18 those who are residing in DHS facilities, or other
19 systems where youth may be temporarily housed, youth
20 that are doubled up, couch-surfing, chronically
21 street homeless, pregnant and parenting youth who may
22 reside in both DHS and DYCD facilities, and their
23 children who are also in DOE settings. To ensure a
24 much more productive count to get a 100 percent
25 accurate census of how many youth are actually

2 homeless in New York City, we need to be counting
3 where young people are throughout the RHY system, not
4 just those residing at DYCD sites. My name is Lyndon
5 Hernandez, and I'm the New York City Youth Action
6 Board co-Chair for the Coalition for Homeless Youth.
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Thank you
9 both for being here with us today and sharing your
10 stories and testimony. I appreciate it.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: We will now
12 call on Lauren Galloway to begin her testimony.

13 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Thank you. Good
14 afternoon. My name is Lauren Galloway, she, her, and
15 hers. I'm the Advocacy Coordinator for the Coalition
16 for Homeless Youth. CHY has advocated for the needs
17 of runaway and homeless youth for over 40 years in
18 New York state, and the Coalition currently comprised
19 of 65 providers for RHY across the state including 29
20 right here in New York City. I want to thank Chair
21 Stevens and the Members of the Youth Service
22 Committee for holding today's RHY oversight hearing.
23 I'll be submitting longer written testimony, but I
24 will be limiting my verbal testimony to 3 main issues
25 regarding RHY and providers. The needs of homeless

2 young adults, the issues with Local Law 81, and the
3 providers' evaluation process. CHY also echoes all
4 the additional issues and recommendations outlined in
5 the testimony of our member agencies as well as youth
6 advocates who have shown up in full force to use
7 their voices to push for change.

8 On the needs of homeless young adults, in
9 2018, CHY worked with the City Council to pass Local
10 Law 88, which forced DYCD to increase the upper age
11 limit of eligibility for older youth to access DYCD-
12 funded RHY programs from 20 to 24 years old, aligning
13 New York City with the changes in the state law that
14 were passed the previous year. Since that time, DYCD
15 has maintained the older youth beds must be funded
16 and operated separately from the beds of 16 to 21
17 year olds, something that doesn't align with nor
18 enforce by either state or city law. These
19 voluntarily restrictions have continued to harm older
20 youth. We know that overwhelmingly youth do not feel
21 safe to enter the adult system shelter. However,
22 since there continues to only be 60 DYCD beds across
23 the ages for 21 to 24 year olds, too many older youth
24 are forced to go to DHS shelters, utilize the 24-hour
25 drop-in centers as a makeshift shelter, or stay on

2 the streets. None of these being acceptable
3 scenarios. We address this with these
4 recommendations. One, DYCD must include in the
5 reporting for 21 year olds in the Local Law 86. Two,
6 DYCD must include 21 to 24 year olds that are turned
7 away from RHY beds in the Local Law 79 report. Three,
8 DYCD should increase street outreach to youth who are
9 often older living on the streets. There's currently
10 only 1 street outreach program for the entire city
11 specifically for youth that operate at a shoestring
12 budget. With the increase of inhumane sweeps and
13 criminalization of people that are experiencing
14 homelessness, DYCD has the responsibility to step up
15 to protect youth living on the streets by increasing
16 outreach to them, working with the partners at DSS to
17 stop the criminalization of street youth and those
18 experiencing housing instability. Fourth, and most
19 importantly, trust that the providers are the experts
20 at providing their own programs and allow them the
21 discretion to serve the older youth in the programs
22 currently limited to 16 to 20 year olds. DYCD
23 continues to state publicly that there are many
24 vacant beds across their 16 to 20-year-old programs...
25 Is it okay to...

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Go ahead.

3 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Thank you. Again,
4 there's vacancy across their 16 to 20-year-old
5 program so why are they forcing older youth into
6 unsafe situations that they do not have to be in.

