

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

----- X

August 9, 2022
Start: 10:22 a.m.
Recess: 1:50 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers-City Hall

B E F O R E: Diana Ayala,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Tiffany Cabán
Crystal Hudson
Linda Lee
Chi A. Ossé
Lincoln Restler
Kevin C. Riley
Althea V. Stevens
Sandra Ung
Nantasha M. Williams
Gale Brewer
Shahana Hanif
Erik Bottcher

A P P E A R A N C E S

1 Gary Jenkins
2 Commissioner of the Department of Social Services

3 Manuel Castro
4 Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant
5 Affairs

6 Tom Tortorici
7 Executive Director of Legal and Support at
8 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

9 Joslyn Carter
10 Administrator at Department of Social Services

11 Zach Iscol
12 Commissioner of the Office of Emergency
13 Management

14 Monsignor Kevin Sullivan

15 Kathryn Kliff
16 Staff Attorney at the Legal Aid Society and our
17 Homeless Rights Project

18 Catherine Trapani
19 Executive Director at Homeless Services United

20 Karim Walker

21 Lymaris Albors
22 CEO for Acacia Network

23 Jasmine Cummings
24 Senior Director of Programs at Project Renewal

25 Anthony Feliciano
26 Vice President for Community Mobilization
27 Advocacy for Housing Works

A P P E A R A N C E S

Deborah Berkman

Coordinating Attorney of the Shelter Advocacy Initiative at the New York Legal Assistance Group or NYLAG

Sara Wilson

Formerly Homeless Housing Advocate

Magalie Bomhomme

Shelter Resident at West End TLC

Milton Perez

Member of Vocal New York Homelessness Union

Susan Lee

Founder of the Alliance for Community Preservation and Betterment

Yesenia Mata

Executive Director of La Colmena

Molly Cohen

Senior Supervising Attorney at the Urban Justice Center Sex Workers Project

Sarah Newman

Director of Organizing for the Open Hearts Initiative

Jackie Wong

Director at the Greater Chinatown Civic Coalition

Shawn Hill

Rachel Miller Bradshaw

Recently elected state committee of the 78 Assembly

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a sound check for the
3 Committee on General Welfare. Today's date is August
4 9, 2022, being recorded by Danny Wong at the
5 Chambers.

6 Good morning everyone. Welcome to today's hybrid
7 New York City Council hearing of the Committee on
8 General Welfare. Everyone please place all
9 electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode. If you
10 wish to submit testimony, you may send it to
11 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that's
12 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

13 Thank you everyone for your cooperation. Chair
14 Ayala, we are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Good morning and
16 my apologies for being late. My father's sister,
17 beloved sister passed away this morning just as I was
18 leaving the house and as you can understand, I needed
19 to stay with him for a few minutes to make sure that
20 he was okay.

21 So, for those of you that pray, please say a
22 prayer for him because he's really going through it
23 right now. Having said that, good morning and thank
24 you for being here today. My name is Diana Ayala,
25 and I am the Deputy Speaker of the New York City

1
2 Council and the Chair of the General Welfare
3 Committee. I'd like to begin by thanking everyone
4 for joining us this morning.

5 Today, our committee is here to hold a hearing
6 entitled oversight, longstanding New York City
7 shelter intake issues and the recent increase in
8 Asylum Seekers. On July 19, 2022, Mayor Eric Adams
9 held a press conference to express concerns about the
10 sharp increase in asylum seekers from Latin America
11 and other regions and reported 2,800 of these
12 individuals have entered the New York City's shelter
13 system. Similarly, on June 18, 2022, the Washington
14 Post reported a similar influx of immigrant families
15 arriving by bus from Texas and Arizona. Stating the
16 unexpected surge of people represented a significant
17 issue that exceeded the city's available resources.

18 Washington DC , Mayor Muriel Bowser contended
19 that the governors of Texas and Arizona were
20 exploiting and harming vulnerable people, fleeing
21 desperate and dangerous situations in their home
22 countries for political gain.

23 On July 21, 2022, Mayor Adams accompanied by
24 Department of Social Services Commissioner Gary
25 Jenkins and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs,

1
2 Commissioner Manuel Castro held a news conference to
3 address the significant uptick in our families with
4 shelter centers over the past couple of months.

5 Which has been driven in part by the increased
6 immigrant population speaking services in the New
7 York City shelter system.

8 Commissioner Jenkins stated that New York City is
9 committed to meeting our legal and moral obligation
10 to provide shelter to all who need it, regardless of
11 background or immigration status and called on
12 government partners to recognize the external
13 pressures being placed upon the shelter system.

14 The news conference on July 21st was held in
15 response to reports from multiple New York City
16 mainstream youth organizations and legal advocates
17 who had interviewed migrant families about delays
18 that they had experienced at the Department of
19 Homeless Prevention Assistance and temporary housing
20 path intake centers. Some of these delays resulted
21 in overnight stays in path offices, prior to shelter
22 placement and Commissioner Jenkins confirmed that
23 four families were not placed in conditional
24 placement within the timeframe specified by the right
25 to shelter laws.

1
2 Unquestionably, the recent increase in unhoused
3 immigrant speaking asylum has highlighted existing
4 challenges within our shelter system. Mayor Adams
5 called for federal assistance to help New York City
6 fulfill its legal obligation to provide housing to
7 those in need. Advocates pointed out existing
8 challenges to timely shelter placement including
9 staffing issues and a complex application process
10 that often result in placement delays. Moreover,
11 once applicants have been approved for placement,
12 some landlords have refused to take their housing
13 vouchers, which in turn keeps temporary shelters
14 full.

15 Finally, establishing new housing options for
16 this cohort often elicits fears, opposition from the
17 community. Today, we're here not to cast blame but
18 rather to ask question that will help to elicit
19 answers and correct misinformation, so that we can
20 better support our shelter system and provide
21 services for those who need it. When they need it
22 the most. We are thankful, a thankfully nation and a
23 city of immigrants and proud to live in a
24 multicultural and diverse community comprised of over
25 \$8.3 million fellow New Yorkers who speak over 200

1
2 languages and choose to call our city home. We will
3 always embrace immigrants. I want to thank the
4 administration, the advocates, legal service
5 providers, volunteers and individuals with lived
6 experience who have taken the time to join us here
7 today.

8 At today's hearing, the Committee will seek an
9 overview of the city's plan and response to the
10 recent rise in asylum seekers to New York City
11 shelters and how we may better serve these
12 individuals in need of social service assistance.

13 At this time, I'd like to acknowledge my
14 colleagues who are here today. Council Members
15 Cabán, Ung, Brewer, Hanif and Restler. Finally, I
16 would like to thank the Committee Staff who work to
17 prepare this hearing Aminta Kilawan Senior Counsel,
18 Cristy Dwyer Legislative Policy Analyst, Julia
19 Haramis Senior Finance Analyst, Rose Martinez
20 Assistant Deputy Director, Nicholas Montalbano,
21 Senior Data Scientist and my staff Michelle Cruz
22 Deputy Chief of Staff.

