

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS AND COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
INVESTIGATIONS 1

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS  
AND COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
INVESTIGATIONS

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June 27, 2022  
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HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING - COMMITTEE ROOM -  
CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Amanda Farías, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés  
Kevin C. Riley  
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.  
Nantasha M. Williams  
Julie Won  
Joann Ariola  
James F. Gennaro  
Linda Lee  
Sandy Nurse  
Gale A. Brewer  
Rita C. Joseph  
Shekar Krishnan  
Marjorie Velázquez  
Kalman Yeger

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS WITH COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT  
AND INVESTIGATIONS 2

A P P E A R A N C E S

Kate MacKenzie, Executive Director of Mayor's  
Office of Food Policy

Kim Yu, Chief-of Staff at Mayor's Office of  
Contract Services

Annie Meredith, General Counsel Mayor's Office of  
Contract Services

Matthew Sullivan, Deputy Chief of Staff at  
Mayor's Office of Contract Services

Adam Buchanan, Acting Deputy Commissioner for  
Citywide Procurement at Department of Citywide  
Administrative Services

Ribka Getachew

Michelle Villagomez

Maire Ullrich

Stephanie A. Arthur

Ravi Reddi

Aracelis Lucero

Kara Shannon

Craig Willingham

Suzanne Adely

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS AND COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND INVESTIGATIONS

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1  
2 SERGEANT PEREZ: Testing one, two. Testing  
3 one, two. This is a test for the Committee on  
4 Oversight and Investigations, Contracts, and Economic  
5 Development. Today's date is June 27, 2022. The  
6 meeting is being recorded by Rafael Perez.

7 Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.  
8 Welcome to the New York City Council hybrid hearing  
9 of the Committees of Economic Development, Contracts,  
10 Oversight and Investigations.

11 If anybody wants to testify today, you  
12 can sign up with the Sergeant-at-Arms in the back of  
13 the room, and we'd be more than happy to provide you  
14 with a witness slip. Those folks that are joining us  
15 on Zoom, you can send any written testimony to  
16 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

17 At this time, everybody please silence  
18 all electronic devices.

19 Chair, we're ready to begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: [GAVEL] Good  
21 afternoon, and welcome to this joint hybrid hearing  
22 of Economic Development, Contracts, and Oversight and  
23 Investigations Committees of the New York City  
24 Council. Today is Monday, June 27, 2022. My name is  
25 Amanda Farias, and I have the privilege of chairing

1  
2 this hearing alongside my Colleagues, Council Member  
3 Julie Won, Chair of the Contracts Committee, and  
4 Council Member Gale Brewer, Chair of the Oversight  
5 and Investigations Committee. I'd like to thank both  
6 of my co-Chairs and the Members of all 3 Committees  
7 for coming together for this hearing. We're joined  
8 today by Council Members Linda Lee and Joann Ariola  
9 and Sandy Nurse.

10           The purpose of this hearing today is to  
11 discuss a pair of bills relating to food procurement  
12 and translation and interpretation services. The  
13 first bill, Introduction 517, sponsored by Speaker  
14 Adams along with myself and Council Member Won would  
15 create a Good Food Purchasing Program and Advisory  
16 Board to establish standards and goals for the  
17 purchase of food products by city agencies. These  
18 standards include 5 so-called value categories which  
19 include animal welfare, environmental sustainability,  
20 health, local economies, and a valued workforce. The  
21 Advisory Board would conduct assessments of each  
22 agency's food procurement processes then develop  
23 plans to assist those agencies in achieving the  
24 standards and goals set forth in the Good Food  
25 Purchasing Program. The Advisory Board would consist

1  
2 of 14 members, 7 appointed by the Speaker and 7  
3 appointed by the Mayor with knowledge of each of the  
4 value categories. The Board would regularly produce  
5 reports to the Mayor and Speaker on agency progress  
6 towards achieving the goals of the Good Food  
7 Purchasing Program. Developing ways to improve the  
8 quality of city food procurement is nothing new for  
9 the Council. The last 4 City Councils Speakers have  
10 all worked closely with advocates in the food policy  
11 community to ensure that, whenever possible, city  
12 agencies choose to purchase quality local food from  
13 New York. Through the leadership of Council Member  
14 Brewer during her first stint as a Council Member,  
15 the Council passed Local Law 50 back in 2011, which  
16 enabled city agencies to develop guidelines for price  
17 preferences for certain New York food products. The  
18 mechanism for this price preference equates to a 10  
19 percent preferred equivalent to the standard lowest  
20 competitive sealed bid. In practice, this means if a  
21 responsible bidder from outside New York state were  
22 to offer a price of \$1 for a bushel of apples and the  
23 same bidder from within New York state were to offer  
24 a \$1.10 for the same type of apples, then the price  
25 preference would make them functionally equivalent.

1 While we applaud the public efforts made by the  
2 administration in support of procuring local food,  
3 the numbers in support of Local Law 50 tell a  
4 different story. Chair Brewer will discuss this in  
5 further detail, but, suffice to say, the number of  
6 vendors who have sent surveys pursuant to Local Law  
7 50 is embarrassingly low, and the number who have  
8 responded is small enough to be statistically  
9 insignificant. For each of the last 5 fiscal years,  
10 only a handful of food vendors even responded with  
11 information regarding their local food procurement  
12 numbers. In Fiscal Year 2021, for example, only 2 out  
13 of 35 vendors even responded. It is difficult for the  
14 Council as the oversight body of the city of New York  
15 or for local food advocates and the public to make  
16 any meaningful conclusions about the success of local  
17 food procurement initiatives if the data regarding  
18 those initiatives is unavailable.

19  
20 Today, we hope to hear more about what  
21 efforts are being made by the administration to  
22 encourage food suppliers to include information about  
23 local food procurement. We plan to hear from the  
24 Mayor's Office of Food Policy, the Mayor's Office of  
25 Contract Services, and the Department of Citywide

1  
2 Administrative Services on what efforts they have  
3 made to improve the quality of food they purchase and  
4 how the spirit of Introduction 517 would fit into the  
5 citywide procurement plans.

6 Before we begin, I would also like to  
7 thank the Economic Development Committee staff,  
8 Committee Counsel Alex Paulenoff, Senior Policy  
9 Analyst William Hongatch (phonetic), and Finance Unit  
10 Head Aliya Ali for their work on this hearing.

11 Finally, before we hear from the  
12 administration, I'd like to turn to my co-Chair,  
13 Julie Won, to say a few words about the second bill  
14 before these Committees today, Proposed Introduction  
15 136-A. Council Member Won, the floor is yours.

16 CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you so much, Chair  
17 Farias, and thank you to Chair Brewer and Speaker  
18 Adams for your leadership on food policy. I'm proud  
19 to be a co-sponsor on Introduction 517 since it is a  
20 welcome addition to the Council's longstanding  
21 efforts to promote good quality food in our city's  
22 schools, senior centers, correction facilities, and  
23 other spaces supported by public funds.

24 I'm also here as the Chair of Contracts  
25 Committee to discuss a bill I sponsored, Proposed

1 Introduction 136-A. This bill would require city  
2 agencies to develop and utilize a preferred vendor  
3 list for community-integrated translation and  
4 interpretation services. The vendor list would need  
5 to include providers in at least 100 languages beyond  
6 the current requirement of translating city documents  
7 into the 10 non-English languages that are most  
8 spoken in the city. The contracts for these services,  
9 telephonic translations in particular, often go to  
10 large translation services companies outside of New  
11 York who typically are not proficient in many of the  
12 varied non-standard dialects that are spoken by the  
13 city's immigrant communities. As a result, many of  
14 these communities rely on informal arrangements with  
15 family, friends, or community centers to have  
16 critical documents translated and usually with no  
17 financial support from the city. Other municipalities  
18 such as Washington, D.C. have so-called banks of  
19 community-integrated legal translation service  
20 providers who recruit, train, and dispatch legal  
21 interpreters throughout the city. Many of the staff  
22 at these providers are based in the communities they  
23 serve which makes them even more culturally  
24 responsive than the far-away telephonic translators.  
25



1 This preferred list would empower these small  
2 community-based translators and interpreters by  
3 providing them with great access to city contracts.  
4 This would support providers who currently conduct  
5 these services often for free at personal expense.  
6 Notably, this preferred vendor list would not extend  
7 to contracts for interpretation or translation  
8 services and access of the city's small purchase  
9 limits, currently up to 500,000, for certified  
10 minority and women-owned businesses and 100,000 for  
11 all other firms. 27 Council Members have already  
12 signed onto Proposed Introduction 136-A, and I  
13 encourage my Colleagues who are not sponsored to sign  
14 on as well. This bill would improve engagement with  
15 government services for many of the city's immigrant  
16 communities and could provide a lifeline to many  
17 informal translators and interpreters who currently  
18 volunteer their time to conduct this critical work.  
19

20 Before we begin, I would also like to  
21 thank the Contracts Committee Counsel, Alex  
22 Paulenoff, for all of his hard work on this hearing.

23 Finally, before we hear from the  
24 administration, I'd like to turn to my co-Chair, Gale  
25 Brewer.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much,  
Chair Won. I am Gale Brewer, and I'm the Chair of the  
Committee on Oversight and Investigations, and I  
certainly want to thank Council Member Won and Farias  
for their work on Intro 517, which I know is  
controversial to some but I, too, am a co-sponsor and  
support it strongly.

This Committee today, all of us, are  
going to be addressing one of the most persistent  
challenges and those in the administration know that  
I've been working on this for a very long time. We  
have to figure out how the City of New York, one of  
the largest purchasers of food in the country, I  
think second only to the military, we need to buy our  
food from local New York state sources, maybe even  
New Jersey and Connecticut, but definitely locally.  
For city agencies, buying local should be a no-  
brainer. It has come up positively in all the reports  
that the agencies have written in the past. New York  
has, as we know, many great food products. We're a  
leader, dairy, beef, apples, cabbage, onions, squash,  
potatoes, lettuce, and purchasing these products from  
the farmers and producers helps support the state  
economy, and we all want to save the local farmers.

1  
2 If we purchase up-state, then we're able to help  
3 those in the Finger Lakes all the way up to counties  
4 like Hamilton that are not able to come to the  
5 farmer's markets. In addition, I have been  
6 emphasizing for many years that food purchased  
7 locally takes less time to ship. It arrives fresher,  
8 lasts longer, and has a lighter impact on the  
9 environment. The lettuce coming from California has  
10 to be on that stupid truck for 2 weeks, and, by the  
11 time it gets here, it has not got a long shelf life.  
12 The problem is that under New York state procurement  
13 laws, city agencies are permitted, yes, to favor food  
14 products grown and introduced in our state as long as  
15 the price falls within 10 percent of the bid price  
16 offered by the lowest responsible bidder. All of  
17 these are challenges. In addition, when soliciting  
18 bids, agencies can mandate that certain products come  
19 from our state. They can also consider factors such  
20 as the length of time from harvest to delivery when  
21 determining which vendor provides the "best value."  
22 These commonsense rules do give the city agencies  
23 much needed leeway to purchase food from in-state  
24 sources, and it is absolutely essential that agencies  
25 take full advantage of this leeway when purchasing

1 food for the city, but, when I talk to city agencies,  
2 they always say what happens if these strawberries  
3 are not in season. Then for god's sake go to  
4 California for the strawberries but buy them locally  
5 when they're in season.  
6

7 In 2011, during my first stint at the  
8 City Council as you heard earlier, I introduced  
9 legislation that builds upon these state rules and  
10 they're challenging the state rules and we know we  
11 have to change them to further encourage city  
12 agencies and vendors to prioritize food grown here in  
13 New York state. That legislation, Local Law 50,  
14 requires the city's Chief Procurement Officer to  
15 provide city agencies with a variety of tools to help  
16 them purchase food locally. The law requires also  
17 city agencies to collect data from their vendors to  
18 track how much of the food purchased by the city  
19 actually comes from in-state sources, and I know  
20 that's not easy to get that data from the vendors. We  
21 can talk about that later.

22 However, as you heard earlier, agencies  
23 have fallen short in their efforts to collect this  
24 information. In FY-21, as you heard earlier, only 2  
25 out of 35 vendors responded to Local Law 50 to the

1 survey, and that response has been below 10 percent  
2 in 3 out of the past 5 years so 2021 was not alone.  
3 In 2020, as Borough President, I testified before the  
4 Committee on Contracts about the need for city  
5 agencies to improve their data collection under Local  
6 Law 50. We cannot run a successful local food  
7 purchasing program unless we know where the food we  
8 buy is coming from, and I understand that agencies  
9 face challenges in getting vendors to respond to the  
10 surveys. I'm willing to call every single one of  
11 those vendors personally. We have to do better. A  
12 regular response rate, 5 to 10 percent, is not  
13 acceptable so today we'll be looking at the Mayor's  
14 Office of Contract Services to help us identify ways  
15 to improve data collection under Local Law 50. We'll  
16 address a number of other important issues related to  
17 the city's food procurement practices based on Intro  
18 517. One issue I've been vocal about for many years  
19 is getting fresh food to be located at Rikers Island  
20 and other Department of Corrections facilities.  
21 That's DCAS' problem. DCAS orders for seniors, they  
22 order for correction, and they also order all the  
23 HRA, human services, but it seems to me Corrections,  
24 having just been there last week, the food is  
25

1  
2 horrific, and there's no reason it can't be fresh. I  
3 look forward to hearing about this issue. If the  
4 Mayor wants everybody to eat plant-based, I'm not so  
5 good on plant-based, but if we want to eat plant-  
6 based, at least it should be fresh then we can eat  
7 it.

8 I would like to thank the members of the  
9 Central staff who helped put this hearing together,  
10 Alex Paulenoff, William Hongatch, and C.J. Murray,  
11 and our Legislative Director Leo Bullaro of my office  
12 and Shula Puder, Chief-of-Staff, who has been working  
13 on this issue for 10 years.

14 Thank you, and I'll turn it back over to  
15 Chair Farias. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much,  
17 co-Chairs. I'd like to also acknowledge that we've  
18 been joined by Council Member Williams.

19 I'm going to pass it over to our Counsel  
20 for next steps.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PAULENOFF: Members of  
22 the administration, would you all please raise your  
23 right hands for the oath?

24 Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth,  
25 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before

1  
2 these Committees today and to respond honestly to  
3 Council Member questions?

4 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PAULENOFF: Thank you.  
6 You can begin when ready.

7 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much.  
8 I'd like to also acknowledge Council Member Riley who  
9 is present virtually.

10 In terms of food governance, I'd like to  
11 ask some questions just to set the tone and the  
12 foundation of this hearing. The Mayor's Office of  
13 Food Policy was created by executive order over a  
14 decade ago and codified into law last session. What  
15 have been the main achievements of the Mayor's Office  
16 of Food Policy since it was codified into law?

17 ADMINISTRATION: Do you want me to respond  
18 to the question before doing the testimony?

19 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I'm so sorry.  
20 Testimony first. We've just been going through these  
21 virtually that it's so new to be in-person. I would  
22 absolutely love to hear your testimony first. I feel  
23 like that might be critical to this hearing. The  
24 thing is that I read everything ahead of time. Sorry.  
25 Yes, please.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thank you.

Good afternoon, Chair Farias, Chair Won, Chair Brewer, and Members of the Committees. My name is Kate MacKenzie, and I'm the Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy. Joining me today are my Colleagues from the Mayor's Office of Contract Services and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services.

Thank you for inviting me here today to talk about our Good Food Purchasing Program. In 2017, the city began exploring the National Good Food Purchasing Program, a program created by the Center for Good Food Purchasing, or I'll call them the Center. That program set specific standards around 5 value areas that you've mentioned, nutrition, local economies, animal welfare, a valued and fair workforce, and environmental sustainability. As one of the country's largest institutional food purchasers, as Member Brewer pointed out, it makes sense to align our purchases with the administration's priorities and values. The city sought to learn more about where our food comes from and how it is produced so it could make more informed choices. For example, about ways to increase



1 participation of New York state and minority and  
2 women-owned business enterprises, M/WBE, vendors.  
3 Health and Hospitals was the first city-affiliated  
4 entity to engage with the Center followed by the  
5 Department of Education. These entities shared their  
6 available procurement data with the Center for Good  
7 Food Purchasing for analysis. In 2019, when I assumed  
8 this position, additional city agencies were included  
9 into this work. The Administration for Children  
10 Services, the Department of Corrections, the  
11 Department of Homeless Services, and the Human  
12 Resource Administration. The Department for the Aging  
13 also began collecting data, but, as its food  
14 procurements are conducted via subcontractors and  
15 Human Service contracts, this proved especially  
16 challenging. Each agency began the process of asking  
17 its vendors for detailed information about the food  
18 they provide to the city. While one might think that  
19 getting information about the origin and methods of  
20 production of food would be easy, it's not,  
21 especially because vendors had no requirement to  
22 report this information to the city. Since the  
23 establishment of nutrition standards by the city in  
24 2008, the city has required vendor adherence to these  
25

standards. Vendors have become accustomed to sharing comprehensive nutritional information with the city at the time of contract award and throughout the duration of the contract. Our efforts to obtain this detailed information about where the food was coming from were extensive yet did not yield complete results. The City of New York is not unique in that way for the entire U.S. food system is complex and opaque. It's unfortunately the norm and something that the city is on a path to shifting.