7 I just want to touch briefly on the
8 provider evaluations. Despite DYCD's testimony at the
9 Fiscal Year '23 preliminary budget hearing, to the
10 contrary except for the annual evaluations, there
11 continues to be no process for which DYCD-funded RHY
12 programs can appeal or request amendments to their
13 program evaluations. This, of course, continues to be
14 of great concern to providers who believe should
15 always be a concern for DYCD and the administration,
16 which means that the outcomes reported for RHY
17 continue to be inaccurate. These programs are issued
18 reports with inaccuracies or missing information.
19 There should be a streamlined process to have these
20 reports corrected, which there is not. We ask that
21 DYCD enables a dispute function in their contract
22 management systems which allows for providers to
23 dispute all the evaluations on monitoring reports
24 that they are issued. The current process of
25 addressing these issues on a case-by-case basis with

2 their individual program managers is not working, and
3 the results have proven inconsistent and time-
4 consuming.

5 I'm going to provide a little bit more on
6 the issue of Local Law 81 in my written testimony,
7 but thank you for the opportunity to testify today,
8 and I am available if you have any questions. Thank
9 you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you so
11 much for your testimony.

12 Council Member, if you have any
13 questions? If not, we can turn on to the next panel.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I do have a question
15 for Lauren. In your testimony, you talked a little
16 bit about that the older youth beds and the 16 to 20
17 year olds beds, and you feel like the providers would
18 be able to use their own discretion. Could you talk a
19 little bit about what that discretion would look like
20 and what that program capacity would be?

21 LAUREN GALLOWAY: I don't want to speak
22 for our provider members, but I think the discretion
23 would be able to know that they have the resources
24 there, they have the staff there, they have the
25 training there to be able to (INAUDIBLE) that we need

2 to provide for those past the age of 20, and it's not
3 working to just limit it. I believe that only we can
4 have the guidance by DYCD to be able to stop that,
5 but I can definitely provide more in my written
6 testimony and get further feedback to you.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, that would be
8 great. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Council Member
10 Aviles, if you have any questions for that panel?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Thank you so much.
12 Just a point of clarification. You mentioned there
13 are 16 beds available citywide?

14 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Not 16. If you're
15 speaking for the 21 to 24-year-old beds, it's 60.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: 60?

17 LAUREN GALLOWAY: The total is 813, 753 go
18 to 16 to 20 year olds, but 60 go to 21 to 24 year
19 olds.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: So right now as
21 the system works, the placement for 20 for 24, that's
22 the older...

23 LAUREN GALLOWAY: 21 to 24.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: 21 to 24? DYCD
3 contends that those have to be done separately and in
4 separate spaces.

5 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Got it. Okay.
7 Thank you for your testimony.

8 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just for the young
10 people who are here who testified today. Do you both
11 have experience in the Youth Count, and, if so, could
12 you talk a little bit about that experience?

13 LYNDON CHRIS HERNANDEZ: I've personally
14 participated in the Youth Count in the past. I've had
15 conversations with Tracey about improving the Youth
16 Count, and, for improvements, there just has to be a
17 lot of changes for it, and a lot of those changes
18 need to come from the voices of young people with
19 lived expertise who are actually experiencing what is
20 going on so that they can better assist with getting
21 an accurate count. We are not counting youth in other
22 places besides DYCD sites. If we are going to be
23 utilizing youth in this process, to make sure that
24 we're incentivizing them, that there's a budget in
25 place, that they're prioritizing their needs and

2 ensuring that they're properly supported while they
3 are being trained and asked to fulfill these duties
4 because it's one thing to ask for a young person to
5 do something, but it's another to ask them when they
6 also have their own needs and their own requirements,
7 their own stuff that they have to deal with so there
8 has to be some form of incentivization for them to
9 participate. If not, it's not going to be beneficial
10 to them.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely, and it's
12 respecting your time and your energy and your efforts
13 so I 100 percent agree.

14 MARIE ANGELA MACCHU: I don't have
15 personal experience with the Youth Count, but I do
16 agree that we do need more to have that accurate
17 number.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: You mentioned also
20 in your testimony that there is only 1 outreach team
21 for older youth. That seems absurd. Can you talk to
22 me a little bit more about what this looks like and
23 what is it that we need?