23 I will now turn it over our to our Committee
24 Counsel Aminta Kilawan to administer the oath to our
25 witnesses.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We are now going to call on members of the Administration. Commissioner Gary Jenkins of the Department of Social Services, Commissioner Manuel Castro of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Tom Tortorici, Executive Director of Legal and Support at Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Joslyn Carter Administrator at Department of Social Services and Commissioner Zach Iscol of the Office of Emergency Management.

Can you all please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before the Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions? Thank you. Commissioner Jenkins, you may begin when ready.

GARY JENKINS: Good morning. Deputy Speaker, before I begin my testimony, my sincere condolences to you and your family and our prayers are definitely with you and please, reach out and let us know if you need anything.

So, good morning, I want to thank the General Welfare Committee and Deputy Speaker Ayala for holding today's hearing. We are here to update the Committee on the ongoing work that our agencies are

1
2 doing each day to support asylum seekers arriving in
3 New York City in unprecedented numbers.

4 My name is Gary P. Jenkins, and I am the
5 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
6 Social Services, which is made up of the Human
7 Resources Administration, HRA and Department of
8 Homeless Services DHS. I am also joined today by
9 Commissioner Manuel Castro, from the Mayor's Office
10 of Immigrant Affairs, Commissioner Zach Iscol of the
11 New York City Office of Emergency Management and DHS
12 Administrator Joslyn Carter.

13 New York City has been, and will continue to be,
14 a city of immigrants. We have, and under the Adams
15 Administration, will continue to welcome immigrants
16 from every corner of the world and ensure that
17 however they arrive in our city they have the support
18 they need to thrive in our neighborhoods. These are
19 the same values that guide our work in supporting New
20 Yorkers experiencing homelessness. Values that
21 prioritize care and compassion for our most
22 vulnerable families and individuals.

23 Our city is currently experiencing a substantial
24 increase in the number of families and individuals
25 seeking asylum through our southern border, many from

1
2 Central and South America and other regions. These
3 individuals and families are arriving at our city's
4 shelter intake centers with little more than the
5 clothing on their backs. These shelter intake
6 centers include: the Prevention Assistance and
7 Temporary Housing Intake Center, better known as
8 PATH, for families with children, located in the
9 Bronx; our 30th Street intake center for single
10 adults and adult families located in Manhattan and,
11 for women's intake, the Franklin Women's Intake
12 Center located in the Bronx, and HELP Women's
13 Shelter, located in Brooklyn.

14 As you all know, New York City is one of the few
15 jurisdictions with a right to shelter, meaning that
16 we are legally required to provide transitional
17 housing for those seeking a place to stay, including
18 the many asylum seekers being discussed here today.
19 This means that we honor our legal and moral
20 obligation and will turn no one away.

21 As we begin our discussion on how the Adams
22 Administration is supporting asylum seekers that are
23 coming to our city and seeking assistance from the
24 shelter system, it is important to provide context on
25 DSS-DHS and homelessness in New York City.

1
2 DHS is committed to preventing and addressing
3 homelessness across the city. Our staff and
4 providers employ many innovative strategies to help
5 individuals who are in temporary shelter or are
6 unsheltered to successfully transition to permanency.
7 The mission of DHS is to prevent homelessness when
8 possible, address unsheltered homelessness, provide
9 safe temporary shelter, and connect New Yorkers
10 experiencing homelessness to suitable housing. We
11 carry out this mission with care and compassion for
12 each client and their circumstances, and these values
13 extend and apply to the vulnerable families and
14 individuals seeking asylum in our city.

15 As a right to shelter city, we remain committed
16 to meeting our legal and moral mandates to provide
17 temporary emergency shelter to all eligible New
18 Yorkers. Our staff and providers also help these
19 individuals access a variety of wrap-around services
20 to ensure a seamless transition back to independent
21 living and stability.

22 In several briefings by this Administration, we
23 have described a significant uptick in our families
24 with children and single adult shelter censuses over
25 the last few months. That uptick has been largely

1
2 driven by an increasing migrant population seeking
3 asylum.

4 Our temporary housing services are available to
5 all, regardless of immigration status. DHS and its
6 contracted providers do not ask about documentation
7 status, and instead, rely on self-reported
8 information across our intake system. In early
9 Summer, DHS shelter staff began noticing an uptick in
10 asylum seekers during intake interviews. As the
11 uptick in asylum seekers continued, DSS-DHS developed
12 a strategy to more robustly identify these
13 individuals while continuing to ensure their
14 citizenship status was not disclosed.

15 As of yesterday, August 8th, there are more than
16 4,000 asylum seekers who have presented themselves to
17 our shelter intake system, which has been a driver of
18 the approximately ten percent increase in the DHS
19 census since April. Approximately 100 people are
20 applying at our intake sites per day.

21 Asylum seekers are a mix of families with
22 children, adult families and single adults arriving
23 and seeking shelter and security after a long and
24 grueling journey to New York City from their
25 homeland. These are unprecedented numbers, and I

1
2 want to thank our staff, providers, and colleagues in
3 government for stepping up and ensuring these
4 families and individuals are welcomed into our system
5 and provided with the same care and compassion we
6 would have for any New Yorker experiencing
7 homelessness.

8 While challenges have arisen, our existing system
9 is withstanding the many stresses placed upon it, and
10 we are serving hundreds of individuals and families
11 in need. Our DHS teams keep families and individuals
12 fed, sheltered, and cared for, and, most critically,
13 provide a place for them to stop, rest and begin to
14 stabilize their lives.

15 Asylum seekers are entering shelter through DHS'
16 existing intake facilities. For families with
17 children, as mentioned earlier this means the PATH
18 intake center in the Bronx. Longstanding PATH rules
19 require that if a family present at the PATH intake
20 center by 10:00 p.m., we are required to place that
21 family in conditional placement by 4:00 a.m. As
22 reported by the Mayor, Commissioner Castro and myself
23 in mid-July, four families were not assigned
24 conditional placement by the required time. In these
25 cases, the three families were placed by 6:45 a.m.

1
2 and the remaining family by 11:00 a.m. We are
3 accountable for this shortfall and have taken steps
4 to ensure this does not happen again. However, it
5 must be emphasized that no families have been sitting
6 for days in our intake center waiting for placement.

7 We look forward to continuing to support the
8 needs of this vulnerable community and we ask that
9 you join us in our efforts in calling for adequate
10 resources to meet the needs of this moment. At the
11 city level, we are leaving no stone unturned to
12 support the unprecedented number of asylum seekers
13 arriving each day. Just last week, the city
14 announced a declaration of emergency for asylee
15 services and shelter, which would allow us to rapidly
16 procure services specifically designed to support
17 this community in need.