In addition to expanding the number of agencies that participated in data collection, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy began convening monthly meetings with agencies in November 2019. The purpose of these meetings was to build understanding and awareness of good food purchasing values and how agencies could support them with their food purchases. At the same time, we also began regularly meeting with the Law Department to build support for the work. With DCAS, we hosted a vendor expo to highlight opportunities for working with M/WBE businesses. MOFP secured philanthropic dollars that resulted in a formal contract, the first contract with the Center for Good Food Purchasing to do those

1 agency assessments and overall vendor analysis. We  
2 also contracted with Karen Karp and Partners to  
3 support agencies and develop agency action plans. In  
4 March 2020, most city programs paused their meal  
5 programs as we knew them as a result of the pandemic.  
6 In February 2021, the city released its first ever  
7 10-year food policy plan, Food Forward NYC, pursuant  
8 to Local Law 40 of 2020, which included knowledge  
9 learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and incorporated  
10 an integrated approach to the Good Food Purchasing  
11 Program. The Food Forward report demonstrated the  
12 role of good food purchasing in addressing all 5 of  
13 the goals outlined in Food Forward. MOFP also created  
14 a specific citywide good food purchasing strategy and  
15 resumed our efforts with city agencies with a renewed  
16 energy and very real food chain experiences as a  
17 result of the pandemic. MOFP committed to  
18 unprecedented transparency, and, in September 2021,  
19 this information was all shared to our website. To  
20 our knowledge, no other city has shared this level of  
21 information. We also released raw data on our food  
22 purchases including prices to the extent legally  
23 possible and intend to continue doing so on an  
24 annually basis.  
25

1  
2 From the extensive engagement the city  
3 has conducted with stakeholders across the food  
4 system, we learned that a major barrier to  
5 participation of small vendors is the lack of  
6 understanding that institutional food contracts look  
7 very different from individual food service so we  
8 shared this information to enable small food vendors  
9 to understand what institutional demand looks like,  
10 the type of foods needed, and the amount of each type  
11 of food.

12 Further, in October 2021, New York City  
13 became the first U.S. city to sign the Cool Food  
14 Pledge, in which signatories seek to collectively  
15 reduce the climate impact of food served by 25  
16 percent by the year 2030. Sharing this information  
17 aims to help food purchasers, consumers, advocates,  
18 and the public more broadly understand the impact of  
19 food choices and to encourage the purchase of more  
20 climate-friendly food options. As part of signing  
21 onto this pledge, the city provided with definitive  
22 metrics and objective data on our food-related carbon  
23 emissions. In February 2022, Mayor Adams formalized  
24 the city's commitment to good food purchasing by  
25 issuing executive order 8, the Commitment to Health

1  
2 and Nutrition Food Standards and Good Food  
3 Purchasing. This executive order directs all agencies  
4 that procure and serve food to participate in Good  
5 Food Purchasing and emphasizes data collection and  
6 transparency as the backbone of the program's  
7 implementation. In April 2022, MOFP launched the  
8 city's first interactive food and climate dashboard,  
9 which includes information regarding the carbon  
10 footprint of the city's food purchases. The dashboard  
11 was developed with input from key stakeholders, and  
12 it utilizes food purchase data from Fiscal 2019 and,  
13 again, will be updated annually.

14           Throughout this journey, MOFP has learned  
15 many things. First, nearly every agency procures food  
16 differently. The types of food, the length of the  
17 contract, and the type of the contract vary depending  
18 on the scope and services needed. Many city agencies  
19 adhere to federal and state grant requirements that  
20 restrict what they can purchase. The recipients of  
21 food range from young kids to older adults and the  
22 serving sizes also vary. In some cases, we buy  
23 commodities like apples, and in other cases we buy  
24 complete and prepared meals. Each agency procures and  
25 serves food differently so we need to tailor the

1  
2 approach to meet their needs. This is reflected in  
3 the drafting and execution of their contracts and in  
4 working with the agency staff who are responsible for  
5 developing menus based on the food that is prepared  
6 pursuant to those contracts. Simply stated, it's not  
7 a one-size-fits-all program. Contracts average about  
8 3 years which affects the cadence with which any  
9 policy changes is reflected in the text of active  
10 contracts. Food contracts alone do not provide many  
11 opportunities to effect timely change. We're also  
12 mapping the process of solicitation development and  
13 implementation for each agency in order to create  
14 more robust interagency support and accountability.  
15 This is vital for timely action on contracting and  
16 data collection.

17           Second learning, robust and complete data  
18 from vendors is essential. This is why executive  
19 order 8 is so important. For each new contract with  
20 vendors, we are directing them to require and use and  
21 our data template to make sure that we get data  
22 annually. We have an informed understanding on the  
23 complex and overlapping state and federal legal  
24 frameworks that govern the city's purchasing of food.  
25 We are committed to pursuing a food purchasing

1  
2 program that is bold and impactful, but any program  
3 that the city pursues must be aligned with state and  
4 federal law. We know that agency staff want to  
5 advance this initiative, they want to learn and  
6 exchange ideas, and we need programmatic  
7 opportunities in addition to contractual  
8 opportunities for them to do so. City agency staff  
9 are the frontlines of this work, whether they're  
10 nutritionists, program managers, operational staff,  
11 chefs, or the procurement staff themselves, they're  
12 doing the vast majority of work to implement this  
13 program. They are also those coordinating annual data  
14 collection from food vendors and holding them  
15 accountable to our data collection standards. As we  
16 develop and set new performance metrics connected to  
17 those 5 value areas, they will be in charge of  
18 working with support from MOFP and their agency  
19 towards those goals. They also have the  
20 responsibility of promoting interagency  
21 communications, sharing best practices, innovative  
22 ideas, and challenges amongst each other. We're  
23 ensuring the city's Good Food Purchasing Program has  
24 the greatest possible impact by aligning its  
25 performance measure framework with other citywide

1  
2 initiatives. We're also designing a program that  
3 works for New Yorkers, which means making sure what  
4 we do is understandable to the public. This will  
5 promote greater transparency in government but is  
6 also critical to another goal of this administration,  
7 removing barriers to public engagement and government  
8 decision-making. The public-facing dashboard is an  
9 important initial step in this process. Through this  
10 dashboard, everyone has the opportunity to learn what  
11 we buy as a city and on an agency-by-agency basis. To  
12 achieve faster rates of improvement, we're looking  
13 for opportunities for change within existing  
14 contracts, like changing some menu items in addition  
15 to contractual changes. The Mayor's Office of Food  
16 Policy is working with Public Works Partners, a local  
17 consulting firm, on identifying opportunities to make  
18 it easier for small food vendors, particularly New  
19 York state M/WBE vendors, to do business with the  
20 city. My colleagues at the Mayor's Office of Contract  
21 Services have also made it a priority to streamline  
22 the procurement process and make it simpler for  
23 vendors to do business with the city. In partnership  
24 with the City Council, they're focused on cutting red  
25 tape, bringing visibility for all parties, and



1  
2 updating the regulatory framework to match the new  
3 digital system for procurement.

4           The Mayor's Office of Food Policy is  
5 committed to the success of this work. We will  
6 continue to work with the Law Department and agency  
7 procurement officers to develop policy pathways for  
8 good food purchasing implementation. We will  
9 continually develop strategies to support  
10 implementation such as the use of data templates,  
11 product catalogues, obtaining guidance on  
12 solicitations, and helping to connect potential  
13 vendors and agencies. We'll also work to develop  
14 accountability mechanisms by developing performance  
15 metrics around process and data completion as well  
16 as, of course, specific program goals. As I've stated  
17 a number of times, sharing all information we obtain  
18 and learn is a priority. Good food purchasing is  
19 essential for achieving Mayor Adams' food policy  
20 goals for a more nutritious, delicious, and plant-  
21 powered options. All New Yorkers deserve to know  
22 where their food comes from, and we are committed to  
23 using the power of procurement to impact the city's  
24 and our planet's health.

1  
2 We look forward to continuing to work  
3 closely with the City Council, the New York City Good  
4 Food Purchasing Coalition, advocates, business, and  
5 New York City residents on the implementation of this  
6 program. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Right before we hear  
8 testimony from Kim Yu, I'd like to acknowledge my  
9 Colleagues, Council Members Joseph and Gennaro who  
10 are present.

11 CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: Good afternoon, Chair  
12 Won, Chair Farias, and Chair Brewer, and Members of  
13 the Committees before us today. My name is Kim Yu,  
14 and I am Chief-of-Staff at the Mayor's Office of  
15 Contract Services, otherwise known as MOCS. I am  
16 grateful for this opportunity to testify before you  
17 all today. I am joined by MOCS General Counsel Annie  
18 Meredith and Deputy Chief-of-Staff Matthew Sullivan.  
19 We appreciate you calling this hearing on the  
20 important topics in front of us, and I want to let  
21 you know that our office is always open to host  
22 discussions on how we can lead procurement reform, a  
23 key strategic priority of our agency in this new  
24 administration.

1  
2 MOCS is an oversight focused on ensuring  
3 regulatory compliance in city procurement while also  
4 leading improvements to the procurement process. Our  
5 mission is to fulfill our required oversight role  
6 while driving equity, innovation, accountability,  
7 excellence, and reform to create the equitable  
8 procurement system New Yorkers deserve. As part of  
9 this work, MOCS sometimes takes the role of  
10 supporting particular policy areas such as food  
11 procurement and language services through strategic  
12 consulting, process guidance, and data aggregation  
13 while deferring to subject matter experts for policy  
14 direction.

15 My testimony today will focus on language  
16 access services citywide and Intro 136 while my  
17 fellow panelist, Director Kate MacKenzie, testified  
18 on the aspects of this hearing related to food  
19 policy. However, Annie, Matt, our colleagues from  
20 DCAS, and I will be available for questions regarding  
21 food procurement, and our agency is similarly  
22 available to hold conversations in the coming days  
23 relating to how we can improve the city's food  
24 purchasing procedures with any of the Council Members  
25 and their staff.

1  
2 I want to start by commending Council  
3 Member Won's focus on expanding language access so  
4 the city services and opportunities can reach all New  
5 Yorkers. This is fully in line with our vision at  
6 MOCS and many of the strategic initiatives we have  
7 been working on where equity is a guiding theme. It  
8 is imperative that city services are available and  
9 accessible to all New Yorkers as we have experienced  
10 in a pronounced way through the pandemic and recovery  
11 period.

12 MOCS has taken steps to improve language  
13 accessibility with respect to the services we  
14 provide. We now have a dedicated language access page  
15 on our website which is in the process of offering  
16 translations for many vendor-facing resources we use  
17 to explain our procurement process and systems to  
18 vendors. Similarly, visitors to our website can  
19 request a phone interpreter through our service desk  
20 who can help guide them through our materials and  
21 systems. These telephonic interpretation services are  
22 available in over 200 languages. MOCS is also  
23 committed to ensuring that language services are  
24 available to our agency partners. We have worked  
25 closely with MOIA, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant

1  
2 Affairs, to convene a series of coordination meetings  
3 with our agency partners regarding their own  
4 contracting for language access services in an effort  
5 to expand M/WBE participation and to ensure that  
6 services Mayoral agencies procure are tailored to the  
7 communities they serve. This has been an exciting  
8 project, and I look forward to sharing out results as  
9 we move forward.

10 MOCS welcomes further dialogue on these  
11 projects and the bills in front of us. We look  
12 forward to learning more about Intro 136 and shared  
13 goals of expanding language access and ensuring all  
14 New Yorkers are able to utilize services and  
15 opportunities available through their government.

16 Once again, I thank you all for taking  
17 the time to convene this hearing and engaging on  
18 these important topics. We are fully committed to  
19 working with each Member to devise solutions to  
20 continue improving the procurement process, and I  
21 welcome your feedback on strategic initiatives we've  
22 shared so far. With that being said, we are happy to  
23 take any questions.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PAULENOFF: Thank you.  
25 We'll now move to questions from the Chairs. As a

1  
2 reminder to any Council Members who wish to testify  
3 remotely, please use the Zoom raise hand function and  
4 you'll be added to the queue for questions.

5 Chairs, you may begin when ready.

6 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Clearly, I was ready  
7 earlier. Can you just reiterate some of the main  
8 achievements of MOFP since it was codified into law?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Sure. Thank  
10 you for the question. It was just in those weeks  
11 before the pandemic began when the office became  
12 codified into law, and a few of the things that I've  
13 noted in the testimony but also want to call out are  
14 the execution of Food Forward NYC, which was an  
15 intended, I believe it was Local Law 40, required  
16 report, and I'm very proud of that report and will  
17 continue to provide progress reports on that, I  
18 believe, in February of 2023 will be the first  
19 report.

20 Also, clearly, all of the work that I  
21 outlined around good food purchasing, getting through  
22 and returning back to as much business as new normal  
23 we can with agencies and their meal provisions.  
24 Certainly, supporting those agencies and picking up  
25 with the patterns and rhythms of good food purchasing

1 on the heels of this administration. In particular,  
2 in February, there were 2 executive orders, 8 and 9,  
3 certainly formalizing commitment to good food  
4 purchasing and also requiring an update to food  
5 standards. Those food standards are groundbreaking in  
6 many ways by integrating sustainability in a very  
7 real and tangible way, and all agencies will get into  
8 sync and compliance with those by July 2023.  
9 Additionally, I think it was the last hearing in this  
10 room in person that I participated in, we talked a  
11 lot about HRA's Emergency Food Assistance Program. I  
12 am very proud that we are in the last days of  
13 negotiating and executing a contract that will  
14 formally make fresh fruits and vegetables part of  
15 that program, making some real additions also across  
16 the board to cultural and ethnic meals and meal  
17 types, really integrating all of the lessons of COVID  
18 into the fact that we now have a Food Policy Office  
19 that is understood across the city, whether it's  
20 Economic Development, Transportation, Human Services.  
21 That's a real legacy and I think positive lining on  
22 the COVID experience. I'll also note that certainly  
23 we are, with the Cool Food Pledge, we are the first  
24 city in the country to endorse and become a signatory  
25

1 of that work, and that's really putting us more  
2 squarely in the space of climate change and  
3 acknowledging the role that food policy plays in  
4 climate. Certainly, with all agencies but I'm going  
5 to particularly lift up the Department of Education  
6 here, we meet weekly with that office on, again, the  
7 continuation of getting back to as normal as possible  
8 with schools and the school meals services. We were  
9 in lockstep with them around making sure that Plant-  
10 Powered Fridays could be rolled out successfully,  
11 and, certainly, as we get into the summer months and  
12 then going back to school next year, I'm really eager  
13 about what's to come for students including my 2  
14 public school students. Finally, I will just say that  
15 we had unprecedented, much in large part due to the  
16 Council, investments in food in the Fiscal '23 budget  
17 from 30 million dollars in DSS for food distribution  
18 to 50 million dollars for cafeteria expansion program  
19 at DOE to expansions of NYCHA, Urban Farms, Groceries  
20 to Go which is a very innovative pilot that will be  
21 operated through the Health Department, and that's  
22 just a few. I think certainly this administration  
23 feels strongly about the role of food policy to  
24 better serve New Yorkers.  
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CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you for that.

We all really appreciate you highlighting the work in the recent budget of committing ourselves to our communities for food policy so thank you for that.