24 LAUREN GALLOWAY: When we think about
25 outreach, it has to be implemented before things

2 start to get to the point of we're already in these
3 places where we feel like we're not able to get out
4 of them, we're not being provided for so I think it
5 starts with the prevention. One of the things that
6 the Coalition for Homeless Youth is working with is
7 the Youth Demonstration Project, and that's one of
8 the things that they've outlined in there so I really
9 think that a way that we can start do outreach is
10 through prevention, and I think being able to
11 implement a lot of the things that the YHDP has put
12 in their plan that has gotten (INAUDIBLE) but a lot
13 of the specific things haven't been approved yet is a
14 place to start because it has to start with
15 prevention. I'm not sure if that fully answers your
16 question, but I can provide more as well in followup.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you to
18 this panel. We will be moving on to our next panel of
19 public witnesses, and that will include Samantha Rod
20 from the Youth Action Board, Shaquasha King from the
21 Youth Action Board, Ivan Dudnik, and Jordan Bowen.
22 These panelists are all available remotely so I will
23 now call on Samantha Rod to begin their testimony.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

2 SAMANTHA ROD: Thank you again. My name is
3 Sammy. I struggled for days to figure out what
4 (INAUDIBLE) I wanted to take today. Will I introduce
5 myself as a present New York City Youth Action Board,
6 a Youth Advocate, a Youth Mentor, or former Youth
7 Specialist for previously 3 different non-profits?
8 Will I introduce myself as someone who is now
9 designing what community-facing work looks like for
10 my current non-profit? Today, I realized that the
11 most important (INAUDIBLE) I could ever take is
12 sharing my story as a homeless youth and just as
13 Sammy.

14 Today, you will hear from many youth and
15 advocates and already have or people with lived
16 experience about the need and importance for more
17 beds, more funding, and more sustainability in RHY
18 services, especially in the older youth from 21 to
19 25, which is all true and in desperate need. However,
20 I want to talk about accountability. We need more
21 than another year of us advocating. This isn't new
22 that RHY services is underfunded and stretched thin
23 for the over 10,000 homeless youth in New York City.
24 What we need is accountability. The word exploitation
25 defines as stated the action of treating someone

2 unfairly to benefit from the worker's story. Let me
3 explain why the words exploitation and accountability
4 go hand in hand in the culture of RHY services. RHY
5 services are filled with exploitation both mentally
6 and systematically. We train youth from the funding
7 to be just enough, and what do I mean? Just enough to
8 pay rent, just enough to stay in the system because a
9 dollar more will mean yes, I can pay rent this month
10 but my food stamps get cut off next month, my rent
11 goes up, and now 30 percent changes to 50 percent
12 because now I'm not qualified for government
13 assistance, I'm not qualified for Medicaid and this
14 scares me because I work full-time. We tell our
15 clients to be just enough to keep our homes and to
16 sign up for our programs. Here's a little chump
17 change and here's a just-enough job to keep you
18 dependent on assistance. It is a fact that New York
19 City minimum wage cannot cover rent alone, but
20 working full-time for minimum wage will get you cut
21 off from almost every assistance program including
22 the help with North Metro Cards just to get to work
23 and back home. Every day for years we are told to
24 sign in, sign our names, sign in if we want food,
25 sign in if we want a bed, sign. Every day for years

2 for funding we are creating more temporary beds and
3 programs than we are creating homes and futures. We
4 need to take accountability that today we acknowledge
5 that the system exploits homeless youth to continue
6 funding year after year while homeless youth struggle
7 to become independent adults. We have youth spending
8 years in youth homeless shelters or drop-in centers
9 without getting any supportive housing or permanent
10 housing. We have youth who get accepted into
11 supportive housing and cannot sustain it. We need to
12 not only talk about the lack of beds but also start
13 talking about the lack of accountability and the
14 codependency of the structure that we build together.
15 We need to not only be accountable to make programs
16 and goals...

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

18 SAMANTHA ROD: But to ensure that the
19 goals we put into place as specialists, program
20 managers, directors, or government officials that we
21 are not creating more barriers, that our programs and
22 our rules are creating sustainability rather than
23 meeting quota marks for the fiscal year. Yes, we need
24 beds. Yes, we need funding. But what we need is for
25 everyone today to make a pledge to be accountable for