18 This is an interagency, all hands-on deck effort,
19 where we will be tapping into our non-profit
20 providers to ensure asylum seekers have access to
21 wrap around services, including legal support, health
22 care and education. Moreover, we are continuing to
23 work with our federal and state partners to access
24 much needed financial resources to meet the needs of
25 this rising cost of this emergency.

1
2 This landscape highlights our shelter capacity
3 needs, a topic that I, along with my team, have
4 testified about many times before. Given this moment
5 of need, and the fact that we must meet our legal and
6 moral mandates to provide shelter, we must expand and
7 be creative in our expansion to temporarily house
8 those seeking asylum in our city. Because we must
9 provide shelter to all who seek it, we are looking
10 across the five boroughs to place asylum seekers in
11 facilities where they can find stabilization and the
12 resources needed to acclimate to New York City and
13 eventually move out of shelter.

14 As the Mayor has said, we must continuously find
15 new locations for emergency temporary housing, and we
16 are looking for assistance from this Committee, as
17 well as the Council at large, to find locations
18 within your districts to shelter asylum seekers. We
19 are all in this together, and we need your help to
20 find and secure necessary capacity to house this
21 vulnerable population.

22 In closing, the DSS-DHS shelter system has done
23 its job even as this unprecedented surge has
24 stretched its resources. We continue to be a
25 lighthouse that lights the way for so many vulnerable

1
2 individuals and families who come to New York City
3 seeking nothing but safety. As I've said before,
4 DSS-DHS often acts as the safety net of the safety
5 net, and we are proud of the work that our staff have
6 done to bring stability and safety to the thousands
7 of individuals arriving at our doors. We are a city
8 of immigrants, and we look forward to continuing New
9 York's tradition of welcoming newcomers with open
10 arms.

11 We thank you for the opportunity to testify
12 today, and we welcome any questions you may have.
13 Commissioner Castro.

14 MANUEL CASTRO: Thank you Commissioner Jenkins
15 and thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Mic.

17 MANUEL CASTRO: Thank you Commissioner Jenkins
18 and thank you Chair Ayala and members of the
19 Committee for holding this hearing. My name is
20 Manuel Castro, and I am the Commissioner of the
21 Mayor's Office of the Immigrant Affairs. I am joined
22 here by Tom Tortorici, Executive Director of Legal
23 and Support Initiatives at our office.

24 Let me begin by emphasizing that my colleague
25 Commissioner Jenkins and I are in full support with

1
2 Mayor Adams's message to the nation, to our state and
3 to our city. In particular, to those seeking
4 refuge in our city. New York is a city of
5 immigrants, and we will always welcome newly arrived
6 immigrants with open arms. Once you're here, you're
7 a New Yorker, and the city has your back.

8 I want to also start by highlighting the Mayor's
9 Office of Immigrant Affairs mission, as outlined in
10 the Charter. The Charter explicitly notes that
11 immigrant New Yorkers make up a large percentage of
12 the city's total population. Three million New
13 Yorkers, or almost 40 percent of the population, are
14 immigrants and 60 percent of New Yorkers are
15 immigrants or children of immigrants. Because of
16 this, the wellbeing of the city, and of all New
17 Yorkers, depends on the willingness of immigrant New
18 Yorkers to engage with the city government. It is in
19 this context that the Office of Immigrant Affairs is
20 working collaboratively with city agencies, including
21 with my colleague Commissioner Gary Jenkins and the
22 Department of Social Services, to ensure that the
23 newly arrived asylum seekers and immigrant families
24 are welcomed.

1
2 I will begin by explaining how we got here and
3 why we are seeing an influx of asylum seekers in our
4 city. First, a large influx of asylum seekers and
5 immigrant families coming into United States is
6 nothing new. Whether it was the millions of
7 immigrants from Europe sailing to the U.S. during the
8 1800's and 1900's or immigrants from Latin America
9 crossing the U.S. Mexico border during the 1990's,
10 like myself and my family. And most recently, the
11 thousands of Haitians and Ukrainian immigrants
12 landing on our shores, we have seen this phenomenon
13 before.

14 In Fiscal year 2021, U.S. Customs and Border
15 Protection reported 1.7 million border encounters.
16 In Fiscal Year 2022, more than two million people
17 have been encountered at the border through June.
18 Encounter means that immigration authorities are
19 apprehending people crossing the border or asylees
20 presenting themselves at border points of entry.

21 Large numbers of asylum seekers and migrants will
22 continue to enter the United States, particularly
23 with the end of inhumane and arbitrary Trump-era
24 policies like the Migrant Protection Protocols or the
25 so-called, Remain in Mexico policy, and Title 42. It

1
2 is estimated that approximately 6,000 to 18,000
3 migrants per day will be allowed to come into the
4 United States to seek asylum and other legal relief
5 that they are entitled to under U.S. and
6 international law.

7 Historically, immigrant had some connection in
8 the United States to help them find their way to
9 their destination, including in New York City. Even
10 those who did not have any family or immediate
11 employment opportunity in the United States, like
12 those we are currently seeing coming from Central and
13 South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Eastern Europe,
14 and Asian countries, naturally found ethnic
15 communities in different cities to determine their
16 place of settlement.

17 However, that is what is new now is the
18 systematic diversion of asylum seekers and immigrants
19 to New York City by external forces including by the
20 disgusting, cruel, and cowardly actions of Texas
21 Governor Greg Abbott who is forcibly bussing asylum
22 seekers to the city.

23 Whereas, before immigrants decided their own
24 destination when they were released by Customs and
25 Border Protection or Immigration and Customs

1
2 Enforcement, we are now seeing that a large volume of
3 official immigration documentation like the Notices
4 to Appear or the G56 Form call-in letters have New
5 York City shelters, or legal service provider
6 locations as the individual's official address.

7 Some documentation even has random office
8 buildings or incorrect New York City addresses. How
9 these addresses came to be included in these
10 documents is yet to be fully determined. We continue
11 to ask federal authorities to provide us with clarity
12 on this matter. However, after speaking with legal
13 service providers, other cities, and community
14 groups, review of public reporting, and my direct
15 experience speaking with asylum seekers, we are
16 getting a better understanding of the situation.

17 We are hearing that travel is being facilitated
18 by an array of sources including border and
19 Washington DC non-government organizations, as well
20 as by the states of Texas and Arizona who are
21 transporting people in buses with the purpose of
22 sending them to New York City even when the asylum
23 seekers did not want to come here because they have
24 family in other cities and state. For example, we
25 met families who came to New York City on a bus from

1
2 Texas even though their desired destinations were
3 Maryland and Oregon.

4 Additionally, it is plausible that asylum seekers
5 are sharing these addresses through informal
6 channels, like WhatsApp and word of mouth. From the
7 beginning, I have been working with my colleague
8 Commissioner Gary Jenkins, so asylum seekers are
9 welcomed to our city. Asylum seekers have a right to
10 be in the United States while they seek humanitarian
11 protection. Let me repeat that, Asylum seekers have
12 a right to be in the United States while they seek
13 humanitarian protection.