I was excited to hear how often you were using some of the data points and meeting frequently with the agencies that are working with the Mayor's Office of Food Policy. Just around some of these shared goals that you had listed, do these goals and strategic plans happen or are discussed during those meetings, do the agencies share these goals or do they develop them separately from MOFP?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thank you for that question. I will say that since we published what were known as assessments and we engaged with the Center for Good Food Purchasing to complete them, we received a great deal of feedback from stakeholders, both internal and external, wishing to see more streamlined and interactive assessments that are written in relatively plain language and directly link to what city agencies can do to make improvements. The reflection on that is our new Food and Climate Dash, and that will continue to build out across all of those values. Right now, we've got

1  
2 certainly the breakdown just by agency and what  
3 they're buying and then, certainly, the climate goals  
4 which is attributable also to the environmental  
5 sustainability piece, but we'll be building out the  
6 local economy's value and certainly looking at New  
7 York state as akin to Local Law 50 so that you can  
8 just see across the board what are we buying from New  
9 York state vendors in a very simple and clear data  
10 place. What I will also say is that we are a leader  
11 across the country, and other cities are looking to  
12 us so as we publish those action plans, they're going  
13 to change. They're not set in stone. When those were  
14 written, we didn't have executive order 8 so now  
15 agencies are also, some of them have new leadership  
16 as well, and certainly a new administration so  
17 certain goals will become more refined and others  
18 that we haven't named will get expressed.

19 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay. Great. What do  
20 you describe as your role from MOFP in coordinating  
21 all of these city agencies to make sure the goals are  
22 still met?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Our role in  
24 addition to the convening factor of talking with city  
25 agencies, ensuring that there's leadership support,

1 we clearly have a Mayor who talks a lot about food,  
2 and, from his lips to Commissioners down, we know  
3 that this is also not just about the program staff  
4 but it is about the (INAUDIBLE) and so very recently  
5 I was on a call with all of the citywide (INAUDIBLE)  
6 to express very clearly we now have executive order  
7 8, here is what we're requesting from all vendors,  
8 here is what we need to include, and I need your help  
9 in enabling the city to advance this. We never had  
10 that type of commitment and direct action that we  
11 could take before. I would also say we convene a  
12 regional Food Working Group with the Department of  
13 City Planning to really use that raw data. That is a  
14 treasure trove of information. We are saying this is  
15 what we buy. We make connections then with New York  
16 state ag markets with regional agriculture and  
17 economic development actors from all over the region  
18 to find ways that we can support more the flow of  
19 regional product coming into this city so people get  
20 a sense, this is what we buy, if we want to get into  
21 a contract around that here's what we need to  
22 produce, and then, as you'll hear others say as well,  
23 really working with MOCS and DCAS not just around  
24 expos and things like that to attract new vendors to  
25

1  
2 the city but getting it clear and pushed out when we  
3 have contracts coming down the pike. I will say, for  
4 instance, the most recent HRA procurement had an  
5 unprecedented number of responses. That's fantastic.  
6 We also really worked to make sure that we got that  
7 solicitation out there so that's just one example of  
8 the kinds of things that we want to do to make sure  
9 that people know the scopes, the timeline, the kinds  
10 of things that we want coming into the city. Finally,  
11 as I've said a number of times and will keep saying,  
12 we are committed to transparency and accountability  
13 around this so we're annually producing these reports  
14 and posting them on the MOFP website, and, in the  
15 fall, we'll have our next traunch of data release.

16 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great. Thank you. I'd  
17 just like to acknowledge Council Member Aviles who  
18 has joined us.

19 Hearing about all of this community  
20 engagement and strategy around it, how does the  
21 office, if at all, work in food justice communities,  
22 for example communities that have inequitable access  
23 to healthy food, often low-income communities, and  
24 communities of color?

25

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Such an important question, and I'm really happy to respond to it. We're very proud of the community engagement work that we've done, particularly to start through the city's 10-year Food Policy Plan. We engaged with more than 300 stakeholders, community groups, food vendors, food workers, advocates to develop the plan that set a strategic framework in place for good food purchasing. We really look forward to doing that now also in a much more, that was very intentional but sustainable way in a post-pandemic way. Trying to engage in a meaningful way through Zooms was just very challenging, and that is something that, particularly as we share information out, we want to be able to hear from stakeholders back if this is working or not so we're very committed to that.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great. Would you see Intro 517 as a codification of executive order 8, and, if so, does that mean there's support for it?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: This administration shares the Speaker's and Council's commitment to the goals, values, and transparency of good food purchasing, and we look forward to discussing potential legislative paths in the future.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great. Thank you. I  
3 look forward to it too. Could you give us an overview  
4 of how food procurement for the city agencies works  
5 right now? Does every individual agency have its own  
6 food procurement strategy? Are there coordinated  
7 efforts within MOFP to standardize some of those?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: As I  
9 mentioned in the testimony, obviously there's lots of  
10 different city agencies and each of them are buying  
11 different things. I'll use a recent example which was  
12 working with DSS, and their food distribution  
13 procurement agency decides what it needs to procure,  
14 develops a scope of work, develops a RFP of sorts,  
15 and puts that out, and typically there could be  
16 anywhere from several weeks to respond to that,  
17 things are reviewed, and then we go through contract  
18 negotiations. The process truly does take a number of  
19 months. My colleagues from MOCS and certainly DCAS  
20 can also speak to a little bit about that process,  
21 but every agency's procurements are run through their  
22 Agency Chief Contracting Office. What EO-8 does is  
23 require, again I think just in these few short  
24 months, 4 months or so, there have been a number of  
25 moments, whether it was the recent awareness of

1  
2 different consolidations in food distributors where  
3 now MOFP gets a lot of calls. People know that food  
4 contracts are something that we need to make sure  
5 MOFP has eyes and also this is a shared partnership  
6 with ACCO offices.

7 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great. I just have a  
8 couple more questions before I pass it on to my  
9 Colleagues. In terms of Intro 517, in your view, are  
10 there any large challenges that the city is facing in  
11 procuring fresh, healthy, ethically sourced foods,  
12 and, in conjunction with that, have the city agencies  
13 looked at considering some of our local food markets,  
14 like the Hunt's Point Produce Terminal? I feel like  
15 I've been there quite a few times recently with the  
16 Mayor as a consultant or advisor on some of the food  
17 purchasing?

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I've also  
19 been especially to the groundbreaking and now  
20 building out of the Grow NYC Wholesale Market too  
21 which is a great opportunity for the city. I'm happy  
22 to follow up with you and the Law Department to  
23 discuss the specific mechanics of some of the  
24 contracting work, but I will just underscore again  
25 that agencies and, particularly under Mayor Adams, we

1  
2 are looking for the best quality produce and plant-  
3 forward meals as much as possible. There was a second  
4 part to your question which was about Hunt's Point in  
5 particular.

6 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Yeah.

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I'll just  
8 say whenever we have a need a solicitation, we're  
9 trying to get that out far and wide and also with the  
10 support of MOCS, making sure it's very clear that we  
11 have the specs for the items and everything else  
12 included. Publishing that wealth of data of agencies  
13 and what they're buying was so well-received by our  
14 regional partners, and some of them, I do know now,  
15 are looking at ways that they can aggregate to be  
16 able to respond to the scale and enormity of city  
17 food contracts.

18 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I asked particularly  
19 because we do have folks like in the Hunt's Point  
20 Terminal Market that are doing this day in and day  
21 out, have been doing it for 50+ years, understand how  
22 to get costs so low because they're buying bulk or in  
23 such large quantities and have the innerworkings of  
24 working with all of these different individual buyers  
25 or potentially with our agencies and they might be



1  
2 the ones to have best practices on looking at how the  
3 city agencies could replicate food purchasing. Thank  
4 you for that. I will hold off on the rest of my  
5 questions and pass it over to my Colleagues.

6 CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you, Chair Farias.  
7 Good afternoon. We have to keep it lively over here.  
8 It's good to see you all. My first question is which  
9 agencies have contracts that are subject to Local Law  
10 50? Are you able to provide a breakdown of the food  
11 budget for each agency?

12 CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: Thank you, Chair Won,  
13 for the question. Here at MOCS, one of our strategic  
14 initiatives is transparency, transparency into the  
15 process as a whole, and so we are working on having  
16 more and more adoption of PASSPort by the Mayoral  
17 agencies as they do contracts and in terms of  
18 awarding them and also going forward. The future  
19 state will be we're going to have a lot more  
20 functionality in PASSPort. Also, I'd love to plug  
21 that MOCS has released PASSPort Public, which also  
22 has a lot of information out there. With the  
23 specifics of Local Law 50 and the data that's  
24 captured around there, I would love to open it up to  
25 my co-panelists who have a lot more information.

DEPUTY CHIEF-OF-STAFF SULLIVAN: I don't think we have that specific data available right now, but we could definitely follow up with that.

CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. We'll look out for that. I want to acknowledge Council Member Velazquez and Council Member Yeger for joining us as well.

My next question is for Local Law 50, which requires MOCS to establish guidelines to help agencies purchase New York state food products, does MOCS conduct trainings for these guidelines? If so, how often and how many agencies typically participate in the training?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Working with our city agencies is of extreme importance to us and, in particular, on the Local Law 50 and training and compliance. I'd love to turn it over to my co-panelists for some more specifics.

DEPUTY CHIEF-OF-STAFF SULLIVAN: The training is kind of always available on our website, not our website...

CHAIRPERSON WON: So it's a static training that's reviewable? Is it a video, a recording?

DEPUTY CHIEF-OF-STAFF SULLIVAN: Yes.

1

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CHAIRPERSON WON: Oh, it's a PowerPoint.

3

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DEPUTY CHIEF-OF-STAFF SULLIVAN: I think  
we do in-person too. Annie, you can correct me.

5

GENERAL COUNSEL MEREDITH: Yeah.

6

7

CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. Got it. Is the 10  
percent price preference permitted under state law  
sufficient or should we be asking the state for even  
greater flexibility?

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I think  
what we'll say is that we're open to engaging a wide  
variety of tools to pull the right levers to make  
sure that city food purchasing is in line with what  
our co-panelist, Kate MacKenzie, just testified about  
and what she spoke about in the Q&A. We're certainly  
open to having those conversations. It would require  
some conversations with our city's Law Department on  
increasing that 10 percent, but I think there's  
certainly opportunity to do more, and we welcome  
those conversations.

21

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CHAIRPERSON WON: Do all food-related  
solicitations released by city agencies include a  
price preference for locally sourced food? If not,  
why not?

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ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: Hi.

3

Thank you for the question. My name is Adam Buchanan.

4

I'm the Acting Deputy Commissioner for Citywide

5

Procurement at DCAS. I can just speak on behalf of

6

DCAS who does food purchasing for ACS and Department

7

of Correction that all of our solicitations are

8

either requiring New York sourcing or including the

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10 percent price preference.

10

CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. Next is about, as

11

discussed at the previous hearing, MOCS has faced

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challenges in collecting survey data from vendors for

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Local Law 50 report. 25 percent response rate in

14

2020, though down to 5.7 in the previous year in

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2021, can you help me understand what you're doing

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now to drive up the response numbers to get more

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surveys out of the vendors since it's only

18

encouraged?

19

CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: Thank you, Chair Won,

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for the question. We have honed in on the survey and

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the response to the survey, and we've been in

22

discussions with co-Chair Brewer and we are open to

23

any suggestions on increasing compliance with it

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including taking advantage of maybe having team

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members from all the Council Members engage with the

1 vendors on the survey. I will say that the numbers  
2 that you pulled were looking at the prior Fiscal Year  
3 and the prior Fiscal Year before that, and, during  
4 that time, we were all in the state of the pandemic  
5 and so we'll have some strangeness when we look at  
6 the numbers because we did so much emergency food  
7 procurement during those months for those Fiscal  
8 Years.

9  
10 CHAIRPERSON WON: Could you just clarify  
11 what are you doing moving forward to encourage a  
12 higher response rate?

13 CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: We're actively in  
14 conversations with Chair Brewer's office, and we're  
15 also looking to work with our city agencies and we're  
16 also thinking about what outreach is appropriate with  
17 our vendors.

18 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. We will be  
19 following up to see what concrete plan you have to  
20 make sure that the responses are increasing other  
21 than conversations.

22 CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: We would welcome that.

23 CHAIRPERSON WON: From the small subset of  
24 data you collected, you just mentioned how these last  
25 2 years were peculiar due to the pandemic. Could you

1  
2 talk about the 2 years separately and then the prior  
3 years to what kinds of trends you have been seeing in  
4 the small subset of data that you are getting  
5 response from?

6 CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: That I think we would  
7 have to maybe engage with your office offline to have  
8 a really robust detailed conversation and a  
9 meaningful one.

10 CHAIRPERSON WON: Got it. Okay. We will  
11 definitely do that. What kind of quality assurance do  
12 agencies conduct to ensure the accuracy of food  
13 source information as provided by the vendors?

14 CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: That I may welcome  
15 some input from some of my co-panelists but also  
16 maybe thinking about an offline conversation may be  
17 worthwhile on that point also.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thank you  
19 for that question. Quite honestly, we're looking for  
20 just a submission. I think also we're doing a very  
21 parallel approach with getting a lot of the same  
22 information from our larger vendors, and we haven't  
23 been in the place to sort of question the validity or  
24 accuracy. We just want some of the boxes filled in,  
25 and then we can begin to think about what raises

1  
2 questions. In our work with the Center for Good Food  
3 Purchasing, that maintains a massive national  
4 database on particular type of product that then  
5 we're building into that too so if it is, an example  
6 might be a frozen potato product. We want to know  
7 literally the farm that that potato was grown on,  
8 where was it cut into strips, and then where was it  
9 bagged. That is the level of transparency that we  
10 want from our food companies, and so we're looking to  
11 build that and also then test that again with the  
12 database that the Center for Good Food Purchasing  
13 manages.

14 CHAIRPERSON WON: Am I understanding  
15 correctly right now you just want to get them to  
16 check off boxes, and, after you're able to get that  
17 response, then you can move towards quality  
18 assurance?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: To be  
20 clear, we're not looking to check the boxes. We're  
21 looking for vendors to submit data, and, once they  
22 submit, we go a more thorough scrub into that. We  
23 have no reason to believe that any of the data that  
24 is submitted is inaccurate, and we will continue to  
25 monitor that.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON WON: In 2022, we have  
3 blockchain technology which allows you to track an  
4 avocado from a tree of a farm to exactly which  
5 cafeteria it is served in so is blockchain technology  
6 part of what you're looking at for the auditing of  
7 your food sources?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: It is  
9 absolutely something that we would love to consider.

10 CHAIRPERSON WON: Got it. It is very clear  
11 to me that all of my Colleagues have come here  
12 because we're hearing from senior centers to  
13 correctional facilities to schools to nursing homes  
14 about the quality of food that they're being served.  
15 How are you collecting feedback from consumers  
16 themselves who consume this food, if at all, and what  
17 is your plan going forward because we're hearing a  
18 lot about getting data from the contractors  
19 themselves, the vendors, but what about the people  
20 who have to consume this food? What are you doing to  
21 collect feedback from them?

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: All  
23 feedback, especially feedback where there's areas to  
24 improve, we welcome, and I can speak on behalf of all  
25 of the agencies that are also serving food to



1  
2 vulnerable New Yorkers as well. What I can also say  
3 is that now there is a requirement in the Food  
4 Standards of 2022 that all agencies must solicit  
5 feedback and they must report on that feedback and  
6 show how they're responding to that so that is one  
7 notable step of actually requiring that agencies  
8 create a feedback loop of data collection and then  
9 process improvement. Again, we take all feedback,  
10 whether it is positive or areas for opportunities for  
11 growth, very seriously.

12 CHAIRPERSON WON: Where are you collecting  
13 the feedback? Are you requiring them to submit it to  
14 311 or are you requiring the vendors to solicit  
15 feedback on their own and they're supposed to submit  
16 it to you? Where is the feedback supposed to go?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: These Food  
18 Standards were just passed in April 2022, and  
19 agencies have until July 2023 to develop their plan.  
20 That is one of many standards that they're completing  
21 so agencies are creating those plans to collect data  
22 and many other things, getting their vendors to  
23 adhere to the new standards so that by July 2023  
24 we're able to begin that process, but I can speak, I  
25 don't want to speak for, but I do know that the

1  
2 Department of Education also takes this very  
3 seriously and is in the process of community  
4 engagement, specifically with parents and students  
5 themselves, and I would defer all other questions  
6 that are agency specific to those specific agencies.

7 CHAIRPERSON WON: I think it's really  
8 important that we have a centralized process that all  
9 of the feedback for all of the agencies are being  
10 brought back to MOCS because it's very clear through  
11 our hearings on PASSPort that all these agencies are  
12 doing all kinds of things on their own and there is  
13 not a centralized process. Therefore, the data is  
14 running off the walls so I hope that for 2023 there  
15 is a centralized process, whether it be 311 or  
16 wherever it is, that we are allowing the feedback to  
17 be collected singularly so that we can analyze the  
18 data and figure out what the recommendations are to  
19 make sure that we have high-quality food assurance.