2 their actions. Visit a homeless youth shelter, visit
3 a drop-in, randomly visit a youth service and get
4 real information on whether your program is
5 positively a safe space. Learn from the youth who go
6 through our services whether or not it is helping
7 them. We have to be accountable. How many homeless
8 youth will have to advocate each year, testify, and
9 protest before we say okay, we need to acknowledge
10 that something is missing. We need to acknowledge
11 that without accountability we are not breaking
12 generational curses but creating new chains of
13 dependency. This is what I wanted to say today, we
14 cannot make change without first admitting that there
15 are faults. We need homes and not beds. We need
16 careers and not jobs. We need sustainability and not
17 codependency. There's a gap and will always be as
18 long as the system continues to limit our future
19 while exploiting our signature and stories. Thank
20 you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for
22 your testimony, Samantha. We will now call on
23 Shaquasha King.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

2 SHAQUASHA KING: Hello everyone. Thank you
3 for having me. My name is Shaquasha King, and I am a
4 member of New York City's Youth Action Board, and I
5 am a youth with lived experience. Today, I am going
6 to advocate and raise awareness about last year's
7 2021 Youth Count survey and data collection. Youth
8 Count reported there are only 7 youth unsheltered in
9 New York City. This is not only obviously inaccurate,
10 but also they didn't conduct the survey in a timely
11 manner so everything isn't carefully planned
12 including the time of year when the survey is taking
13 place. Inaccurate data is detrimental and leads to
14 less resources and funding for runaway and homeless
15 youth population. During the time when COVID was
16 peaking, there were many youth unhoused and in
17 unstable conditions, but, for some reason, we only
18 had 7 youth counted. You might want to consider
19 having more data collectors instead of having it run
20 by 1 staff with no additional funding and to
21 efficiently and effectively cover all 5 boroughs of
22 New York City, both in-person and virtually. You
23 might want to think about raising the incentive so
24 youth will be more willing to participate in the
25 survey. Five dollar McDonald's gift cards and two-way

2 subway cards in exchange for invasive and possibly
3 triggering questions is not enough and, in my
4 opinion, is tokenism, adultism, and very insulting.
5 Thank you for having me.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for
7 your testimony. We will now call on Ivan Dudnik.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

9 IVAN DUDNIK: Hello. My preferred name is
10 Dudnik. I use they/them pronouns. I'm testifying
11 about my experience with DYCD system as an older
12 youth and also an LGBTQ, non-binary immigrant person.
13 The quality of services is decreasing and resources
14 become more scarce as youth are getting older. There
15 are even more limited beds and housing where one can
16 turn 21. (INAUDIBLE) system is not transparent and
17 full of favoritism. Staff members are always
18 protected and clients live in constant fear of being
19 thrown out. Once older youth are kicked out, they
20 have to restart the process of living in drop-in
21 centers where they have to bring their belongings
22 every night and take them with them every day for
23 several months until they get placed in emergency
24 housing again. Some drop-in centers are useless for
25 youth and open for very limited services. They are

2 often located in a different borough from the most
3 residential programs, forcing youth to commute to
4 pick up their mail or make unnecessary trips for
5 mandatory check-ins that can be done virtually
6 because staff members don't respect their time and
7 they're not tech savvy. That exposes youth to risks
8 of being a victim to a crime and getting COVID. It's
9 an unnecessary waste of time suggesting homeless
10 youth's time is not relevant and not valued and they
11 have nothing else to do. There is no regard for youth
12 in their living space. They are deprived of privacy
13 with their bathrooms, bedrooms, or working area. The
14 doors are not allowed to be locked. In some cases,
15 they shall be wide open so staff members can see
16 them. Lights shall be on in some sleeping areas.
17 Young people live under constant surveillance like in
18 a correctional facility. Staff have privileges don't
19 have like staying in a room by oneself. Staff are not
20 competent in handling the youth and trauma-informed
21 response. Staff don't respect the silence at night
22 and don't enforce it. Staff are benefiting from
23 homelessness crisis. I say they have jobs because we
24 don't have jobs. There is a lot of...