14 Thus, we are working to ensure the city is
15 communicating with them in their preferred language
16 as required by Local Law 30, have access to free
17 legal advice through the city-funded immigration
18 service providers, as well as health service through
19 our NYC Cares program, which recently upon our
20 advocacy, eliminated the six-month residency
21 eligibility requirement.

22 Under the leadership of Mayor Eric Adams and
23 Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, we are working to
24 further address the emergency needs with a service
25

1
2 center dedicated to asylum seekers to effectively
3 respond to the needs of this community.

4 More work needs to be done for sure. However,
5 and we look forward to – we look forward to working
6 with the City Council, state and federal partners to
7 secure the needed resources, so we can provide the
8 necessary support for our new neighbors, as well as
9 to address the root of the problem that has diverted
10 hundreds, thousands of asylum seekers from their
11 families and communities.

12 We thank you for the opportunity to testify
13 today, and we welcome any questions that you may
14 have.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I guess my first
16 question is, you're absolutely right. Uhm, you know
17 asylum seekers have been a part of New York City's
18 history for many generations. So, that part of it is
19 not new, however, four dozen people don't just show
20 up within the course of a couple of days. I would
21 like to better understand, what exactly was the
22 timeline in which you know, where we started to see
23 that – the influx just a little bit higher than
24 normal?
25

1
2 MANUEL CASTRO: Thank you Deputy Speaker, I'll
3 just say that yes, certainly, asylum seekers have
4 been part of the history of New York's newly arrived
5 immigrant population, however, we began to notice a
6 surge in asylum seekers because they began to arrive
7 at our emergency shelter system.

8 So, I'll defer to Commissioner Jenkins on that
9 experience but certainly, as I said in my testimony,
10 this was a surge in large part because the Governor
11 of Texas, as he has admitted began to buss and send
12 people to the region. And we have been working
13 closely with community groups in Texas and DC and New
14 York to track that and over the last you know, I
15 would say six weeks, we began to really notice and
16 search, and I'll defer to Commissioner Jenkins on the
17 rest.

18 GARY JENKINS: Thank you Deputy Speaker and DHS,
19 we began to notice an uptick in May of 2022. The
20 staff started reporting that they started to
21 recognize that folks would come in from out of the
22 country and arriving at our PATH center located in
23 the Bronx and at that time, that's when started
24 really evaluating and accessing the amount of folks
25 that were coming in and that was for families with

1
2 children. And then the single adults, it started in
3 June, we started recognizing that more individual
4 asylum seekers started showing up at our single
5 adults and adult families and they started showing up
6 in July.

7 So, from May through July, we started
8 recognizing, we started to see an influx of asylum
9 seekers coming to New York City entering our shelter
10 system.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: The emergency declaration was
12 issued last week. What did the Administration do if
13 anything to prepare for the potential inundation when
14 the numbers of persons arriving at the intake began
15 to rise above the remote levels.

16 GARY JENKINS: So, thank you for that question
17 Deputy Speaker. So, the emergency declaration, if
18 I'm answering you question correctly, it's going to
19 give us the ability to procure in a more efficient
20 manner.

21 We will be able to work with our providers and
22 they can start delivering services immediately before
23 that contract is registered. And I also want to
24 publicly thank the Comptroller for really partnering
25

1
2 and being supportive in that emergency declaration
3 and signing off and being with us on that.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah and the Deputy Speaker
5 for being one of the first to open in her district.

6 GARY JENKINS: Absolutely the Deputy Speaker and
7 appreciate your ongoing partnership and cooperation.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Absolutely. I think that
9 this is an all-hands-on deck situation, and it
10 requires you know us to work together but similarly
11 the city was aware that the eviction moratorium was
12 coming to an end. How are we gauging what the number
13 of people is that are asylum seekers versus New
14 Yorkers who are possibly facing eviction while we are
15 still in the midst of this pandemic that won't go
16 away?

17 GARY JENKINS: Yes, Deputy Speaker. So, we are
18 closely monitoring who enter our system as a result
19 of an eviction proceeding. According to our records
20 and we watch it closely, only – not only, one percent
21 of folks entering our shelter system is a result of
22 an eviction proceeding.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: One percent, okay, because
24 the Census is up by 5,000 from last year, same time
25 last year.

1
2 GARY JENKINS: Right and again, the Census is
3 around 50,000 but as we mentioned earlier,
4 approximately 4,000 individuals enter our system that
5 identified as asylum seekers.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, the Press Conference
7 announcing the 2,800 asylum seekers was what two
8 weeks ago?

9 GARY JENKINS: That was two or three weeks ago.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, since then, we've now
11 increased to an additional 1,200 individuals.

12 GARY JENKINS: It's in total over 4,000
13 individuals.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's a very rapid rate of
15 growth.

16 GARY JENKINS: Yes, it is and that's why this is
17 so concerning for us and we, you know, looking
18 towards our federal and our state partners and the
19 City Council as a whole to really address this
20 emergency head on and we're not going to turn away
21 our asylum seekers. We're going to you know address
22 them with open arms, but we recognize that we
23 definitely need resources and financial resources to
24 address this population.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you, what is the specific
3 ask of the federal government in terms of funding?

4 GARY JENKINS: So, we are in conversation with
5 our federal oversight, and we are assessing along
6 with OMB, what is the actual ask will be and we can
7 get back to you.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Okay, I had a
9 question, and it just flew out of my mind. But,
10 okay, so this is what I'm going to ask. Before, so
11 one of the greater concerns that I think you know
12 many people share is the vacancy rate at the
13 shelters. I think it was at one percent. Most
14 people would argue that safely we should be at around
15 three percent or above in order to accommodate a
16 surge like this.

17 We were at one percent, so as families were
18 trickling in, because this is a very fast volume
19 right of growth. How quickly were we able to place
20 them and how did you pivot if we didn't have the
21 beds?

22 GARY JENKINS: So, as we know historically, in
23 summer months when school has concluded, we see an
24 uptick in our census for families with children. So,
25 we recognize at that point and time, you're correct,

1
2 we had a one percent vacancy rate, and we was
3 concerned, and we was watching closely. The influx
4 of asylum seekers definitely put a strain and that's
5 when we had to pivot to open up emergency hotels. To
6 date, we've opened up eleven because as we all are
7 aware, New York City is a right to shelter city and
8 we're legally and morally mandated to have temporary
9 housing to those who present to us and we're making
10 sure that you know we work along with you Deputy
11 Speaker. You said thank you very much, it was the
12 first that said yes, we needed to open up an
13 emergency hotel and we continue to ensure that we
14 have capacity for those that reach us.

15 The emergency declaration is going to even
16 further afford us the ability to move quickly to
17 accommodate our capacity concerns.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, and I can appreciate
19 the need to open the hotels. Obviously you were not
20 proponents of you know sheltering families especially
21 families with children in hotels but under the
22 circumstances we understand that you know this is
23 necessary. Of the 4,000 individuals, families that
24 were placed, how many of those were children, school
25 age children?