20 I believe Council Member Farias had a  
21 followup question as well.

22 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Just along those  
23 lines, as someone who has worked in the non-profit  
24 sector before, when you're not given individualized  
25 standards of what needs to be asked and how it needs

1  
2 to be collected and then how that aggregated  
3 information goes back to the central hub, you can end  
4 up having all the agencies asking a bunch of  
5 different questions where we can't actually evaluate  
6 that data and make really good assumptions or next  
7 steps from them. In the same breath, I urge you folks  
8 to consider coming up with at least a basis of  
9 questions that are necessary to be asked, how  
10 frequently they're going to be, set a schedule, and  
11 where they need to be centralized within the  
12 (INAUDIBLE) side of the admin just so we can actually  
13 be able to have good data sets that look the same. If  
14 other folks want to have additional questions that  
15 can help us with certain populations like youth or  
16 seniors, etc., that's always helpful for those  
17 subsets, but not having a standardized process or a  
18 standardized set of questions is not helpful to us.  
19 It feels like in a year we'll be asking the same  
20 questions.

21 CHAIRPERSON WON: As we mentioned, all of  
22 us as Council Members, we're hearing feedback from  
23 students, seniors, immigrant communities, CBOs about  
24 the quality of the food that they're being  
25 distributed. For the food quality assurance and even

1  
2 the quantity of the food distributed, a second grader  
3 should not be receiving the same quantity of food as  
4 a fifth grader in a school so for the quantity that  
5 is distributed, whether it's in a nursing home or in  
6 a different location, through these agencies, what is  
7 the protocol on the quantity that each vendor is  
8 required to distribute through all these agencies?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thank you  
10 for that question. I do know that each agency, as I  
11 mentioned whether they're procuring different food  
12 types or meals, specifically within the Department of  
13 Education, even for the Department for the Aging,  
14 there are specific federally or state-mandated  
15 requirements around that, and I'd be happy to convene  
16 the agencies to be able to speak more to that with  
17 regard to what their specific serving sizes are and  
18 anything else related to the agencies and what meals  
19 they are providing.

20 CHAIRPERSON WON: I know that we each have  
21 many complaints from our constituents about all these  
22 different agencies on the quality of food as well as  
23 the quantity of food. When a food vendor fails to  
24 fulfill its contractual obligations and breaches the  
25 contract, what is the accountability? Can you walk us

1 through the process when there's a complaint, for  
2 example, of rotten food or food that should not have  
3 been served? What is the process for accountability?  
4

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I don't  
6 manage food contracts. I believe that I would defer  
7 that to an agency who's actually in the business of  
8 managing that contract.

9 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: Hi.  
10 Regarding quality assurance, again I'm just speaking  
11 for the specific contracts that DCAS manages mostly  
12 for ACS and DOC, we have what's called the Bureau of  
13 Quality Assurance. What they do is they ensure that  
14 all the food that's being delivered by the vendors is  
15 meeting the specifications that are contained in the  
16 contract, and, if certain items are failing to meet  
17 those standards, there can be deductions, the food  
18 can be returned to the vendor, and we can require a  
19 replacement, and, if the vendor is kind of a habitual  
20 offender, then we would start thinking about  
21 corrective action plans or potential breach of  
22 contract and moving on to the next vendor on the list  
23 so there are various contractual remedies available  
24 to us depending on the nature of the infraction that  
25 we're talking about.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON WON: Got it. Just so that I'm  
3 understanding, you're saying that the Bureau of  
4 Quality Assurance is what oversees every single  
5 agency for quality assurance?

6 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: For  
7 things that DCAS buys so this is a bureau that lives  
8 within DCAS.

9 CHAIRPERSON WON: Does each agency keep  
10 accountability for themselves then?

11 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: We  
12 do accountability for the agencies that we buy for,  
13 which is ACS and DOC. I can't speak to the other  
14 agencies.

15 CHAIRPERSON WON: Got it. How, if at all,  
16 do city agencies work with non-profit vendors to help  
17 them identify New York state food procurements that  
18 are available?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Could you  
20 repeat the question?

21 CHAIRPERSON WON: How, if at all, do city  
22 agencies work with non-profit vendors to help them  
23 identify the New York state food products that are  
24 available?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I don't know how to respond to that question. Do you want to explain?

CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. I will pass it over to Council Member Gale Brewer.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I think what is being asked is even with the DFTA, for instance, you've got all the non-profits, from Project Fine to whomever, purchasing locally, individually so how can the city agencies work with them, in my hope, to buy local.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Got it. This is where I see the 2 streams of Local Law 50 and our Good Food Purchasing work meeting, which is we're supporting again agencies to help, we need more data. We need more and better data, and human service contracts represent upwards of 40 percent of all of the food that the city buys so supporting those human service contracts, those non-profits, with all different kinds of things and especially making sure that they, for instance, I know that the Grow NYC Wholesale Market, 90 percent of their business is with non-profits, which is fantastic, but also how we can either encourage more businesses to utilize organizations such as that that have good

1  
2 traceability to where their food is coming from,  
3 their fresh product, but also, again as my colleagues  
4 have said, we are happily willing and able to talk  
5 and find some of those ways to support human service  
6 contractors in a way that gets them even better food.

7 CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you. I want to  
8 acknowledge Council Member Krishnan who has also  
9 joined us, and I will pass it over to Council Member  
10 Brewer to continue the next line of questioning.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.  
12 I just want to start by understanding who buys food  
13 for which agencies. Because DCAS, Correction, which  
14 should be easy, it has Rikers and the Barge, right?  
15 Is there some place else you buy food for? Rikers and  
16 the Barge.

17 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: I  
18 don't have a full list of locations for DOC, but we  
19 could get that.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'd like to know  
21 that.

22 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN:  
23 Sure.

24  
25



CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Would DCAS also, you say ACS, but don't you also do the shelters or you don't? Who buys food for the shelters?

ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: No.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'm trying to find out who in hell's name buys food for these agencies. It's very confusing to the outside world. Go ahead.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Within the DSS umbrella, DHS has their own procurements..

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: And, this is a change, HRA used to procure their food through DCAS, it is now this new procurement that should be executed imminently is independent, it is not through the city.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Hold up. I call DSS and HRA the same thing, but it's not is what you're saying. DSS does their own procurement?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And HRA, what did you just say that they do?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Formerly, they were with DCAS. They are now executing their contract with a private distributor to procure,

1 store, and distribute food to the pantries across the  
2 city.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, for the  
5 pantries? All right. So you're only doing ACS is what  
6 you're saying?

7 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN:  
8 Okay. Each childcare center doesn't do it on their  
9 own. They all do it through you?

10 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN:  
11 They're doing it through the centralized contracts,  
12 yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. DFTA, you also  
14 ostensibly do even though everybody does it on their  
15 own?

16 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: We  
17 don't handle DFTA's food procurements.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You don't do DFTA?

19 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: We  
20 do not.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: This is a mess. Each  
22 one does it on their own. This is a freaking mess.  
23 Okay, so DOE, you don't do DOE. I understand that.  
24 You talk to DOE, but you don't do DOE. Who else has  
25

1  
2 food? The Health and Hospitals, you don't do. Who  
3 else has food?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: The  
5 agencies that procure food include Health and  
6 Hospitals, the Department of Education, the 2  
7 agencies through DCAS, DSS, DFTA, the Department of  
8 Health, and DYCD.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: DYCD for the youth  
10 programs?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Correct.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Does anybody do  
13 scratch cooking except for some of the senior  
14 centers? The Correction kitchen is closed. I was just  
15 there personally. It sucks, excuse my French.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: When it's  
17 in operation, DOC kitchen does scratch cooking. We  
18 know that there are a number of schools and  
19 increasingly..

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Some, some, very few.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: We'll get  
22 there. Certainly, some of the senior adult centers..

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, some.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Some, and  
25 that is the majority of meals prepared onsite.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Can we get a  
3 list, first of all just like an organizational chart  
4 as to who's buying from whom or something so we have  
5 some sense of this? Then I assume for ACS, for  
6 instance, that's not scratch cooking. That's all  
7 delivered, right, to the childcare centers. What kind  
8 of food does ACS partake in with their centers as  
9 DCAS is doing their purchasing?

10 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: I  
11 think we would just have to defer to ACS on what  
12 they're doing at each specific center.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But you can get us  
14 this information so we have an organizational chart...

15 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN:  
16 Absolutely.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: For DSS purchasing  
18 for the shelters, I assume that's what they do,  
19 that's all delivered. There's no scratch cooking in  
20 any shelter whatsoever, and I hate that because you  
21 never smell the food and that's actually a mental  
22 health issue, not to be able to smell cooking. I can  
23 have a whole conversation about that. That would be  
24 helpful just to know who's doing what because it does  
25 add up to a lot, particularly with DOE.

1  
2                   During the summer, DYCD will be  
3 purchasing more for summer camps and so on or you'll  
4 get a list of all the purchasing that they do and for  
5 what?

6                   EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: For sure.

7                   CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. The Health  
8 Department, who are they purchasing for? The food  
9 pantries or not?

10                  EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Actually  
11 no. A lot of the mental health providers, there's  
12 food provision, a small scale but still food  
13 provision...

14                  CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But it's something.  
15 Okay. The reason I ask, one of the issues that we're  
16 all trying, when you go to Correction, the only thing  
17 fresh there is a banana that's unripe. I tried to  
18 open it. You couldn't even open the skin. The apples  
19 and the oranges and every single, I knew literally  
20 almost every detainee there for some reason, and they  
21 all need fresh fruits and vegetables. Maybe we could  
22 even have Grow NYC at Rikers. Something has to give  
23 at Rikers. You don't have to go from place to place.  
24 You've got 8 institutions, but it's one island so  
25 please let's figure this out.

1  
2           On the state level, as we know, because I  
3 happen to like Commissioner Ball, head of Ag, so he  
4 realized that the onion under the RFP was a  
5 California onion. As you know, we simply switched the  
6 RFP to a New York onion, and, guess what, we're  
7 buying New York onions for the jails so we should be  
8 able to do the same thing here, for God's sake. You  
9 know my onion story, but I could give it over and  
10 over again. Even for Rikers, are we buying local  
11 onions or are they coming from California?

12           ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: I am  
13 happy to report that out of the 534 individual items  
14 that DCAS carries, currently we have 152 coming from  
15 New York sourcing including onions, carrots,  
16 cucumbers, apples, potatoes, celery, ground beef,  
17 various breads, various flours, and various kosher  
18 and halal meals so about 30 percent of DCAS' entire  
19 portfolio is now coming from New York state, and, if  
20 you take out shelf stable items, which are hard to  
21 source in New York, we're up to 44 percent so really  
22 obviously a lot of work to do, but we're happy 50  
23 percent of the fresh produce that DCAS is procuring  
24 is coming from New York state, 61 percent of the  
25 bread and baking products is coming from New York

1  
2 state, and thanks to that meeting that we had pre-  
3 pandemic, it would've been nice to meet more  
4 recently, but with your office back when you were  
5 Manhattan Borough President, that was really eye-  
6 opening for us, and we've really tried to move the  
7 needle quite a bit since then.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I appreciate  
9 that. When you go to Rikers, you do not see any of  
10 these products on the lunch platter so there's just  
11 lots of work not to be discussed today, but we've got  
12 to figure this out. I think one of your issues is  
13 that when you talk to the vendors, and the vendors  
14 are challenging, the distributors are challenging,  
15 but they don't know necessarily what is local unless  
16 there's some way of getting that information. We need  
17 to have very granular information. I know we talked  
18 about it earlier, but have you been able to get, if  
19 it's Grow NYC, obviously, they will give you that  
20 information, but for these vendors, like the big ones  
21 like Sysco and others, I don't think they give you  
22 the information that it's local or not or how do we  
23 get that so that we know? You talked about it  
24 earlier, but could you be more specific?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: For the past 3 years, it has been optional and we now, through EO-8, are requiring, I don't have the specific template, a form at the moment of contract-signing and negotiations to say these are the things that you're going to be able to report on us every year, is that correct, and we're working through our first moment here, but so far so good where you give them the upfront notice of we need to know where this stuff is coming from and we need to know all of the moments where it was processed, etc., so being really clear in requiring it is the tool that we now have and I have every reason to believe we'll be able to get there.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right now as we speak, if Sysco or Baldor or somebody is a distributor, they're going to tell you that the potatoes come from Ulster County or whatever farm, is that how it's supposed to work?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Correct. All of the data that is currently on the MOFP website and you see the raw data, you can see where there's holes but also where a specific distributor says this is where my corn, my apple, my cabbage, whatever it



1 is came from, and that's the supply chain  
2 transparency that we're aiming for.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. When we tour,  
5 as you know I've taken people upstate 3 times, 4  
6 times, anybody wants to go, Cornell's willing to do  
7 it again because sometimes people never been upstate  
8 and talked to farmers, you have, but other agencies  
9 have not so the question is in order to be the New  
10 York, make this up, celery, lettuce, whatever, they  
11 need a year in advance to plan. You cannot grow  
12 lettuce in 2 minutes so what are we doing to work  
13 with the upstate farmers, because unless you tell  
14 them DCAS is going to buy for Correction, I'm making  
15 this up, the celery, the onions, they're not going to  
16 be ready so how are we working with the farmers to  
17 say, I mean in the past I was always told we can't  
18 promise to scale, we can't promise. Well, you have to  
19 promise the farmers so how are we going to make sure  
20 they have enough onions, etc., to be able to supply  
21 the City of New York in the way that we want? How is  
22 that going to work?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thank you  
24 for that question. There are a few steps that I'd  
25 like to point to. I keep going back to the posting of

1 that raw data. You know who looked at it most? Local  
2 farmers because they want to see what are the things  
3 that we're buying, and then, if I'm a farmer that can  
4 satisfy 25 percent of it, how can I find another  
5 farmer and then we know that there are aggregation  
6 hubs and even more in the pipeline to be built across  
7 the state so signaling with what we're buying is one  
8 effort, but also, again, this regional Food Working  
9 Group where we're also identifying federal and state  
10 opportunities to have those aggregation hubs  
11 developed. I mentioned sharing not just what agencies  
12 are procuring what but the public version of that is  
13 also and when are they going to make their  
14 solicitations so we know DOE in Fiscal '23 has a big  
15 moment out there. We want to start signaling that  
16 these are the things that we want to be buying so  
17 we're working both with supply chain to be able to  
18 signal this is what we want and also showing people  
19 what it is that we're buying. There's just a few of  
20 the ways. Commissioner Ball spent a whole day up at  
21 Gracie (phonetic) last week for our convening that we  
22 had. We have a fantastic relationship now with Ag and  
23 Markets, and, again whether it's through the...

24  
25 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (INAUDIBLE) farmer.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Yes, and remarkable Commissioner and so just trying to make sure that we are signaling where our demand is so that people can either work with distributors or direct in the ways that are possible.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I could talk about this forever. How are we going to deal with, DOE has their own procurement, Health and Hospitals has their own procurement, how do we work with them? I guess a separate hearing to figure this out because, with all due respect, the kids aren't going to eat Mayor Adams' plant-based, I won't eat it either, unless it has fresh ingredients. So far, they're not too fresh. What are we going to do with DOE and Health and Hospitals and then, go ahead.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: What I will say is that DOE and H&H, while non-mayoral agencies, are the longest, most historic partners with the city and good food purchasing and so whether that's H&H and through their specific vendors, they're committed and making great strides around good food purchasing.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I know, but there's not only Mayor Adams's plant-based whatever, but

1 there's also supposed to be locally based, I think  
2 it's Thursday or Mondays, I can never remember...

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thursdays.

5 GENERAL COUNSEL MEREDITH: Meatless  
6 Mondays, Thursdays, Sunday, Friday, something. The  
7 only thing locally based recently were the Jamaican  
8 meat patties. That was nice, but there wasn't a lot  
9 else locally based. I love meat patties and I love  
10 them from Brooklyn, but I want my farmers upstate  
11 also to be part of locally sourced food so, to be  
12 honest with you, that was it last Thursday. There was  
13 nothing else. I appreciate that there is this effort.  
14 One other question I have is how are we going to  
15 deal, if at all, to improve scratch-based cooking.  
16 It's more expensive. It's this and that, but it is  
17 something that we need to do so it's not at  
18 Correction, very few schools, more senior centers  
19 would like to do it so what are we doing on the issue  
20 because when you do scratch-based, you're also more  
21 likely to have more locally sourced so what about  
22 scratch-based?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: We share  
24 your interest, your commitments around that, and also  
25 as an administration are working on the long-term

1 vision and operational plans to be able to get there,  
2 not just as you mentioned within DOE but also across  
3 other agencies as well. This is about also connecting  
4 the food provision to education, and what better way  
5 than through cooking.