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

2 IVAN DUDNIK: Hiring of incompetent staff
3 members who don't identify neither with LGBTQ
4 community nor with homeless community, and they are
5 constantly leaving for better positions. Case
6 managers not competent in helping immigrants
7 experiencing homelessness. Case managers direct
8 immigrant clients through a lengthy process of
9 obtaining public benefits just to realize they are
10 ineligible for a lot of housing and food security
11 programs provided by the government due to their
12 status. There is lack of accommodation for non-
13 English speakers in shelters and lack of flexibility
14 in programming inclusive of immigrants. People who
15 get paid off the books like sex workers and
16 undocumented immigrants are cut off housing vouchers
17 even though they have stable income to support their
18 lives. Educational programs and groups are
19 dysfunctional, specifically summer youth programs by
20 DYCD because there are specific sites implementing
21 it, violating the rules of the program. Those
22 programs don't prepare youth for aging out and
23 independent living. Thank you.

24

25

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for
3 your testimony, Dudnik. We will now turn to Jordan
4 Bowen.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

6 JORDAN BOWEN: Good afternoon, everybody.
7 My name is Jordan Bowen, he/him/his. I'm a Youth
8 Advocate for the Coalition of Homeless Youth. I just
9 want to say thank you to Council Member Stevens and
10 the administration for having me here today. Overall,
11 my experience residing at (INAUDIBLE) Community
12 Service was unorganized. I thought that the program
13 needed support, it needed to hire people who had
14 experience in order to move clients out of the
15 sheltering system and to have good communication
16 skills because oftentimes when I was in the shelter
17 they would talk to us any type of way. With this
18 experience, this overwhelmed me personally because
19 not only that I was in my situation during the
20 pandemic but I felt like I was going to be stuck in
21 the sheltering system for more than I needed to. Even
22 though I have less than 3 minutes, I just want to be
23 sure and breathe. I will explain more of what I will
24 be talking about in my written testimony. What I had
25 asked for the City Council and the administration to

2 add more funding towards runaway and homeless youth.

3 Thank you so much and have a great day. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Chair, unless
5 you have any questions for this panel, we'll move on
6 to our next group.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Jordan, I just
8 wanted to say thank you for sharing your testimony
9 and all the panelists for this panel. It was all very
10 powerful. I just had a question because I know you
11 said you had a negative experience at one of the
12 shelters. Obviously, you don't have to share it here,
13 but I would definitely want to..

14 JORDAN BOWEN: It's okay. I will share.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Go ahead.

16 JORDAN BOWEN: I wanted to also talk about
17 the lack of food and also how basically overall how I
18 was treated. Basically, what my experience of my
19 housing process, I had to also seek from other
20 organizations to help me because the program manager
21 is usually the person who would oversee the
22 (INAUDIBLE) process but he didn't even know how to
23 basically move forward with the process so it was
24 like basically me and the care coordinator who
25 basically was trying to figure out what to do with

2 that. Even now, before I left the program, there
3 wasn't even a case manager to even help us so I was
4 just like in my situation, in a way where I don't see
5 things moving. Like how you said earlier, you can
6 lose young people with this process. They,
7 unfortunately, lost me because it's just why are
8 things taking so long and I only just thought like
9 why you don't know these things if you are in these
10 jobs and this is your job to do this and you don't
11 really know how to do your job so that was just me,
12 my own personal...

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you for
14 sharing that, and that's very helpful information to
15 know that that's some of the challenges that are
16 happening. Thank you.

17 JORDAN BOWEN: You're welcome.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you to
19 those panelists. Our next and I believe final panel
20 will include the following individuals. John Sentigar
21 from Covenant House, Bill Torres from the Ali Forney
22 Center, and Steve Cruz. John Sentigar, you may now
23 begin your testimony.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

2 JOHN SENTIGAR: Thank you so much. My name
3 is John Sentigar, and I'm the Director of Development
4 and Communications at Covenant House New York where
5 we serve runaway and homeless youth ages 16 to 24.
6 I'd like to thank the New York City Council Committee
7 on Youth Services, especially Chair Stevens, for the
8 opportunity to testify today.

9 CHNY is the nation's largest non-profit
10 adolescent care agency serving homeless, runaway, and
11 trafficked youth. During this past year, we served
12 over 1,600 people in our programs and on a nightly
13 basis we provide shelter to more than 200 young
14 people, including LGBTQ youth and pregnant women and
15 mothers with their children as well as survivors of
16 human trafficking. We provide young people with food,
17 shelter, clothing, medical care, mental health and
18 substance abuse services, legal services, high school
19 equivalency classes, and other educational and job
20 training programs as well as specialized services for
21 survivors of human trafficking.