1
2 GARY JENKINS: Give me one second. I know I have
3 that information here Deputy Speaker if you can just
4 bear with me for a second. Thank you. So, in total,
5 we have \$16,766 that's in our shelter system. Zero
6 to five is \$7,903 and the ages of six to 17 is
7 approximately \$8,800.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, do we know how many of
9 the \$8,800 are newly arrived?

10 GARY JENKINS: We can get back to you on that
11 information Deputy Speaker.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, now does MOIA have a
13 dedicated office, a space within PATH to easily
14 connect families that are arriving to services?

15 GARY JENKINS: At PATH?

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yes.

17 GARY JENKINS: No, they don't have a dedicated
18 office but again, as Commissioner Castro mentioned
19 earlier— spoke about earlier, we don't work in silos,
20 not in the Adams Administration. We're in constant
21 communication as far as how the asylum seekers are
22 coming in, where they are going. So, we're in
23 constant, our teams, communication so we can be
24 prepared when those individuals present at our door,
25 if they present at our door.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I guess my concern is that if
3 we're placing families in an emergency declaration,
4 or we're placing them wherever the real estate is
5 available, are we then - are the social workers then
6 making a referral to MOIA? Is MOIA you know being
7 proactive and you know engaging with these families
8 and in what way? We saw when the community was
9 growing in the South Bronx, that families had to
10 travel from the South Bronx all the way to federal
11 plaza. Often times walking because they didn't have
12 the transportation necessary to get here.

13 And so, I'm trying to figure out like in what
14 ways we're facilitating these conversations and these
15 connections so that we're not necessarily you know
16 relying on a referral-based system.

17 MANUEL CASTRO: Yes, Deputy Speaker, as
18 Commissioner Jenkins said, we've been working hand
19 and hand from the beginning and not just DSS, MOIA
20 but other city agencies to make sure that the
21 immediate emergency needs of the asylum seekers are
22 met, which are particularly emergency shelter, but as
23 we've seen as the busses arrive, people arrive
24 hungry, thirsty, and often sick.

25

1
2 And so, those are the immediate needs. We've
3 developed a continuum of care model that addresses
4 this. Asylum seekers have many particular needs,
5 specially the asylum-seeking immigration process is
6 quite rigorous. Often they come with notices to
7 appear at immigration court that we are working
8 closely with our legal service providers to meet the
9 demand and increase the capacity to be able to serve
10 this population. But initially, we are helping often
11 feed, clothe and of course shelter the asylum seekers
12 as they arrive in the last several weeks.

13 And we are very close to opening a service center
14 to be able to provide and centralize all the services
15 that they may need. We've learned quite a lot from
16 previous experiences. As you mentioned [INAUDIBLE
17 37:01] experience but also, unaccompanied children
18 and other refugees and asylum seekers.

19 Most recently Ukrainians and Haitians. So, we're
20 you know come together to really come up with a
21 process that makes sense and that we don't have
22 people going around the city without the support that
23 they need.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I really appreciate that, but
25 I would like that to happen as expeditiously as

1
2 possible. People have been arriving since May. I
3 think we had kind of a little bit of a heads up. I
4 don't think that we had a heads up to the degree that
5 you know the numbers that we're seeing but enough
6 time to come up with a plan and I really would argue
7 that in office, or some sort of you know visibility
8 at PATH directly is something that should be
9 happening.

10 Is food provided at PATH for families that are
11 coming in? Food, water?

12 GARY JENKINS: Yes, Deputy Speaker. Food and
13 water is definitely provided. I've witnessed along
14 with Administrator Carter on several occasions, when
15 we visited a location, and food is given as much as
16 they want. So, you know is not rationed out as far
17 as one meal. If a family asks for three, then they
18 get three. If they ask for four, they get four. We
19 have appropriate food and water for individuals. We
20 also relaxed our rules. If folks want to bring food
21 from outside, they're more than welcome to bring in
22 food from outside as well.

23 When we recently visit, it was in place where
24 because we do serve food to families, outside food
25 was not allowed. We changed that immediately once we

1
2 recognized that was in place because some families
3 want outside food, and it needs to have the
4 affordability just like you and I to eat what they
5 want to eat.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Uhm, we've
7 seen lines of individuals lined up outside of PATH
8 for the last few weeks. It's been really hot out.
9 We're in the middle of a serious heat wave. What
10 precautions has DHS taken to ensure that families are
11 not out in the sun for too many, you know for too
12 long? Obviously a few minutes it too long these days
13 but are there any other community partners in that
14 community that allow for space for families to wait
15 until their process? What does that look like? What
16 is the length of time that a person you know is
17 expected to stand in line?

18 GARY JENKINS: Administrator Carter.

19 JOSLYN CARTER: Thank you for the question Deputy
20 Speaker. So, what we have done at family intake is
21 that we have opened several floors to move families
22 through, so they are not – so they have opportunities
23 to be in different spaces to wait, rather than the
24 floors that we had before because we recognized that
25 we need to make sure that there is space for them.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

And in addition, I just want to just add on to what the Commissioner talked about with food. When families show up, we want to make sure to meet their basic needs. We also need to make sure we give clothing. One thing we see sometimes, they come with only the clothes on their back, and they need to be not only fed but to get clothes and to get the basic needs met. So, we are also doing that at the front door.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I want to recognize a couple of members that have since joined us. Council Member Hudson, Stevens, Williams, Riley and Bottcher.

Alright, so going back to the hotel issue, so families with children, so as of December 2021, DHS ended the problematic practice of using the hotel shelters to house homeless families with children. A recent article in the New York Times indicated that the vacancy rate in the shelters for families was or below the one percent, which we discussed. What is the current new vacancy rate for shelters that house families with children and what is DHS doing to address the need for more shelter capacity. I'm assuming that in addition to the emergency declaration, there must have been a plan.

1
2 GARY JENKINS: Thank you Deputy Speaker. Uhm,
3 the vacancy rate is still below one percent for
4 families with children. We are aggressively working
5 with our providers and again, want to thank the City
6 Council body as a whole to continue being a partner
7 with us as we look for additional emergency shelters
8 but our process of citing shelters throughout the
9 five boroughs, has not stopped. We recognize that we
10 are a right to shelter city and we need to provide
11 shelter to those who present themselves to us.

12 As the Mayor has stated previously, we are
13 looking for everyone to be a partner in this effort,
14 recognizing that certain areas are over saturated but
15 also focus on areas where there is undersaturation
16 and so, we are looking across the city asking our
17 elected officials to please continue to be a partner
18 with us and identify locations where shelters where
19 there's opportunities to create these shelters.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: But the declaration allows
21 you to bypass councilmatic input right? Normally the
22 city would -

23 GARY JENKINS: The declaration allow us to
24 accelerate working with our providers, so they can

25

1
2 start providing services before the contract is
3 registered.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Gotcha.