6  
7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I hope that  
8 when you get us a listing and the org chart, you'll  
9 also include all those, probably on the dashboard.  
10 It's the Comptroller's dashboard that you're talking  
11 about, right, when you're talking about your  
12 dashboard.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: We have an  
14 independent one through MOFP that looks at all of the  
15 data available for Fiscal '19. In the fall, '20 and  
16 '21 will be uploaded that looks at the city but then  
17 also by agency across anything from dairy to fruits  
18 and vegetables, tubers, ruminant meats, grains so you  
19 can actually see what each agency is buying and then  
20 another layer to that is the carbon equivalence of  
21 that food so that's very different and distinct from  
22 the Comptroller's, but our visualization of what  
23 we're buying.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Other issue of  
25 course involving EDC, and this is again 20 years of

1  
2 discussion, but what are some other impediments to  
3 buying locally? I understood the freaking lettuce  
4 washing machine and the apple cutters and blah, blah,  
5 blah. Are there other issues that EDC should be  
6 working on to purchase locally that are  
7 infrastructure-related?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I would  
9 welcome that conversation with EDC.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, because you  
11 know there's a lot. There's a long list. Okay, I'm  
12 done for now. I could go on. Thank you very much.  
13 Let's go to the other members.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much. I  
15 just have one question before I move to Member  
16 questions. It's regarding the survey, and I'm just  
17 asking this to ask this. Do we think mandating the  
18 survey in any capacity with some level of enforcement  
19 or penalty would encourage participation and/or hurt  
20 contracts?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I would  
22 love to have that conversation with DOHMH who is the  
23 agency responsible for making the food standards  
24 really happen. I know they put a lot of thought into  
25 that and would welcome that conversation.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay, great. Thank you. I'd like to kick it over to Chair Won.

CHAIRPERSON WON: We're going to shift focus just for a little bit for a few minutes for the Intro 136 on language access.

Local Law 30 of 2017 requires the city to publish 10 citywide designated languages based on a specific formula using census and DOE enrollment data. How often does the Mayor's Office assess which languages are the 10 citywide designated languages?

CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: Chair Won, thank you for that question. I would have to defer to the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs on that, but we're happy to make the connection offline because it is a very, very important topic, and, yes, the 10 identified languages are just a subset of the many, many languages spoken in New York.

CHAIRPERSON WON: Could you describe how the Mayor's Office tests emergency messaging and what role MOCS has in contracting outside vendors for that?

CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: I'm sorry, Chair Won. I missed the first part of the question.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON WON: Could you describe how  
3 the Mayor's Office tests emergency messaging, for  
4 example, during Hurricane Ida, when all of our phones  
5 got the emergency message saying that there is a  
6 hurricane on the way, and the role that MOCS has in  
7 contracting outside vendors for that?

8 DEPUTY CHIEF-OF-STAFF SULLIVAN: I think  
9 we'd have to defer that conversation to NYCEM, but we  
10 would play our standard role in overseeing the  
11 procurement process and facilitating it for those  
12 contracts.

13 CHAIRPERSON WON: Got it. Please describe  
14 how the Mayor's Office targets remote outreach  
15 through digital platforms using LEP populations and  
16 ethnic media. Do all the agencies use these methods?

17 DEPUTY CHIEF-OF-STAFF SULLIVAN: I think  
18 we might need Office of Community and Ethnic Media  
19 for that one, but, yeah, happy to continue that  
20 conversation.

21 CHAIRPERSON WON: You're saying that the  
22 Mayor's Office of Media does all the outreach  
23 planning for emergencies as well as...

24 DEPUTY CHIEF-OF-STAFF SULLIVAN: I think I  
25 missed the first part of the previous question.



CHAIRPERSON WON: If you could describe how the Mayor's Office targets remote outreach through digital platforms used by LEP populations and ethnic media.

DEPUTY CHIEF-OF-STAFF SULLIVAN: I think we might need NYCEM for that one as well.

CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. What guidance has the Mayor's Office disseminated to agencies regarding language assistance provisions for populations with lower rates of literacy in their native language? For example, I'm just trying to make it easier, to humanize it, someone who, for example, my grandmother, she is Korean but she grew up in Japan because of the Japanese occupation. She never learned to read and write Korean, but she can speak it fluently so for folks like that who may understand a language colloquially but cannot read and write, what is the Mayor's Office's plan for that?

CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: Chair Won, thank you for these questions. They're very important, and we are committed to equity and inclusion in connecting New Yorkers with the services that they're looking for in their spoken language and in providing written materials in their preferred language, but, here at

1  
2 MOCS, we are focused on making it easiest to do  
3 business with the city so that is sort of the  
4 perspective of our organization. Some of these  
5 questions about connecting New Yorkers to emergency  
6 services and things like that, we're happy to take  
7 this engagement and open it up to our fellow partners  
8 at the Mayor's Office who are more specialized in  
9 some of these topics.

10 CHAIRPERSON WON: Okay. I'm going to  
11 forward most of these questions to you because it's  
12 clear a lot of these questions you will have to defer  
13 to other parts of the Mayor's Office. I did have  
14 questions for the advocates. Should I ask them now or  
15 do you want me to? Okay. Thank you. I'll turn it back  
16 to Chair Farias.

17 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much.  
18 Just a reminder to my Colleagues, we will have a 5-  
19 minute clock that we will try to stick to. The first  
20 Member up for questions is Council Member Nurse.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: It's always nice  
22 when you're at the top of the list. Thank you all and  
23 thank you, Chairs. I just have 3 questions.

24 Executive Director Kate, you mentioned in  
25 your testimony the need for programmatic

1  
2 opportunities for agencies to learn and exchange in  
3 order to advance this initiative so to share their  
4 experiences. Can you just share a little bit more  
5 about that and just mindful I only have 4 minutes  
6 left.

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: No problem.  
8 The people that we meet with weekly are the program  
9 staff. It could be a person from ACS who is actually  
10 developing the menu. She's not developing the  
11 contracts necessarily, but she maybe heard from  
12 Health and Hospitals about a great tactic that they  
13 had, this is a real example, about labeling or  
14 calling something different on the menu to solicit  
15 greater participation. Nobody likes to choose  
16 something that's called the vegetarian chili but the  
17 3-bean something was really good so they're  
18 exchanging ideas like that that could help elicit  
19 participation in a different way or specific  
20 collateral that gets sent out, what resonates with  
21 families or different people. Those are the kind of  
22 programmatic changes. We brought in the Better Health  
23 Foundation to be able to talk about placement, like  
24 if you're going to put a product at eye level versus

1  
2 down lower, things like that that help all of our  
3 agency programmatic staff serve their meals better.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you. My next  
5 question is really more based on resiliency and kind  
6 of, I love the Cool Food Pledge, but maybe you could  
7 share what additional in-city infrastructure can  
8 really support achieving the good food purchasing  
9 goals. You mentioned farms at NYCHA. I helped build  
10 out a couple of those farms, but those are going to  
11 achieve scale. Those are educational opportunities  
12 for people to see and be like this is amazing, but,  
13 when we're talking about scaling up for some of the  
14 things that can be produced quite quickly like leafy  
15 greens and things, what can we do or advocate for to  
16 help achieve some of that?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: This is one  
18 of the reasons why we committed to producing the Food  
19 Forward 10-year Food Policy Plans while we were still  
20 in the pandemic because so many of the lessons,  
21 particularly from a resiliency perspective, we didn't  
22 want to be missed. Something that I know, sort of  
23 related to procurement, is always having a second  
24 item in a procurement that's acceptable so if we  
25 can't get this item we're going to go for that and

1  
2 it's already achieved so from a procurement place,  
3 there's some little lessons like that that are really  
4 valuable, but I would say also our new program called  
5 Groceries to Go, which is still in a pilot phase, but  
6 this now allows us to work with small businesses,  
7 particularly small grocers, to be able to get people  
8 meals any time that they need it. We were not able to  
9 do that during the pandemic. We worked with very,  
10 very large vendors to do home delivered meals  
11 essentially, and now we have a mechanism that NYCEM  
12 could activate in an emergency to make sure, weather-  
13 related or otherwise, that will enable us to restore  
14 and support small businesses. Those are just 2, but  
15 goal 4 of the 10-year Food Policy Plan is  
16 specifically about sustainability and resilience, and  
17 I would love to continue that conversation with you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I guess I'm curious  
19 if you know offhand the percentage of contracts that  
20 are for locally produced, in-city produced food?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Again, a  
22 deep learning from the pandemic is that we do not in  
23 this city produce a lot of food. We know we need more  
24 opportunities for businesses and manufacturing of  
25

1 food in the city and that, again, means a  
2 conversation with our partners at Planning...

3  
4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Do you have a  
5 percentage maybe, just to understand the baseline  
6 we're at or, Chairs, can I request that that be a  
7 part of the followup just to get an assessment?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I would  
9 rather get you a real number rather than something  
10 that's not going to be helpful.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you so much.

12 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much,  
13 Council Member Nurse. Next up for questions is  
14 Council Member Lee.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Sorry. I don't know  
16 the order anymore because we're not on Zoom. I may go  
17 over 5 minutes. I'm sorry, but I'll try to stick to 5  
18 minutes. Thanks so much for being here. As a former  
19 non-profit executive and DFTA senior center homebound  
20 Meals-on-Wheels runner and afterschool program, all  
21 that stuff, so I love talking about food, food  
22 access, contracting, and procurements so I just had a  
23 bunch of thoughts were going through my head. Just on  
24 background too, I know that for DFTA, I can't speak  
25 for other agencies but for DFTA, they actually had a

1 nutritionist that worked very closely with us that  
2 even went through the different ounces of how much  
3 food we're supposed to provide. If we didn't meet  
4 those standards, like they even inspected the  
5 kitchens and observed all the fruit flies and then,  
6 if we didn't have our ducks in a row, there's always  
7 a CAP, corrective action plan, that you need to do.  
8 If you don't do that, it goes in VENDEX. Granted, the  
9 audits have been years later but then you get a  
10 negative ding in the VENDEX system which is not what  
11 you want because then that sort of lowers your score  
12 in the system. I think there are checks and balances  
13 there in terms of PASSPort which is leaps and bounds  
14 what HSS and all those other things were, but, having  
15 said that, I think to echo some of my Colleagues'  
16 points is that that's DFTA but then as an agency like  
17 ours that I used to run that has multiple city agency  
18 contracts, I think that the information is there in  
19 PASSPort, it's not that it's not there because we're  
20 required to dump all that information there, I think  
21 the challenge is that city agencies require different  
22 things depending on which contracts you have and so  
23 the reporting does not look the same so we're not  
24 necessarily comparing apples to apples. I think  
25

1  
2 that's where the challenge becomes and so I'm just  
3 wondering is it ultimately MOCS that has to oversee  
4 that process in conjunction with the city agencies or  
5 how do we help to fix to make that process and system  
6 more consistent? I understand that obviously  
7 different programs require different things, but, at  
8 the same time, how do we make the database more  
9 centralized and easily accessible?

10 CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: Thank you, Council  
11 Member Lee. It's very helpful to have your background  
12 and the context to understand the question which  
13 you're asking. MOCS in partnership with MOFP, I think  
14 we are shared on the front that we want to make it  
15 easier for our human service providers to do business  
16 with the city and really cutting through the  
17 bureaucracy and trying to standardize and streamline  
18 reporting requirements is something that's very high  
19 on our strategic initiatives, but, to echo what my  
20 MOFP co-panelists are saying, different agencies have  
21 different needs and they serve different populations  
22 so there will be some differences, but I think we  
23 share the load and we're in partnership.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: On our side as  
25 Council Members so that we can go into the database



1  
2 and easily check that because I know for one agency  
3 it could be this but then how do we make sure that  
4 we're holding all the other agencies accountable so  
5 is it through that audit/VENDEX/CAP system or how do  
6 you guys ensure that there's accountability there  
7 across the board?

8 CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: I certainly think  
9 that's one of the tools.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. The other  
11 question I had, and thank you for your comment about  
12 the (INAUDIBLE) because I think the challenge half  
13 the time is that there's a policy but then the  
14 (INAUDIBLE) don't always know what's going on and so  
15 they're telling us one thing even though we know that  
16 the policy is something else so that can be  
17 challenging so it's good that you guys are doing  
18 that. I guess my question, sort of flipping it a  
19 little bit, is going to DOE, and I don't know if this  
20 is something that you guys can speak to but one of  
21 the things I've been hearing a lot from the  
22 principles and the school teachers and the PTA  
23 presidents is that there's such an incredible amount  
24 of food waste that's happening and so is there a way  
25 to use the contracting process to include something

1 with the food vendors so that they have some  
2 direction of what to do with that food waste because  
3 what ends up happening is they just throw it away so,  
4 given how many meals we serve in the school system,  
5 I'm wondering what can be done about that.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thank you  
7 for raising that concern. I recall at a hearing maybe  
8 a week or 2 ago with DOE, (INAUDIBLE) highlighted  
9 some new initiatives that they would be rolling out  
10 in the coming weeks and months and so I would defer  
11 to the DOE plans around that but thank you for  
12 raising that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, awesome. I  
14 don't know, again, if this is MOCS or DOE or MOFP,  
15 but, for example, the cultural food sensitivity thing  
16 is something that I think is super, super important,  
17 and even including in my district, we have the second  
18 largest Asian population in the city, and so I'm just  
19 wondering when it comes to the contracting, and this  
20 is something that we've been really wanting to see  
21 for years, and I don't know if it's been implemented  
22 across different city agencies, but similar to M/WBEs  
23 and how you get awarded certain higher points perhaps  
24 if you're an M/WBE organization, can we add something  
25

1  
2 like if you serve certain populations and include  
3 that in the contracting RFP process where if you  
4 serve certain populations with that cultural  
5 sensitivity and background, if you're able to achieve  
6 that, you get a certain higher score or it's weighted  
7 differently or something? I don't know if there's a  
8 way to do that in MOCS or across the agencies.

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: What I  
10 would say is that absolutely, and, again, incredible  
11 learning from the COVID pandemic about what food  
12 types and cultures and preferences are truly needed  
13 across the city, and Mayor Adams feels incredibly  
14 strongly about this so, again, going for all new  
15 contracts they are being examined to make sure that  
16 the appropriate language and commitments then from  
17 vendors and capacities are included.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I think that sort of  
19 concerned me because I know that at the last hearing  
20 when I was asking a question about DOE, they only  
21 have 3 vendors across all the schools and the  
22 contract ends, I believe, in 2024 so I'm just wanting  
23 to see if we can prepare for that now.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: 100  
25 percent.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Also, I know that for the New York state sales and Grow NYC, there are certain vegetables and fresh produce that are available, but, again, when you're talking about populations that have specific food needs, a lot of the vegetables and fresh produce are not there and so I think you alluded to it before but I just wanted to confirm you guys are open to using local supermarkets, vendors, and how do they get into the system to be able to participate?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: The Groceries to Go program is separate and distinct. I believe it's again going to be operated through the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and I'll defer to them on the specific eligibility for that pilot program, but I will say, again, with a nod to what I just mentioned around different types of foods, cultural, ethnic, specialty items that that gets acknowledged in contracts going forward.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. I'll stop. I went over my time. I'm sorry.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much. Next up is Council Member Williams.

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COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I'll be fast.

Hi. My question is about food desert communities. We know that roughly 1 million of our residents are considered food insecure. I definitely have parts of my district that can be considered food deserts so just wanted to know how your office works with these communities. Of course, the Council has done a lot of work prior to even being in the Council, and I know this Council also continues to do that work so just wanted to know what your office's role is.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thank you

for that. I really, again, want to extend deep appreciation to the Council for the additional 30 million dollars to, not calling it EFAP because it's going to have a new name, the former Emergency Food Assistance Program, and we, through MOFP and partnership with DSS and the Office of Economic Opportunity, are looking at where there's gaps in not just food pantries but also where there's need for more emergency food, and it might be in a district that doesn't have a lot of food pantries and so thinking about how we're able to support mobile distributions going into those communities, that's one acknowledgment there about making sure that

1 coming off of the gravity and frankly the  
2 extraordinary amounts of food that were available  
3 throughout the city during the COVID pandemic to make  
4 sure that we're also supporting not just the free  
5 food distributions but also acknowledging and paying  
6 attention, summer food service starts tomorrow. That  
7 is a free meal for any kid under the age of 18.  
8 Making sure that our benefits access programs are  
9 reaching these areas and prioritizing those,  
10 particularly the racial inclusion and equity  
11 neighborhoods that drive absolutely everything that  
12 this administration is doing to make sure that we  
13 have resources for food, childcare, and many other  
14 things.  
15

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So your office  
17 specifically is serving a coordinating role? Are you  
18 driving the effort? What specifically, do you have  
19 any specific initiatives?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: We do not  
21 operate programs other than the sort of governance  
22 initiatives, which are for the city at large, but  
23 we're making sure that, for instance, Summer Food  
24 Service Program, in times in the previous  
25 administration and we really reduced the allowable

1  
2 distance of how frequently summer meal sites could,  
3 the distance between them. We work with EDC and  
4 others as they're thinking about the Fresh Program  
5 and different programs and really trying to  
6 underscore again that the penetration of these  
7 programs is happening where they're needed most so we  
8 provide advisement and oversight for all city  
9 agencies to make sure that the Mayor's food  
10 priorities are expressed in all of the programs that  
11 are operated.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I yield my time,  
13 Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you. I'd now  
15 like to call on Council Member Joseph.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Mine,  
17 of course, will be around schools because I had my  
18 hearing and my students, they said the food was  
19 horrible. How do we change that? A lot of them are  
20 not for Vegan Friday. Maybe the approach should be  
21 different. In your previous conversation, you said  
22 you were doing surveys and I think we left the  
23 students out. We tend to give them stuff but not make  
24 them part of the conversation.