22 First and foremost, I'd like to again
23 thank the Youth Services Committee, especially Chair
24 Stevens, who I know you've been an advocate for young
25 people. I've been in meetings with you these past

2 couple of weeks and for advocating for more city
3 funding across New York. We're extremely grateful
4 that in recent years there's been an increase in the
5 number of beds for homeless youth under the age of
6 21, but we still need more. The vast need for
7 wraparound services for this population is still
8 dire. With the unfortunate closing of the Peter
9 Cicchino Youth Project, there is only 1 direct legal
10 services lawyer specializing in legal services for
11 homeless youth across the entire city. The need for
12 legal services continues to grow, especially as there
13 has been an increase in the number of young people
14 migrating from Central and South America who are in
15 need of immigration services and legal services.

16 Additionally, at CHNY, we've noticed an
17 increase in the number of attempts to lure homeless
18 youth into situations involving commercial sexual
19 exploitation. Research demonstrates as many as 1 in 5
20 of the young people we serve had experiences that fit
21 the New York City definition of human trafficking.
22 The service needs for these young people are
23 extensive, and funding is needed for programs that
24 serve survivors across the city so they can embark on
25 new futures filled with safety, freedom, and hope.

2 Finally, mental health needs grew for
3 most everyone, of course, during the global pandemic,
4 but for homeless young people it added an additional
5 layer of trauma in an already traumatized population.
6 As we know, LGBTQ youth are over-represented in the
7 homeless youth population, and there is extra need
8 for mental healthcare for LGBTQ young people
9 experiencing homelessness.

10 I also want to echo the need expressed
11 earlier by Chair Stevens in this meeting for
12 additional 21 to 24-year-old beds. Currently, many
13 youth experiencing homelessness are being left out of
14 DYCD services and are forced into the DHS system.
15 Covenant House currently provides 20 of the 60
16 aforementioned 21 to 24 beds for female-identified
17 youth, and we find that we're at capacity so we,
18 again, echo the call of Chair Stevens to provide more
19 beds for this age group (INAUDIBLE) intakes and
20 assist more people to get on a pathway towards
21 permanent housing.

22 Finally, one of the greatest needs for
23 young people experiencing homelessness, as I
24 mentioned before, is mental healthcare. These
25 experiences can lead to PTSD, anxiety, depression,

2 and many other health issues. At Covenant House,
3 we're fortunate to have 12 social workers on staff
4 and to have contracted with a part-time psychiatrist
5 who is dedicated to serving our young adults.
6 However, no program serving survivors in New York
7 City can afford a full-time psychiatrist, and the
8 waitlist for psychiatric appointments for homeless
9 youth across the city can be long, thereby leading to
10 unnecessary delays in care so we also request the
11 city dedicate funding for mental health and mental
12 healthcare for young people.

13 Again, thank you for the opportunity to
14 testify today.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for
16 your testimony. We will now call on Bill Torres.

17 BILL TORRES: Good afternoon. Thank you,
18 Chair Stevens and Members of the Youth Services
19 Committee, for this opportunity to testify. My name
20 is Bill Torres. I use he/him pronouns. I'm the
21 Director of Drop-in Support Services and the Founder
22 of the Ali Forney Center, better known as AFC.

23 Today, I am sharing testimony on behalf
24 of AFC. I would like to begin by acknowledging and
25 thanking Mayor Adams for announcing a nearly 6.7-

2 million-dollar investment in new and expanded
3 services for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers including LGBTQ+
4 homeless youth. The Ali Forney Center was founded in
5 2002 in memory of Ali Forney, a homeless gender-non-
6 conforming youth who was forced to live on the
7 streets at the age of 13 and struggled to survive to
8 the age of 22 when they were tragically murdered. AFC
9 is the nation's first around-the-clock drop-in center
10 for homeless LGBTQ youth and the largest provider of
11 housing and wraparound services for homeless LGBTQ
12 youth in New York City. Committed to saving the lives
13 of queer young people, our mission is to provide them
14 with housing and a continuum of support services to
15 help them thrive, prepare them for independent living
16 and enable them to become successful, productive
17 adults. Our facilities encompass 16 emergency and
18 transitional housing sites in Manhattan, Brooklyn,
19 and Queens and a multipurpose intake drop-in center
20 located in Harlem. As we've all heard, studies have
21 found that LGBTQ youth comprise up to 40 percent of
22 the homeless youth population in New York City. AFC
23 provides services to 2,000 homeless LGBTQ youth in
24 New York City each year, and 9 out of those 10 that
25 we serve are youth of color. With barely 753 beds