5 GARY JENKINS: So, we're really pleased again
6 that the Comptroller was a partner in that effort and
7 the Deputy Speaker supporting for us to get that
8 emergency declaration completed.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, and these are just
10 question we're asking because I want to get a lot of
11 this on record and I want to clarify a lot of what
12 has been said and of course I understand that this
13 situation is very sensitive. But the last time that
14 the city violated the right to shelter law, the
15 administration notified the Legal Aid Society. Why
16 did this not happen this time?

17 GARY JENKINS: So, again Deputy Speaker, as I
18 said in my testimony, we fell short. We had an
19 influx of individuals entering our shelter system and
20 our dedicated staff was working as fast as possible
21 to address this unprecedented surge within our
22 system. With those four families, we have now cost
23 correct. We are working with our IT department to
24 improve technology at PATH and across our systems.
25 We are closely monitoring the timeline when someone

1
2 enters our location. Administrator Carter and myself
3 receive a daily report identifying that the folks
4 that arrive prior to 10:00 P.M. were conditionally
5 placed by 4:00 A.M.

6 We recognize that for those four families, we
7 did, we fell short. I'm going to leave it - we fell
8 short and that's something that we're not proud of
9 but that's something that we address going forward
10 and we are ensuring that that would not happen again.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I appreciate that. And what
12 is the timeline then for families? Are we moving
13 families? I want to better understand, so families
14 coming to PATH, obviously we have to place them. We
15 put them you know wherever beds are available. Are
16 they then transferred to other facilities or is that
17 their permanent place of residence for whatever time
18 is needed to really access what the needs of that
19 particular family are?

20 GARY JENKINS: I appreciate that question. I'm
21 going start and have Administrator Carter chime in.
22 When a family presents at PATH, we place them into a
23 conditional placement, because it gives us the
24 opportunity to have the assessment because we want to
25 treat each family as an individual family with their

1
2 own unique needs. We want to ensure that they are
3 placed in the appropriate setting. It was DV, we
4 recognize that there are certain boroughs or
5 neighborhoods that we cannot place those families in,
6 so we want to have that true, full assessment to meet
7 the families where they are.

8 So, they do a conditional placement as we are
9 going and understanding the eligibility as far as
10 documentation and then from there, they are placed
11 into a permanent – and I say permanent, it's a
12 temporary setting until we can move those families
13 and individuals to a place of stability.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And is there consideration to
15 families that maybe have family members that live in
16 New York City and maybe let's say, a new arrival. I
17 have you know an aunt that lives in Queens and I
18 would to be you know near my aunt, but I can't live
19 with the aunt. Is there any consideration? I mean,
20 I understand that because of the emergency and the
21 lack of beds, to fulfill our mandated obligation, it
22 may be tricky to do that but is that a conversation
23 that is being had?

24 GARY JENKINS: That is definitely a conversation
25 and that's even prior to the surge of asylum seekers,

1
2 that's our protocol. We work with the individuals;
3 we work with their family or friends to see if
4 there's another avenue for them to secure housing.
5 So, if they know a friend, we speak with a friend,
6 you know the staff speak with a friend at PATH to see
7 if that individual, that family can stay with them.
8 So, that conversation is ongoing and engaging but in
9 the end, if we're not successful or we can't find a
10 place for those individuals to go, as the city, as I
11 stated earlier as we are mandated to, legally
12 mandated to place those families into temporary
13 shelter.

14 JOSLYN CARTER: I do Commissioner. I think one
15 of the things that we do make sure that happens, once
16 a family placed conditionally, if they are eligible,
17 they are remaining in the same space. We are not
18 moving them. And we do look at their families
19 members, that they could be diverted to because we
20 think you know, we do know that shelter is the last
21 emergency space for families to be together out of
22 shelter.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, considering that the
24 vacancy rate was up at one percent, right, and now we
25 have this emergency declaration, if a New Yorkers, a

1
2 family that resides in New York, right. A New Yorker
3 who is facing eviction goes into PATH, do they now
4 fall into this new system of newly identified shelter
5 studies? Like, is that family going to be placed in
6 a hotel?

7 JOSLYN CARTER: So, we released, and part of the
8 emergency declaration is allowing us to move through
9 the process quicker to have providers open shelters
10 for the asylee population. Our regular process of
11 procuring shelters will remain. So, we are hoping to
12 open a setting for asylees will be separate from our
13 process that we have now. So, those who are coming
14 into a system, a regular New Yorker, families come to
15 us will not be going into this emergency asylee
16 system that we are standing up. So, we did release
17 the RFP's. It was a vendor conference that happened
18 to kind of explain what that is. And so, once stand
19 that up, that is where asylee's will be going to.
20 Not into a regular system but our process will remain
21 the same that we have now for folks who are applying
22 that are not asylum seekers.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Absolutely. Now, PATH has a
24 process by which in order to place families, couples,
25 the couple has to be married or have a domestic

1 partnership. Is that something that's being waved?

2 Are families being separated that cannot produce
3 marriage licenses or have elected not to get married?
4

5 JOSLYN CARTER: So, for our regular process and
6 continue to be the same process, we do place
7 conditionally for ten days and give opportunity for
8 couples to get domestic partnership if they don't
9 have that. So, that's our regular process but what I
10 talked about a few minutes ago, you know emergency
11 system that were setting up, we'll be looking at ways
12 that we can adjust what our processes are you know to
13 really look at these families who are coming because
14 we do know that it's going to be some ways that we
15 will have to look at these families in a different
16 way.

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I really wish that you guys
18 would revisit that policy. I don't want to get
19 married, and I don't know that I want to have you
20 force me to marry someone.

21 GARY JENKINS: Council Member, if I could add on,
22 you know we also have rules and regulations that the
23 state is our oversight, and we would have those
24 discussion as Administrator Carter said. You know
25 it's a unique population and these families are

1
2 coming over. You know, like I said in my testimony,
3 wear nothing but the clothes on their back. So, we
4 want to give them the opportunity and work with them
5 to get the documentation but also, have a
6 conversation with our state oversight to see how
7 those rules can be adjusted and relaxed and I thank
8 you, and I do believe that you want to be married.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I don't, I don't, and I would
10 resent you highly. But is DHS or is the city, MOIA
11 maybe communicating with Texas and Arizona at this
12 point because we've been hearing from families that
13 had an appointment you know maybe to see you know
14 immigration on you know their appointment and I guess
15 to start the process right of seeking the asylum.
16 And yet no one, you know their paperwork was
17 misplaced, addresses were wrong. Whose tracking this
18 information and is there any, you know any
19 relationship between what you're doing here in New
20 York City and what's happening at the border?

21 MANUEL CASTRO: We're in constant communication
22 with our federal partners who are at the border.
23 However, as I stated earlier, the state of Texas is
24 not cooperating. They've essentially weaponized the
25 situation. We've learned that the buss company that

1
2 they are working with has a non-disclosure agreement
3 that does not allow them to communicate with the City
4 of New York.