25

1

2

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thank you.

3

I also have 2 students who, as of today, are in 5th

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and 3rd grade, and I hear a lot myself. I also know

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that to operate 1,200 kitchens across the city is an

6

enormous undertaking, and, unfortunately, what's

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going on in schools is not comparable to others

8

because of all different kinds of things from

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equipment to size, my kids are in a very large

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school, it's very challenging for them to get the

11

kind of service that they were used to in a 300-

12

person public school so these are all the factors

13

that MOFP is working with DOE leadership on to make

14

sure that school food becomes the model for the

15

country, not just in terms of the meal provision but

16

also in the education that we're providing around

17

food so this is a lofty, long-term vision but I share

18

your experiences and am committed to working with the

19

Department of Education and the Council on that.

20

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I know Chris also

21

talked about Farm to School. Is that something you're

22

working on? Could you share a little bit more about

23

that initiative?

24

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Farm to

25

School is very hard to define, but I do know that



1  
2 there are just shy of 1,000 school gardens across the  
3 city, again making those connections and even one  
4 school garden is very different than the next school  
5 garden and the next school garden but making sure  
6 that there is not just a directory of where those are  
7 but also trying to make the integration more and more  
8 to the local product, the New York state product that  
9 is coming into the school, that it's not just the  
10 Jamaican beef patty, but I know that we have apples,  
11 I know that we have carrots, I know that we have  
12 other items, and making sure that that can become  
13 connected and that kids have a pride around that. It  
14 is New York Pride after all, right, and so those are  
15 the kinds of things that Farm to School is everything  
16 about learning about the food that you're eating to  
17 connecting how food is grown and ultimately building  
18 those lifelong habits.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: (INAUDIBLE) a very  
20 important topic. I used to run a summer program with  
21 the (INAUDIBLE) and lots of food went to waste, and  
22 this is a city where we also have a lot of children  
23 that go to sleep at night hungry. How do we minimize  
24 the waste?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Thank you for that. Food waste is something that the city takes incredibly seriously and we've been working for years with the Department of Agriculture federally. The school meal program is a federally authorized program, and we're looking to find ways in which we can, and I know DOE has a few ideas that they're exploring to be able to minimize that and also ensure that food that is able to be distributed elsewhere can, where they're working to solve for that.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chairs. That was my questions.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much. I'd now like to call Council Member Aviles.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairs, and thank you so much. Along the lines of continuing in the food element, one of the things in the last hearing that we heard and certainly I've experienced as a mom of 2 public school students is the enormous waste that happens in school buildings which is generally a result of state or federal guidelines around what must be provided. I'm assuming that this is also potentially a problem with other city agencies that may have similar

1 regulations that really just don't work, that lend to  
2 continued food waste so I was wondering what does the  
3 advocacy of the agencies look like to push against  
4 federal and state regulations that really isn't  
5 sensible on the ground and we see what it leads to?  
6 Also, how does rescuing food look like and weigh into  
7 contracts and operational aspects?  
8

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Again,  
10 thank you for continuing to bring this topic up. I  
11 would defer to the agencies themselves and the  
12 language in their specific contracts. I do know that  
13 over the course of the pandemic, there were specific  
14 elements included into those contracts where if  
15 something couldn't be delivered, obviously we're not  
16 doing a million home-delivered meals a day anymore so  
17 the elements will have to change, but I would say  
18 also last Tuesday we convened the first in the  
19 country's convening in a leadup to the White House  
20 Conference on Hunger, Health, and Nutrition at Gracie  
21 Mansion with Mayor Adams, and the White House is  
22 looking to New York City to make recommendations  
23 across all federal programs for change. I've had  
24 several conversations specifically with USDA, and I  
25 think this is an element, again, not just about

1  
2 nutrition standards but about those connections to  
3 sustainability and to environment, and Washington is  
4 also looking at connecting food to climate goals so  
5 that provides a great opportunity for us to share our  
6 experiences and show how federal leadership can  
7 really benefit all cities and rural areas as well.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: I definitely  
9 appreciate that advocacy as this has been such a  
10 longstanding issue, and the amount of waste is mind-  
11 blowing in the midst of ongoing food insecurity  
12 across the city where we see so very long lines of  
13 folks needing food, and in every public school  
14 building we are throwing away untouched, perfectly  
15 good food. Thank you for that. I hope we will push  
16 them as hard as possible and along the lines of  
17 culturally relevant food as well which is another  
18 element where we haven't seen nearly enough gains in  
19 relation to both the urgency and just the  
20 longstanding advocacy because communities of color,  
21 immigrant communities didn't just show up. They've  
22 been here for hundreds of years so thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: One more question  
24 about the seniors because, maybe this is for DCAS,  
25 but right now when you're running a center and you

1  
2 have to put your menu list months and months in  
3 advance, again this is 20 years of discussion, it's  
4 really hard to substitute blueberries when you had  
5 strawberries or whatever. How can we be more flexible  
6 on those menus? That's not you, maybe, but who is it?  
7 Is it the nutritionist, is it DFTA? It doesn't  
8 happen. It's always a challenge and that's how we get  
9 our local produce. If you have your menu 6 months in  
10 advance, you don't know that the blueberries are  
11 going to be in season or whatever. You need to be  
12 able to have that kind of flexibility. What do you  
13 suggest on that kind of front?

14 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BUCHANAN: Just  
15 to reiterate, DCAS doesn't purchase for DFTA, but I  
16 think that something like you're saying could be  
17 handled in the contract-drafting process so you could  
18 have it say seasonal fruit as opposed to be specific  
19 to blueberries or strawberries or something like that  
20 and so you could kind of lay it out. It's like in the  
21 first quarter of the year, here's what will be  
22 acceptable for you to serve, in the second quarter of  
23 the year here's what would be acceptable for you to  
24 serve. It's all about approved equals, and, as long  
25 as you're making the vendor aware of what that

1  
2 process is going to be in order to determine whether  
3 something is an approved equal, I think that's fair  
4 to put that in the contract.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It's a problem. The  
6 nutritionists are a problem, and so it needs to be  
7 addressed. Otherwise, every barrier to locally  
8 sourced food has to be addressed. Just so you know,  
9 that's another one.

10 Another question I have quickly about the  
11 seniors is, again, it's the issue with the smaller  
12 vendors working with the older adult centers, they  
13 procure, and they want to know as we go forward with  
14 this I think good agendas that you're trying to  
15 produce, they want to make sure that they can use the  
16 local vendors that they have because they do want to  
17 have Korean and Chinese cuisines, and they are  
18 nervous that if we have something that isn't flexible  
19 enough they're not going to be able to do that kind  
20 of flexibility that they need. I don't know if you can  
21 respond to that, but we've got to find a system  
22 that's flexible at the local level that gets these  
23 vendors at the citywide level to give you the  
24 granular information that you need and then, of  
25 course, we need more funding I think probably for the

1  
2 upstate farmers to figure out how they can be more  
3 responsive. Are you going to be flexible enough, you  
4 think, in this new system to work with the DFTA  
5 contracts?

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: That is our  
7 intention. Underscoring everything that we've  
8 mentioned around working everywhere from the  
9 (INAUDIBLE) to the program staff to the solicitation  
10 to the contract negotiation...

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And the reporting  
12 too.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: And the  
14 reporting.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Not too onerous but  
16 getting to what you need to get.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Yeah, so  
18 it's not just a renew, renew, renew.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Then the other  
20 issue would be, as you do sustainable purchasing,  
21 what I call locally purchasing but maybe good jobs,  
22 will there be any kind of incentive for the companies  
23 to do that or is that something that they just have  
24 to do?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I think those are, again, some of the conversations that we would love ideas on how to explore in partnership with the Law Department.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. All right. Thank you very much.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Can I ask a followup actually to what Gale just asked?

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Of course.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I think the question I would have as a vendor, because I do think that at least DFTA from what I can tell has been pretty flexible about allowing contractors to purchase from the local supermarkets, but I think the bigger picture question I have is how can we make it more cost effective for the vendors because when you go off to these one-off supermarkets it's more costly, it's more expensive to do that so I guess my question to you all is how do you, which is sort of what I was asking before but maybe not as eloquently, which is how do we include some of those more ethnic-specific supermarkets into that system so that there's bigger purchasing power there so it's less expensive for the



1 vendors when they buy that stuff, if that makes  
2 sense.

3  
4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I think I  
5 know exactly what you're asking, and, again, it's  
6 creating different types of scopes for work that we  
7 don't have right now. If we're talking about pulling  
8 in different types of vendors, who's the applicant,  
9 and then are they subs, so all of those different  
10 arrangements, I think it's important to mentioned, I  
11 think it was you Council Member, DOE has, it's not a  
12 long lead time, it's like 18 months so thinking now  
13 and planning now for what, if any, evolutions or  
14 changes we'll need, every agency needs that visioning  
15 moment of what's working, what do we need to do, and  
16 is our current version of our contract going to get  
17 us there.

18 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you. I'd like  
19 to also acknowledge we've been joined by Council  
20 Member Salamanca and Council Member for the day Aiden  
21 (phonetic), and I believe Chair Won has one more  
22 followup.

23 CHAIRPERSON WON: This is from Council  
24 Member Nurse who asked us to ask for the record is it  
25 possible to get a followup on whether MOCS is working

1  
2 with Black Farmers United and the Northeast Farmers  
3 of Color? So Black Farmers United and Northeast  
4 Farmers of Color, they're 2 advocacy groups that I  
5 think she would like to see.

6 CHIEF-OF-STAFF YU: Thank you, Chair Won.  
7 I actually think that there's a lot of activity in  
8 this space that I would maybe defer to Director  
9 MacKenzie to speak on.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I'm  
11 familiar with the first organization, but the second,  
12 Northeast...

13 CHAIRPERSON WON: Farmers of Color.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Farmers of  
15 Color. I'm writing it down because in our Food  
16 Forward Planning, we did engage with more than 300  
17 different organizations and collectives. I don't want  
18 to speak definitively on this, and, if we don't have  
19 a relationship, I would love to find that.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PAULENOFF: Thank you,  
21 Chairs and to members of the administration. We will  
22 now turn to the public testimony portion of the  
23 hearing.

24 For virtual panelists, we just like to  
25 remind everyone that we will be calling individuals

1  
2 one-by-one to testify, and we will be limiting public  
3 testimony today to 3 minutes so please listen for  
4 your name to be called. Once the Sergeant has started  
5 the timer, you can begin your testimony.

6 Council Members who have questions for a  
7 particular panelist should raise their hands and  
8 Council Members who are attending virtually should  
9 use the Zoom raise hand function.

10 Once your name is called, a Member of our  
11 staff will unmute you, and the Sergeant-at-Arms will  
12 set the timer and give you the go ahead to begin.  
13 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may  
14 begin before delivering your testimony.

15 I'll turn it to the Chair to announce the  
16 panelists.

17 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: The first panelist we  
18 will hear from is Maire Ullrich and my apologies on  
19 the pronunciation followed by Ribka Getachew.

20 SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

21 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Maire, if you are  
22 speaking, we cannot hear you.

23 Okay, so while we wait, is she unmuted?  
24 Okay, while we wait to figure that out, we will move  
25 to Ribka.

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SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

RIBKA GETACHEW: Hello, everyone.

Chairperson Farias, Chairperson Won, Chairperson  
Brewer, and Members of the Committee, thank you for  
the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Ribka Getachew, and I'm the  
Director of the New York Good Food Purchasing Program  
Campaign at Community Food Advocates. In my position,  
I've worked very closely with our city and with  
partners around the country who are actively  
implementing the Good Food Purchasing Program, which  
is why I'm here today to testify in support of Intro  
517. As was mentioned earlier, of course, this bill  
seeks to further codify the city's commitment to the  
Good Food Purchasing Program. For context, the Good  
Food Purchasing Program is the first procurement tool  
and model of its kind that has been utilized in  
cities across the United States from L.A. to Chicago  
to Boston and many others. As we've started to hear  
today, it provides a comprehensive set of tools,  
technical support, and resources to support public  
institutions in shifting towards a values-based  
procurement model. Quite simply, this program aims to  
on one hand hold large vendors accountable to better

1  
2 practices while also ensuring that small and  
3 historically marginalized vendors like black,  
4 indigenous, and other POC farmers and food producers  
5 have more opportunity to contract with our public  
6 agencies. Working in close partnership with the Food  
7 Chain Workers Alliance, CUNY Urban Food Policy  
8 Institute, and the Center for Good Food Purchasing,  
9 we at Community Food Advocates have been building a  
10 robust coalition of over 30 local and national food  
11 system experts that align with the 5 value areas that  
12 serve as the pillars of the Good Food Purchasing  
13 Program. This was mentioned earlier at the top of the  
14 hearing, but I'll just flag them again. Those value  
15 areas are local economies, valued workforce, animal  
16 welfare, nutrition, and environmental sustainability.  
17 Many of the phenomenal experts in this coalition are  
18 lending their support to this bill today in the form  
19 of both verbal and/or written testimony. Our city  
20 serves approximately 230 million meals a year across  
21 its public food-serving agencies, a tremendous  
22 amount, and they collectively spend about half of a  
23 billion dollars annually on food. These agencies  
24 serve some of our most vulnerable and food-insecure  
25 populations including, but not limited to, of course,

1  
2 senior citizens, students, those who are unhoused,  
3 incarcerated individuals, and those under medical  
4 care. This is why I think of Good Food Purchasing  
5 Program as a tool that in its true essence seeks to  
6 amplify the power of these communities who have  
7 historically had the least amount of say in  
8 determining their food realities.

9 SERGEANT PEREZ: Time expired.

10 RIBKA GETACHEW: We have the power to  
11 change this. Sorry. What was that?

12 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: It was your time  
13 expiring. If you can, wrap up in the next couple  
14 minutes.

15 RIBKA GETACHEW: Okay. I'll wrap up  
16 quickly. Considering our city's tremendous purchasing  
17 power, New York City is especially primed and  
18 uniquely positioned to become a clear leader on the  
19 Good Food Purchasing Program in this country, taking  
20 a firm stance in declaring that good food relies on a  
21 values-driven food system, one that's ecologically  
22 and economically viable, sustainable, truly racially  
23 just and socially responsible, humane, safe, and  
24 teeming with nutritious and culturally relevant  
25 foods. We know that Mayor Adams has taken a clear

1  
2 stance on the Good Food Purchasing Program by signing  
3 executive order 8 in February 2022. It's important to  
4 lift up the work of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy  
5 and city agencies that have already begun  
6 implementing the Good Food Purchasing Program,  
7 baseline reporting and action planning. We also  
8 recognize that the City Council codifying the Good  
9 Food Purchasing Program is essential and instrumental  
10 to the longevity and the durability of the city's  
11 commitment to GFPP, or the Good Food Purchasing  
12 Program, no matter a change in leadership. The New  
13 York City Good Food Purchasing Coalition has been  
14 leveraging our expertise to work with the  
15 administration and City Council to advance this  
16 program, the Good Food Purchasing Program. We look  
17 forward to working with you all in the City Council  
18 to ensure that we codify the strongest and most  
19 substantive policy and our ongoing work with the  
20 Mayor's Office of Food Policy to support the most  
21 effective implementation of the Good Food Purchasing  
22 Program.

23 We thank Speaker Adams and all of the  
24 other bill sponsors and all of you here today for  
25 your leadership on this Introduction 517. I hope you

1  
2 all will join us in the good food movement as we seek  
3 to push forward Intro 517. I thank you all for your  
4 support today. Take care.