2 available for approximately 4,000 homeless young
3 people in New York City, 40 percent of whom identify
4 as LGBTQ, homeless youth are gravely underserved. Few
5 sites are LGBTQ competent, and even fewer offer more
6 than a bed. Tragically, homeless queer youth are
7 especially vulnerable. Homeless queer youth are more
8 likely to experience higher levels of sexual and
9 physical assault, domestic violence, stalking, and
10 trauma than their counterparts in the homeless youth
11 population. LGBTQ youth are more likely to be
12 bullied, assaulted, or crime victims. More than 80
13 percent use or have used sex work to survive. As a
14 result, these young people struggle with a vast array
15 of psychological and mental health issues including
16 low self-esteem, depression, suicidal ideation, and
17 past attempts of suicide. According to a study by the
18 Trevor Project, queer youth are 8 times more likely
19 to experience mental health issues, and, last year
20 alone, nearly 50 percent of LGBTQ youth seriously
21 considered suicide.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

23 BILL TORRES: If I may finish. AFC's drop-
24 in center is working to meet this critical need,
25 offering homeless queer youth a safe, warm

2 environment, support, free meals, showers, clothing,
3 and hygiene supplies. To address the dire situation
4 among our city's homeless LGBTQ youth, we must ensure
5 that funds are allocated to prioritize resources that
6 support this population. We urge our partners in the
7 city government to preserve and expand the resources
8 for queer youth. Specifically, we are asking for
9 funding to be allocated to increase the number of
10 available beds for LGBTQ+ youth, especially for youth
11 ages 21 to 24, and we are asking for funding to
12 support on-site mental health services and also
13 funding to fight against food insecurity amongst our
14 queer youth.

15 Thank you very much for your time. I'm
16 happy to make myself available for any questions you
17 may have. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for
19 your testimony. I think we actually have concluded
20 our public testimony. Our last panelist will not be
21 testifying publicly. Chair, if you have any questions
22 for this panel, feel free, or Council Member Aviles.

23 Okay, at this time, this concludes our
24 public testimony. Because this is a hybrid hearing,
25 if you're on Zoom and your name has not been called

2 and you still wish to testify, please raise your hand
3 using the Zoom raise hand function.

4 All right. Seeing no hands raised, Chair
5 Stevens, we have concluded public testimony for this
6 hearing. I will now turn it back to you for any
7 closing remarks.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would like to
9 first start out by saying thank you to everyone who
10 testified today. It's extremely important that we
11 continue to amplify those voices and those stories
12 and experiences. Those are really important so thank
13 you all who took the time to come here to testify and
14 those who are testifying virtually.

15 I just want to say that I've been in
16 youth development for the last 20 years, and, like I
17 said, homeless youth population, homeless runaway
18 youth is not something that I necessarily had the
19 expertise in but in these last couple of weeks I've
20 met with providers, I spoke with young people and
21 really got a better understanding of the
22 disproportionate resources that's being given to
23 them. When we talk about homelessness throughout the
24 city, we never talk about the young people who are
25 being homeless and how their voices aren't being

2 heard so I want to make sure that I'm continuing to
3 work with our young people and our providers to make
4 sure that their voices and concerns are being
5 uplifted and heard. I want to also just highlight
6 that we should not be thinking about shuffling young
7 people from shelter to shelter, thinking about how
8 are we making sure that when they're transitioning
9 out of these shelters as young people, they're
10 transitioning into permanent affordable housing so we
11 need to figure out where the breakdown is in the
12 system, that we have a lot of people who are still
13 unable to be housed and understanding that if we
14 fixed it and we did a better job with our younger
15 population and our younger youth and we transition
16 them it would not be such a crisis at the city level.
17 I look forward to continuing to work with DYCD and
18 providers and young people across the city to make
19 this a better-known issue and make sure that they're
20 getting the resources that they need.

21 With that, our meeting is adjourned.

22 [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date August 1, 2022