5 Really demonstrating how disruptive Governor
6 Abbott is trying to be in this situation. As I said
7 before, he's using human beings as political pawns
8 which is why we are condemning them and their
9 actions. Certainly, we'd love to be in more
10 coordination and know exactly how many people will be
11 arriving in New York City to provide the services
12 that they need, as well as to make sure that they are
13 arriving at their immigration court hearings.

14 I'd also like to say, take the opportunity to
15 really applaud that the work of our frontline staff
16 at DSS, they've done tremendous work in supporting
17 asylum seekers. They've been very flexible, and
18 Commissioner Jenkins and I are in constant
19 communication to troubleshoot anything that might
20 come up that we hear from advocates and community
21 groups and will continue to do so because this
22 population is coming here with a great amount of
23 needs, and we have to push back on what Governor
24 Abbott is doing. New Yorkers won't be scared or
25

1
2 intimidated, and we are showing how asylum seekers
3 should be welcomed in our country.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I just - My concern is just
5 that we lose people and that you know, they are off
6 the grid and now we have no idea what state they
7 ended up in and uhm, you know, whether or not they
8 are connecting with someone at that state to ensure
9 that they're not missing appointments that will then
10 jeopardize their ability to stay you know in the
11 United States. That's really concerning to me.

12 I'm going to just be quiet for a little while and
13 allow my colleagues because I have a lot of
14 colleagues here who have a bunch of questions and I
15 will come back around. Okay, we'll have a five-
16 minute clock for Council Members.

17 GARY JENKINS: Deputy Speaker if I may.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yes.

19 GARY JENKINS: Just add on what Commissioner
20 Castro said in regard to our frontline staff. I
21 would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the hard
22 work across all of our agencies. They have always
23 rise to the occasion to get the job done. It has not
24 stopped with the asylum seekers coming to New York
25 City. They embrace and have open arms with them and

1
2 really engage with them as well. So, I just really
3 want to give a shout out and big kudos to our
4 frontline staff that's out there each every day and
5 night doing the work on behalf of New Yorkers
6 regardless of immigration status.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I concur and what
8 I view to the equation and thank you for your honesty
9 uhm, in our communications, you've always been you
10 know very upfront about the situation and uhm, even
11 before you made headlines, you were very honest about
12 the number of people and what was happening and what
13 your approach was and trying to address it as quickly
14 and as humanely as possible. It is a very unique
15 situation and I encourage you know my colleagues to
16 really work with the Administration to try to figure
17 out how we can all be helpful. This is not you know
18 one of those times where we can afford to you know to
19 take a political stand right on a humanitarian
20 crisis.

21 With that, we have five minutes for Council
22 Members. We're starting with Council Member Hanif.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much Deputy
24 Speaker Ayala and thank you Commissioners Jenkins and
25 Castro and Council Member Shahana Hanif. I'm also

1
2 the Chair of the Immigration Committee and I applaud
3 the work that you are doing and thank you so much
4 Commissioner Jenkins for giving a huge shout out to
5 the frontline staff. That's really important to
6 acknowledge. How is the city coordinating with
7 nonprofit, faith-based and mutual aid groups in
8 southern border states?

9 GARY JENKINS: So, we are working closely with
10 Community-based organizations here in New York City
11 who have close ties with groups in southern border
12 states, as well as national coalitions of groups that
13 have been trying to address. In fact, what Deputy
14 Speaker mentioned, losing people along the journey,
15 which is critical in making sure people don't go
16 without appearing to their court hearings here in New
17 York or elsewhere. So, again, what Governor Abbott
18 is doing is disruptive and it's harming people and we
19 have all had to come together to respond to this
20 emergency and coalitions of people have really come
21 together including volunteers and mutual aid groups
22 who have not done this work before to support people
23 arriving in DC for instance who then want to come to
24 New York City.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Are you able to provide
3 uhm, some specific names of organizations so that we
4 can continue to give them shoutouts and make sure
5 that folks are supporting to help them expand their
6 capacity?

7 MANUEL CASTRO: Uh, yes, well we work pretty
8 closely with Granny's Respond, which is a network of
9 volunteers that have been welcoming asylum seekers at
10 bus stations.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Could you repeat the name
12 one more time?

13 MANUEL CASTRO: Granny's Respond.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay.

15 MANUEL CASTRO: And this is an organization that
16 has been doing this work for many years.
17 Specifically with asylum seekers and they have a
18 network of volunteer organizations in across the
19 country really and they've just done a tremendous
20 amount of work. They have a chapter here in New
21 York. What's the Chapter called? TLC, uh, Team TLC,
22 who have been fantastic. They've been welcoming
23 people here at Port Authority with us, but they've
24 been doing this work for many years. Of course, I'll
25 give a shout out to Catholic Charities who will

1
2 testify later today. They have been working with
3 asylum seekers on both sides of the border really but
4 in Texas and here in New York. And there are many
5 others and I'd love to give them all a shout out but
6 it's a long list and I do also want to say that
7 they've been tremendous in identifying information
8 that has been hard to come by because of non-
9 cooperation by Texas and other states.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. Could you walk
11 us through the city's presence at the Port Authority
12 bus terminal when it's known that a bus from Texas
13 will arrive. How does the city learn about the bus
14 and then which city agencies are directly present?
15 Which non-profit partners? And then services offered
16 including is IDNYC, a part of the package here?

17 MANUEL CASTRO: Yes, as you know I said in my
18 testimony, asylum seekers are arriving in a variety
19 of ways, many of them, many asylum seekers have been
20 taking commercial public buses and arriving at the
21 many drop off locations. Not just Port Authority but
22 as you know Mega Bus and Bolt and others have drop
23 off location at street corners. Often not you know
24 in bus depots right.

1
2 And so, the other complexity of that logistics is
3 that some busses arrive without asylum seekers, and
4 some do and often late in the evening or at night, so
5 it's hard to know when exactly people are arriving
6 because they are connecting to these commercial buses
7 in DC and coming here. We're in touch with these bus
8 companies. Whether attendance at these drop off
9 locations, that's one of the ways we've come to learn
10 that there is a surge in people arriving and they've
11 been helpful in connecting people to our shelter
12 system. So, that was the initial way we began to
13 support asylum seekers arriving to New York.

14 Officially, Governor Abbott announced that a bus
15 directly from Texas was arriving this past Friday.
16 Granny's Response and their group of volunteers
17 alerted us of this the night before. Again, Governor
18 Abbott in Texas did not you know warn us about this,
19 even though the bus had started their journey
20 Wednesday and was to arrive Friday.

21 Again, the time - it's difficult even for the
22 volunteers to know exactly and then, another bus
23 arrived Sunday and we just learned that buses
24 arriving today and then tomorrow will be receiving
25 two buses. So, as you can see, it's a fleet of buses

1
2 at this point leaving Texas and will be arriving here
3 in New York on a consistent basis we assume. And so,
4 we're working closely, specifically with Granny's
5 Response who have already been doing this work. But
6 we're pulling together really a coalition of groups
7 who have experience in working with asylum seekers
8 and also legal service providers and volunteers
9 who've approached us in collaborating.