5 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much for  
6 your testimony. I will try one more time for Maire  
7 Ullrich, if we can. Is she unmuted? Okay. We're  
8 having some audio trouble. I will try again to come  
9 back to you, and we'll have someone reach out on the  
10 side.

11 Next up for public testimony is Michelle  
12 Villagomez.

13 SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

14 MICHELLE VILLAGOMEZ: Good afternoon,  
15 everyone. My name is Michelle Villagomez. I'm the  
16 Senior Director for the ASPCA, the American Society  
17 for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I thank you  
18 for the opportunity to speak in support of Intro 517,  
19 which would create a Good Food Purchasing Program,  
20 which we call GFPP, in New York City. The ASPCA is a  
21 national partner to the GFPP. It provides a metric-  
22 based flexible framework to encourage large  
23 institutions to direct their buying power in  
24 allegiance with the 5 core values mentioned. We  
25 played a key role in crafting it's animal welfare



standards, and we support efforts around the country to incorporate good food purchasing principles and to municipal institutional food sourcing practices.

We've prioritized this work given the significant potential values-based food procurement has to improve the lives of nearly 10 billion land animals raised for meat, dairy, and eggs in the United States each year. This program offers a practical alternative to many of the welfare problems plaguing animals in today's conventional factory farming model where animals are forced to endure conditions that are cruel and unnatural such as highly intensive rearing, for example, being packed into housing facilities by the tens of thousands or immobilized in cages and crates. There is little to no animal welfare oversight on most farms. There is no scheme in place for onsite inspections and auditing, which Good Food Purchasing aims to add back into the food system. Public and consumer sentiment has increasingly turned against these practices in favor of higher welfare products. Public institutions including schools are wonderfully positioned to take up this call, serving as crucial partners in building a new and more humane food system. As such, we've

1  
2 given widespread adoption of institutional values-  
3 based food procurement, GFPP is being implemented by  
4 municipal governments and school districts across the  
5 country, including major cities like Los Angeles and  
6 Chicago, representing nearly 1 billion dollars in  
7 food spending. This program offers 2 avenues for  
8 improving animal welfare. Institutions may opt to  
9 direct a percentage of their food dollars towards  
10 animal welfare certified products whose meaningfully  
11 higher standards are verified by independent on-farm  
12 audits. They can reduce their total volume of meat  
13 and eggs purchased by supplementing with plant-based  
14 alternatives. The most successful institutions will  
15 likely combine these strategies. If Good Food  
16 Purchasing is enacted in New York City, either option  
17 will promote significant and critically needed  
18 improvements for animals in our food system while  
19 helping to build a robust regional food system that  
20 supports farmers producing more food humanely and  
21 sustainably and fairly. The ASPCA and the vast  
22 majority of New Yorkers believe all animals deserve  
23 respectful and compassionate treatment. The GFPP  
24 offers cities the opportunity to build on these

1  
2 sentiments by using their purchasing power to commit  
3 to standards that impact food production...

4 SERGEANT PEREZ: Time expired.

5 MICHELLE VILLAGOMEZ: All the way down the  
6 line. With all of this in mind, the ASPCA  
7 respectfully asked the City Council to send an  
8 important message that food should not only be  
9 healthy, sustainable, and fair, but also ensure  
10 compassionate treatment of farm animals. We thank you  
11 for your time and consideration of Intro 517 and our  
12 Coalition-suggested amendments to strengthen the bill  
13 which we have sent to the Committee. Thank you so  
14 much, Chairs and Council Members.

15 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much. I  
16 just want to say a reminder to my Colleagues. If you  
17 have questions, please let us know or use the raise  
18 hand function if you are virtual and for the  
19 additional testimony to please stay within your time  
20 as close as you possibly can.

21 Third time's a charm. Maire, can we see  
22 if you...

23 MAIRE ULLRICH: I'm here. Sorry about  
24 that. I had run down the hall.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: We're just glad we  
3 can get you on. You can start.

4 SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

5 MAIRE ULLRICH: I just want talk a little  
6 bit about economics for agriculture. I hear a lot of  
7 very worthy plans that New York City has for buying  
8 local, helping support local farmers, and that one of  
9 the other things that hasn't been mentioned is  
10 supporting local farmers helps support open space so  
11 enjoying those rides upstate with all that open land,  
12 a lot of that farmer-owned, not just the pastures but  
13 the wood lots and whatnot so just want to throw that  
14 in.

15 I heard a little bit about it but  
16 probably not enough that if you want to have these  
17 goals of more local, more specific kinds of farms,  
18 particularly smaller farms, you want to institute  
19 more requirements, you're going to have to pay more.  
20 This all comes at a cost, and I would hope it doesn't  
21 come at the cost of the farmer. Right now, a lot of  
22 regulations are put upon farmers, rightfully so,  
23 whether it's food safety or something else, but the  
24 food safety regulations that have come down federally  
25 in the last few years, all of those costs are borne

1  
2 by the farmer. There's a little bit of reimbursement  
3 programs from some areas, but it really isn't enough.  
4 Anybody who's a fairly sizeable fruit or vegetable  
5 farmer has to have an employee who does nothing but  
6 keep up the paperwork for this so that's the kind of  
7 thing that I would encourage is the conversation has  
8 to start with how much more money, and I think part  
9 of the problem with the 10 percent is that 10 percent  
10 really isn't enough. New York state is seeing some  
11 movement with school food when we're talking more  
12 like 30 percent. I know that's a big number,  
13 especially when you apply it across all those meals,  
14 so just looking at how it's going to be funded, not  
15 just what the final goal is because I don't think  
16 you'll get to the goal if you don't have the funds to  
17 go along with and to really support that farmer in  
18 that local food, small farms, specialty farms, it  
19 really does all cost them more to do business because  
20 they don't have the economy of scale. It is a little  
21 more costly to do business in Southeastern New York,  
22 even New York state in general, so I would just  
23 recommend that the Council and everyone else keep  
24 dollars in mind. That's all.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Maire, my question,  
3 it's Gale. How are you?

4 MAIRE ULLRICH: Hi, how are you?

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Because of all your  
6 experience at Cornell and otherwise..

7 MAIRE ULLRICH: That's true. I should've  
8 introduced myself. I'm Maire Ullrich with Cornell  
9 Cooperative Extension in Orange County, but I work on  
10 several statewide teams and have worked with Gale in  
11 the past on things. Sorry. Go ahead, Gale.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: My question is what  
13 kind of lead time, I know we've discussed this, do  
14 you need if DOE is really going to buy from the  
15 farmers and has that been discussed? Have you heard  
16 anything to the effect that New York City really is  
17 serious about buying in the kind of quantities that  
18 would be of assistance to your farmers? Have you  
19 heard any of those kinds of discussions?

20 MAIRE ULLRICH: We go back and forth. I  
21 think you mentioned 2011 so that would be 11 years  
22 now when you first came up to Orange County and we  
23 went on a little tour so both DOE and DCAS have  
24 purchased locally. It gets a little hard for me to  
25 know exactly who's buying what, especially now with

1  
2 Nourish and that Grow NYC does purchasing from a lot  
3 of local farmers and then is the middleman for some.  
4 I know there's some. I'm sure there could be more. I  
5 think the answer to your question in terms of timing,  
6 depends on what we're talking about. Somebody  
7 mentioned blueberries earlier. You'd need to give a  
8 farmer probably 3 or 4 years warning if you wanted  
9 blueberries in any quantity. Part of the economics I  
10 want to bring up too, as I say blueberries because  
11 they're a hot commodity and they're a pricey crop,  
12 there are some things that maybe you never will get  
13 because they are just cost-prohibitive to buy locally  
14 because there's a lot of hand labor involved in  
15 picking them, they just really are a high value  
16 retail crop here in Southeastern New York or even in  
17 most of New York state so you probably want to figure  
18 out what, pun intended, the low-hanging fruit are.  
19 We've done some of that. Cabbage, potatoes, onions,  
20 apples, dairy products are all competitively priced.  
21 We started, but I don't think we ever really figured  
22 out how to do the dairy because we kind of got  
23 snagged on who's buying what from who and all the  
24 labels and trying to figure out exactly how to go  
25 backwards in terms of which ones are really New York

1  
2 state. It's not too hard, but it's a little more  
3 difficult than figuring out where apples came from,  
4 whose milk went into that container of sour cream  
5 that's at that childcare center.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Hopefully when the  
7 city gets the more granular information from the  
8 suppliers and the vendors and the distributors then  
9 we'll have that information. That will be helpful to  
10 all of us.

11 MAIRE ULLRICH: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you so much.

13 MAIRE ULLRICH: No problem. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Next up we're going  
15 to hear from Stephanie A. Arthur and, after that,  
16 Ravi Reddi and then Aracelis Lucero.

17 SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

18 STEPHANIE A. ARTHUR: Good afternoon. Good  
19 afternoon, Chair Won, Chair Brewer, Chair Farias, and  
20 Members of the Committees present. My name is  
21 Stephanie Arthur, and I am a Policy and Legislative  
22 Coordinator at African Communities Together, and it's  
23 through ACT that I also work with the Language Access  
24 Collaborative which is comprised of our partners,  
25 Asian American Federation, New York Immigration



1 Coalition, (INAUDIBLE), and Empire Justice. On behalf  
2 of ACT, I would like to first applaud and thank the  
3 Council for their major accomplishment in passing the  
4 recent budget that would allocate funding for the  
5 implementation of language access services through  
6 (INAUDIBLE), a community interpreter bank, and  
7 community-led worker cooperatives. Specifically, we'd  
8 like to thank Council Member Won for your passion,  
9 your advocacy, and your leadership in ensuring that  
10 the most vulnerable in our communities can access  
11 resources that would help them navigate their  
12 quality-of-life responsibilities confidently and  
13 securely. ACT is very pleased to assist the Council  
14 as they consider an implementation approach to  
15 language access services by first creating the  
16 Preferred Vendor List, which is through Intro 136.  
17 Through this list, we believe that the list needs to  
18 be accredited and properly vetted to ensure the  
19 integrity and quality of services being offered to  
20 our immigrant community. As you consider how this  
21 list will be created and structured, ACT would like  
22 to give you some insight on some of the challenges  
23 that we face with our clients with access to  
24 translation and interpretation services and hopefully  
25

1 that can provide some recommendations that can  
2 possibly guide you on the way forward.

3  
4 First, our community members face  
5 challenges in finding reputable and experienced  
6 interpreters, interpreters who possess the range of  
7 African languages spoken within the African community  
8 other than French. Our office often receives calls  
9 from our new immigrant members who are unable to  
10 access city services because they are not able to  
11 communicate with city agencies in their preferred  
12 language and dialect. We are proposing that vendors  
13 who may provide services offer a variety of the most  
14 spoken African dialects and languages, and we can  
15 provide that after this testimony in some data  
16 points.

17 Second, at ACT, we are aware that both  
18 city agencies and city-funded non-profits depend  
19 heavily on telephonic interpretation services, which  
20 face significant issues of available, quality, and  
21 cost. Telephonic interpretation has been less  
22 desirable than in-person interpretation for  
23 establishing trust and rapport with our clients as  
24 well as with the interpreters.

25 SERGEANT PEREZ: Time expired.

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2                   STEPHANIE A. ARTHUR: In high-stakes  
3 matters like deportation cases. What we're finding is  
4 that telephonic interpreters cost a lot but also the  
5 problem is that they do not speak the nuanced  
6 languages within the African community so someone  
7 from the Francophone community, the assumption is  
8 that they only speak French but their preferred  
9 language may be one of the most nuanced languages  
10 like Mandingo, Bambara, Wolof, and so they can't  
11 trust that what they're communicating is accurately  
12 being understood and accurately being then  
13 communicated to the resource provider so we are  
14 asking and proposing that the vendors that are doing  
15 the telephonic interpreting also possess the variety  
16 of languages spoken within the African community.

17                   Lastly, and I'll close by saying that  
18 while these issues are particularly acute in relation  
19 to the immigration legal services, what we find is  
20 that they do cut across city-funded services  
21 elsewhere like obviously the DOE, Housing, and other  
22 social service needs. We are in support of the  
23 Introduction 136 and finding a preferred vendor list  
24 that is vetted, that has the resources and the  
25 capacity to manage the variety of languages in the

1 African community, that has a data resource where  
2 they can accurately collect data, recruit, train and  
3 be able to manage privacy standards and compliance  
4 standards within the community protecting the  
5 information.

6  
7 Thank you again for the time. Thank you  
8 for allowing me to speak. Have a good day.

9 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much.  
10 Ravi Reddi.

11 SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

12 RAVI REDDI: Thank you so much. I want to  
13 thank Chairs Won, Farias, and Brewer, and the Council  
14 Members of the Committees for holding this hearing  
15 and giving the Asian American Federation the  
16 opportunity to testify on the language access needs  
17 of our community. My name is Ravi Reddi, the  
18 Associate Director of Advocacy and Policy at AAF  
19 where we proudly represent the collective voice of  
20 more than 70 member non-profits serving 1.5 million  
21 Asian New Yorkers. As we'll discuss today, language  
22 access is essential in the vastly diverse city of New  
23 York, and, with legislation like Intro 136-A  
24 introduced by Chair Won, more can be done towards LEP  
25 communities of our city and prioritizes them in our

1 New York City contracting processes, but, first,  
2 thank you for advocating on our community's behalf  
3 for the inclusion of funding in this year's city  
4 budget for a community interpreter bank and worker-  
5 owned language co-ops for our communities. With  
6 (INAUDIBLE) we will see the payoff in multiple ways,  
7 from providing employee opportunities in our  
8 immigrant communities to relieving strains on  
9 existing CBO capacity to providing interpretation to  
10 addressing the serious gap in quality language  
11 interpretation for the communities that need it the  
12 most. When it comes to immigration, Asian community  
13 members have consistently been unable to navigate  
14 complex (INAUDIBLE) processes that are language  
15 limited. More than at any other time, immigration  
16 policies are in such a state of flux that our  
17 communities will need sustained in-language  
18 engagement to stay abreast of changing policies,  
19 processes, and documents. As we consistently note,  
20 good policies mean nothing if the people they're  
21 meant to help don't know about them. With our  
22 community in the midst of a mental health crisis,  
23 mental health service delivery in the city's most  
24 diverse community is notoriously difficult but very  
25

1  
2 urgent. More than 20 Asian ethnic groups are  
3 represented within our city, speaking dozens of  
4 languages. Aside from the logistics of mental health  
5 service delivery in a crisis, cultural stigma around  
6 mental health adds an additional layer of service  
7 delivery complexity. The shortage of linguistically  
8 and culturally competent mental health practitioners,  
9 which is particularly serious (INAUDIBLE) specialty,  
10 highlights the urgency to address these gaps and  
11 ensure that our community has equal access to mental  
12 health services and all social services that cater to  
13 very unique needs, especially through city entities.  
14 One thing is clear when it comes to assisting our  
15 small businesses in crisis, even when a service is  
16 much needed, it is crucial to provide both outreach  
17 and one-on-one support to ensure LEP immigrant  
18 businessowners can access it. Small businessowners in  
19 our community have consistently been shown to have  
20 been hit earlier and harder by the COVID pandemic and  
21 the ensuing xenophobia. We are glad the latest  
22 version of Intro 136 includes interpretation within  
23 its (INAUDIBLE) as our community deals not just with  
24 the translation of the materials but more often with  
25 verbal interpretation services. As Stephanie

1 mentioned from our partner organization, African  
2 Communities Together, we would like to see efforts  
3 aimed at quality control, including accreditation  
4 efforts and a focus on existing capacity within our  
5 communities. Our community members and organizations  
6 that serve them should be the first called upon and  
7 supported to provide translation and interpretation  
8 assistance. In our work and the work of our member  
9 and partner organizations, we are consistently  
10 reminded that much of the language accessible...

12 SERGEANT PEREZ: Time expired.

13 RAVI REDDI: Our community is grappling  
14 with relate to issues of capacity. Our communities  
15 are often the last to know about the information, and  
16 the pandemic has demonstrated that there is still  
17 much work to be done in making sure our community,  
18 many of whom are our first line workers, benefit from  
19 the work of our city agencies. Legislation like Intro  
20 136-A and proposals like the community interpreter  
21 banks and worker co-ops are steps in exactly that  
22 direction, and we look forward to working with all of  
23 you to support our community members and CBOs that so  
24 expertly serve them. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much.

Next up is Aracelis Lucero followed by Kara Shannon and then Craig Willingham. Just a reminder to those testifying, we do have your written testimony so you do not have to read it word-for-word. Aracelis.

SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

ARACELIS LUCERO: Hi. Nice to see everybody. My name is Aracelis Lucero. I am the Executive Director of Masa, (INAUDIBLE). Thank you to the Committee Chairs Won, Farias, and Brewer, and to all of the City Council Members here present. We would also like to extend our great gratitude to Julie Won and to all the advocates for your leadership during the budget process, trying to get the Language Access Campaign funded, and we look forward to working with everybody to make sure that it's a success. Masa is a community-based organization that works with Mexican and Latin-American immigrant children, youth, and families in the South Bronx. We have a community-led integrated model that integrates the entire family, and we are grounded in a deep commitment to strengthening literacy, leadership, and power for Mexican, Central American, and indigenous people. A significant number



1 of community members, especially among our indigenous  
2 speaking community, are also limited English and  
3 Spanish proficient, and they have limited digital  
4 literacy and limited literacy skills, which presents  
5 a series of challenges that make it very difficult to  
6 navigate many of New York City's public services.  
7 Translation, and especially in-person interpretation  
8 services, in languages that are the least commonly  
9 spoken are direly needed. Historically and most  
10 notably during the pandemic, we saw how ill-prepared  
11 the city was to respond to the diverse language needs  
12 of immigrant communities. Everything from 311 to  
13 public assistance portals to health agencies to the  
14 Department of Education and the use of language lines  
15 was very limiting. Many of Masa's community members  
16 have complained about often being matched to an  
17 interpreter that doesn't really speak their  
18 indigenous language and, most of all, that wasn't  
19 culturally sensitive to their needs and realities,  
20 often making them feel bad and discouraging them from  
21 completing processes, and most aren't even made aware  
22 of their rights to get services in their language. I  
23 have many stories and examples of why it is so  
24 critical that we do more by supporting community-

1 based and grassroots organizations who have the  
2 unique knowledge, cultural fluency, and language  
3 ability to become true partners in this effort to  
4 ensure services are being known and utilized by the  
5 people who need it the most, but there is one story  
6 that I'll share today, hopefully I get to get through  
7 it, that really gives a great example of why this is  
8 necessary. During the pandemic, we were able to work  
9 with a community member named Evaristo (phonetic). He  
10 is 38, probably 40 by now, and in early 2020 had  
11 recently migrated from Mexico. His primary language  
12 is Totonaco, an indigenous language of Mexico. He  
13 does not know how to read or write and, at the time,  
14 had no family here but a cousin who was equally as  
15 terrified to be discovered by ICE. Evaristo was  
16 referred to us by a family member who knew about him  
17 and who was really concerned that he was sick and in  
18 isolation with no real support. We tried to get him  
19 services to go to Lincoln Hospital, but he was really  
20 afraid because of his immigration status. After  
21 speaking to Lincoln Hospital and getting somebody to  
22 actually meet with him and try to guide him through  
23 the process, we explained to him that...

25 SERGEANT PEREZ: Time expired.

1  
2 ARACELIS LUCERO: That support and  
3 wouldn't be deported. The whole point of this story  
4 really is to highlight that this person was in  
5 isolation for a very long time. Had he had a  
6 community member who spoke his language, who was  
7 trusted, he would've ended up going to the hospital  
8 and getting support that he needed. Instead, he was 2  
9 months in isolation. We would call him almost daily  
10 and deliver food, really not knowing whether he was  
11 going to make it, and so this is just a clear example  
12 of how the quality of life of immigrants and being  
13 able to have a dignified life really will make a  
14 difference with part 136 and getting language  
15 services that are culturally competent and that  
16 people are going to trust. Thank you, and we look  
17 forward to the implementation of language access.

18 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you. I'll now  
19 go to Chair Won for her questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you to African  
21 Communities Together, Asian American Federation, and  
22 Masa for advocating for the language banking co-op. I  
23 want to ask Ravi, Stephanie, and Aracelis, the last 3  
24 panelists, the following questions.

1  
2           The first question is how is your  
3 organization engaged with city agencies on language  
4 access issues?

5           ARACELIS LUCERO: I can start really  
6 quickly. The most clear example that comes to mind  
7 most recently is with the Department of Education.  
8 Information was really flowing slowly. Most of the  
9 time what we saw was that English communication would  
10 be put out first, both in print and orally, and then  
11 subsequently we would see Spanish posted. It was very  
12 problematic because a lot of services, when free  
13 testing came out, when what people needed to do for  
14 school to getting devices, people were very confused.  
15 We didn't have a place to point them to until, during  
16 the pandemic, we really worked closely with a set of  
17 partners to address language access and to make sure  
18 that we were able to tell community members when the  
19 languages that they were speaking were available, but  
20 what we've been doing for the last 15 years,  
21 especially with the Health Department, with the  
22 census, with the Department of Education is really  
23 trying to figure out the people who are most  
24 vulnerable, indigenous-speaking community who are not  
25 literate, how do we get them access to information.

1  
2 Most of these languages, they don't know how to read  
3 and write them so making sure that there is language  
4 access (INAUDIBLE) information that are in video form  
5 or in the proper ethnic news outlets as I think  
6 Council Member Julie Won earlier had noted so those  
7 are some of the ways.

8           STEPHANIE A. ARTHUR: I'll just add that  
9 with African Communities Together, very similarly  
10 working with the Department of Education, the  
11 Department of Health as well as ACS, finding someone  
12 within the community that could actually interpret  
13 (INAUDIBLE) service needs of the client, and then  
14 being able to communicate that to the provider. The  
15 challenge with that, too, is there's a cultural  
16 competency issue that we've noticed as well. ACT has  
17 been an advocate in making sure that there is staff  
18 representative of these agencies that have a  
19 familiarity with the community or that can do their  
20 best to communicate some of the nuanced languages but  
21 also ACT has worked with African media to be able to  
22 get a representative from these agencies in those  
23 spaces to be then able to communicate, whether it's  
24 through a podcast, whether it's through FM radio,  
25 what new policies are coming down the chain of some

1  
2 of these agencies and then obviously, from the other  
3 end, uplifting concerns of clients and people of the  
4 community.

5 RAVI REDDI: Ravi Reddi on behalf of Asian  
6 American Federation. Similar to what Aracelis and  
7 Stephanie said, it really is hard to pull specific  
8 examples because we can't talk about any of our  
9 issues without talking about language access first.  
10 Our Senior Working Group consisting of 12 community-  
11 based organizations, Asian-led, Asian-serving senior  
12 service providers are working with the Department for  
13 the Aging to make sure that we're getting language  
14 accessible, culturally competent services to our  
15 seniors, but across all of our (INAUDIBLE) we're  
16 seeing that the primary focal point of our work is in  
17 making sure that city agencies see our Asian-led,  
18 Asian-serving organizations as partners, as experts  
19 already doing the culturally competent language  
20 accessible work on the ground, whether that's our  
21 senior service organizations comprising our Senior  
22 Working Group or the mental health providers, many of  
23 whom are highlighted in our recently put together  
24 mental health database at [mhd.aafederation.org](http://mhd.aafederation.org) or, if  
25 it comes to our programmatic work, our small business

1  
2 teams are doing incredible work with SBS and a number  
3 of different agencies making sure that we're getting  
4 culturally competent language accessible resources to  
5 small businessowners, and one thing we're learning is  
6 that especially in our work with agencies across  
7 these issue areas, it's not just making sure it's  
8 language accessible but in crisis it's also making  
9 sure it's of quality and that it's timely. More often  
10 than not, what we've seen in a number of different  
11 issue areas is that those have been mutually  
12 exclusive asks. We can get it quickly, but we can't  
13 get it high quality. We can get it high quality, but  
14 it'll take more time. A lot of our work across these  
15 issue areas is showing that so much of the work is  
16 already being done, we just need support from the  
17 city or we need them to be recognized, and I think  
18 that's where some of this legislation can go a very  
19 long way.

20 CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you. My last  
21 question for the 3 panelists is describe the issues  
22 or limitations of telephonic interpretations  
23 currently provided by the city, colloquially referred  
24 to as the Language Line.

25

1

2

ARACELIS LUCERO: Aracelis for Masa again.

3

One, I don't think a lot of our community members

4

even know that they have a right to the Language

5

Line. Most of the time we get a lot of community

6

members discouraged. We have a community member

7

that's waiting for an appointment since November

8

because she's been told that there isn't anybody

9

available that speaks her language to have, and this

10

is just Spanish. Other community members that do

11

speak an indigenous language, a lot of the times have

12

complained that the person on the other end, it's not

13

the same variation of the language that they speak.

14

It spreads. There's a lack of trust even in the

15

Language Line. I think it does have a very bad

16

reputation, and I think for sensitive issues it

17

really is uncomfortable to have somebody on the line

18

that you don't trust, that you don't know hearing

19

about very sensitive things that they would hope to

20

share that are part of the problem but that they

21

don't get an opportunity to fully disclose because

22

they don't trust the person on the line who knows

23

nothing about them and who they don't think is

24

getting the message across, the urgency, and the

25

sensitivity of the issue so those are some of the



1 things that we've seen and have been communicated  
2 from community members.

3  
4           STEPHANIE A. ARTHUR: This is Stephanie  
5 from African Communities Together. I echo Aracelis'  
6 point. I think it's a real trust issue so when we  
7 talk about members of our community that have to deal  
8 with deportation issues, they can't trust that the  
9 interpreter is accurately understanding what they're  
10 trying and then transferring it over to the service  
11 provider or the appropriate decision-maker  
12 accurately, and so they're apprehensive about sharing  
13 information, they're unsure, and it defeats the  
14 purpose of the kind of language access that we're  
15 trying to provide to the community if they can't  
16 trust the agencies to accurately (INAUDIBLE)

17           RAVI REDDI: To put an exclamation point  
18 on what's already been said, we're working in  
19 coalition representing communities that are  
20 incredibly diverse, even amongst communities that  
21 have similar languages but different dialects. These  
22 are specificities that are only really well-  
23 understood, expertly understood by people within our  
24 community so when we have community members being  
25 asked to call the Language Line, there isn't an

1  
2 element of trust there that exists with the  
3 community-based organizations they would go to  
4 anyways for these services if they were being  
5 provided by our organizations. There is an element of  
6 trust that already exists within our communities, but  
7 it's made redundant when our community members who  
8 are already isolated are being asked to call into  
9 some hotline where someone they don't even know,  
10 possibly linking to someone who doesn't speak the  
11 right language in a crisis situation so it all  
12 exasperates one incident after the other, that there  
13 is a lack of trust and then it is almost impossible  
14 to ask any company or contractor to provide all the  
15 languages that represent the diversity of the city,  
16 much less the Asian community or the Latinx community  
17 or the African community whereas all that expertise  
18 is already in our communities, whether it's our  
19 community-based organizations or individual community  
20 members. To underline what's already been said, the  
21 lack of trust is just a function of experience. There  
22 are so many smaller languages that aren't represented  
23 that we couldn't possibly expect to be represented in  
24 a hotline.

CHAIRPERSON WON: Thank you so much. I  
look forward to working with you to see this come to  
fruition this year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Next us is Kara  
Shannon.

SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

KARA SHANNON: Hi, everyone. My name is  
Kara Shannon. I am the Director of Farm Animal  
Welfare and Policy at the ASPCA, and I was joining  
today just in case there were any technical questions  
about the animal welfare standards that my lovely  
colleague, Michelle, couldn't answer, and, since  
there weren't any and you've already heard the  
ASPCA's testimony in support, I could just cede my  
time right back. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Wow. Rockstar. Thank  
you so much. Craig Willingham.

SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

CRAIG WILLINGHAM: Good afternoon, Council  
Members. My name is Craig Willingham. I'm the  
Managing Director (INAUDIBLE) Policy (INAUDIBLE)  
Today's hearing is meant to explore codifying from  
Intro 517 the city's commitment to using the Good  
Food Purchasing framework for citywide food

1 procurement (INAUDIBLE) a move (INAUDIBLE) enable New  
2 York City significant progress (INAUDIBLE) public  
3 dollars to purchase the city's food. We support Intro  
4 517 and want to highlight the key factors that we  
5 believe the Council should consider as it seeks to  
6 improve New York City's approach to food procurement.  
7

8           The first being the city should  
9 prioritize building partnerships with organizations  
10 invested in the 5 GFPP value categories in order to  
11 help provide oversight and input and to ensure that  
12 the policy is making substantive progress in changing  
13 the procurement practices for the better.

14           Second, providing opportunities for input  
15 from city agencies on the implementation of this  
16 policy to identify specific strategies for better  
17 aligning with existing and related policies.

18           Third, ensure that prospective vendors  
19 have all the information needed to respond to GFPP  
20 requirements and provide resources to support their  
21 transition from current procurement practices towards  
22 a values-based procurement approach.

23           Fourth, make clear that the city's  
24 meaningful progress on each of the GFPP 5 value  
25 categories should be the goal, not a piecemeal

1  
2 implementation that organically defaults to unequal  
3 progress within categories. For example, success on  
4 local economies but failure on animal welfare.

5 Fifth, develop a tracking system to  
6 monitor procurement to continually assess alignment  
7 with values-based purchasing models.

8 Last but not least, sixth, explore the  
9 possibility of a centralized institutional food  
10 procurement system.

11 The CUNY Urban Policy institute offers  
12 its academic expertise and research capacities to  
13 assist the City Council and the Mayor's Office of  
14 Food Policy in ensuring that values-based procurement  
15 has, in fact, taken root and grown in New York City  
16 and so we can celebrate our accomplishments and  
17 (INAUDIBLE) set new, even more ambitious goals for  
18 the coming years. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much.  
20 Our final testimony will be from Suzanne Adely.

21 SERGEANT PEREZ: Starting time.

22 SUZANNE ADELY: Good afternoon. Thank you  
23 for the opportunity to address you today about the  
24 Good Food Purchasing Program. I am the co-Director of  
25 the Food Chain Workers Alliance, a national coalition

1 of 34 food worker organizations throughout the food  
2 economy. Many of our member organizations are located  
3 in the New York City and New York state area, and we  
4 have been proponents of the Good Food Purchasing  
5 Program, or GFPP for short, for the last decade,  
6 working to pass similar policies in cities and  
7 counties across the country. We believe that these  
8 policies will allow localities to use the power of  
9 public procurement to protect workers in the food  
10 economy. Food workers, the majority who come from  
11 black, indigenous, Latinx, and immigrant communities,  
12 are the lowest paid and most food-insecure of any  
13 other workforce in the U.S. and are  
14 disproportionately impacted by health and safety  
15 violations and unfair labor practices in our  
16 corporate food system. Our public dollars can and  
17 should fund the food procurement system that supports  
18 farms and food businesses that pay fair wages,  
19 provide safe working conditions and do not retaliate  
20 against workers who may exercise their right to  
21 organize. That's why we support the New York City  
22 Council's adoption of the Good Food Purchasing  
23 Program. It has emerged as a way to shift our public  
24 supply chain towards better conditions for workers.  
25

1  
2 The Food Chain Workers Alliance helped develop the  
3 Good Food Purchasing Program in 2012 and, since then,  
4 has provided direct support to community leaders  
5 working with their local institutions to adopt the  
6 program in cities and counties around the country.  
7 When we began our work here in New York City with our  
8 fellow coalition partners in 2016 to work closely  
9 with city leadership in building a strong foundation  
10 for values-based procurement. We believe that New  
11 York City agencies should be able to reserve the  
12 right to reject bid and cut contracts for those  
13 suppliers who fail to comply with the standards you  
14 intend to put forth and particularly those vendors  
15 who violate fundamental labor laws. We also believe  
16 that bidders should be encouraged to provide their  
17 sourcing data so that agencies as well as the public  
18 are aware of where our food is coming from and can  
19 support implementation from an informed position. We  
20 really appreciate your leadership in taking this  
21 critical step for formal adoption. Thank you very  
22 much.

23 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much for  
24 everyone that stood at today's hearing to testify and  
25 for the administration to come and give us all of

1  
2 their remarks and answer our questions. I'd like to  
3 see if my Colleagues would like to have any final  
4 statements.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I want to say thank  
6 you to both Council Members Farias and Won and the  
7 staff and just to say from the Oversight and  
8 Investigations perspective and my long history, I  
9 definitely support 517, but the portion that I am  
10 adamant is the City of New York, in order to save the  
11 farmers and save our lives in New York, absolutely  
12 have to find a way that the food that our agencies,  
13 clients, guests, and customers eat is fresh,  
14 wholesome, nutritious, and it has to come from  
15 locally based enterprises, farms and businesses.  
16 Thank you very much.

17 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much.  
18 This hearing is adjourned at 3:54. [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 12, 2022