10 Of course, we want to do this in a very organized
11 way. You know Port Authority as you know is managed
12 by the state and this bus company that was contracted
13 by the State of Texas is not even licensed to use
14 Port Authority. Port Authority is allowing them to
15 use the bus station because of the people that
16 they're transporting.

17 And we're working closely with them and the state
18 to make sure that we have the space to work with them
19 and connect them to the emergency services, which are
20 again, food, clothes, you know and some medical
21 emergencies, we've had three people that arrived with
22 need of mediation. Two young people who didn't have
23 insulin for three days on their journey and needed
24 medical attention and of course, people arrive
25 dehydrated and hungry.

1
2 So, those are the immediate needs, and we are
3 triaging right. Some people need to connect to the
4 emergency shelters, others need to arrive to family
5 acquaintances in the city and unfortunately others
6 don't even know why they're in New York. As I
7 mentioned, uh, a family you know was transported here
8 who intended to go to Wisconsin to meet with
9 relatives there and had to you know, we've had to
10 help them get there. And another person this past
11 Friday, wanted to go to Portland Oregon and once he
12 arrived here, he's like, well how do I get there from
13 here? And we had to explain that it was on the other
14 side of the country and so, therefore had to stay in
15 our emergency shelter system.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And could you just speak
17 to the IDNYC piece here. Are folks applying upon
18 arrival or how are connecting them to the municipal
19 ID? And that's all for me. Thank you so much.

20 GARY JENKINS: Thank you for your question.
21 IDNYC, we were already in the process of working with
22 our homeless individuals, so they can have the
23 availability of the IDNYC card. So, we are
24 dovetailing this asylum seekers into that process,
25 looking at the rules, looking at the documentation

1
2 that's needed for these individuals. Understanding
3 that as I said earlier, they're coming with only the
4 clothes on their back. So, how as a city work with
5 them to obtain the appropriate documentation, so then
6 they can obtain the IDNYC card. So, we are also
7 keenly focused on this population but as a whole, all
8 of our residents that's in our shelter system, to
9 make sure that IDNYC card is available to them to
10 apply for.

11 MANUEL CASTRO: And just for awareness, when an
12 asylum seeker enters the country, their
13 documentation, their paperwork is taken away from
14 them and they're giving of course documents from you
15 know CBP, USCIS, which they carry with them but we're
16 unsure as to whether they can use those to even fly
17 right across the country like this individual who
18 needs to get to Portland. The federal government is
19 considering providing an ID at the border, you know
20 in lieu of the documents that they take away but that
21 is a serious concern obviously.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Council Member.
23 Uhm, Council Member Cabán.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you Chair. Thank
25 you Commissioners. I actually just want to follow-up

1
2 very briefly on a question that my colleague asked,
3 and you expanded upon Commissioner. Knowing that
4 many folks are having their ID's confiscated by ICE
5 at the border, will DHS find families ineligible for
6 shelter if they don't have their ID with them?

7 GARY JENKINS: We work with those families, those
8 individuals to obtain their documentation. So, they
9 have a ten-day conditional to get documentation.
10 We're obligated to work with those individuals to
11 obtain that documentation. If they are found
12 ineligible, I'm going to be really clear with this,
13 they are not displaced and said, you have to leave
14 shelter. They are ineligible for the city to receive
15 reimbursement from the state.

16 So, again, we continue to work with those
17 individuals to get the necessary documentation that's
18 needed for them to be eligible and for us to get
19 appropriate -

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: So, in those ten days,
21 they are in shelter?

22 GARY JENKINS: Yes, yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Uhm, I wanted to ask a
24 little bit about singles intake particularly. We're
25 hearing that folks have seen many single individuals

1
2 who go to singles intake. Be sent to inappropriate
3 congregate shelters despite the fact that they have
4 serious health conditions or need private rooms or
5 reasonable accommodations based on COVID or other
6 health issues. And so, I'd like to know what
7 percentage of people at singles intake are being
8 assisted with reasonable accommodation requests.

9 JOSLYN CARTER: Thank you for that question.
10 Single adults who come to our intake center are
11 assessed for their needs. And so, there is a
12 reasonable accommodation process that they do go
13 through. Uhm, and that is through our OLA system,
14 and we do have individuals at intake at all three
15 intake centers and three or four intake centers that
16 do assessments of their needs on site and if there's
17 a reasonable accommodation that needs to happen, that
18 can happen.

19 If there is, once they are placed in a congregate
20 setting and they do need an individual room and
21 there's a reasonable accommodation that's needed,
22 that happens. If you show up at intake and there's -

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: I apologize because I know
24 we all have limited time. Uhm, I understand the
25 process, my question is like what's the percentage of

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

people at singles intake that are being assisted with these requests?

JOSLYN CARTER: I'd have to come back to you with the percentage.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay, thank you and I appreciate your patience with me. Like I said, I just want to make sure my questions get answered. Uhm, there's obviously a significant need for these single rooms to accommodate people so they don't have to stay in crowded congregate shelters, especially following the closure of thousands of single rooms last year and the closure of more single rooms in the first half of this year. Is DHS planning to open addition single rooms?

GARY JENKINS: So, under the mayor's historical investment of over \$700 million, we are looking at our stabilization beds and safe havens across the city. Some of those are single, some are double, some are quads, and we are committed to making sure that we meet that requirement that the mayor placed upon us, and we are doing it. We're working towards that each and every day. For the hotels, the emergency hotels that we opened, those are primarily single rooms to meet the surge, but again, you know

1
2 working with the Council as a whole, as we look to
3 open up purpose centered shelters across the city, we
4 want to make sure that it's accommodating to the
5 needs of our residents.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you and advocates
7 have spoken to individuals at singles intake who are
8 waiting so long for intake that they don't get sleep
9 or bed assignments until the next day. Have you all
10 heard about situations where people wait overnight
11 for intake and beyond that, like what's the average
12 time for intake and bed assignment particularly at
13 William, Franklin and Bellevue?

14 JOSYLN CARTER: Council Member, we'll come back
15 to you with the average time for single adults.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: I'm sorry, can you -

17 JOSYLN CARTER: I said, I'll come back to you,
18 we'll come back to you with the average time for
19 single adult placement.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay, thank you.

21 GARY JENKINS: But I want to be clear, a person
22 does not sleep overnight at any of our locations,
23 particularly when I mention families with children,
24 if they're in by 10:00 P.M., you know we are in
25 agreement to place them conditionally by 4:00 A.M.

1
2 For singles, we find – we have capacity, and we
3 place them into a setting.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: So, is it true that nobody
5 is sleeping at PATH anymore?

6 GARY JENKINS: So, just to be clear, it's not
7 anymore. No one sleeps multiple nights at path.
8 Again, if they're in by 10:00 P.M. we place them by
9 4:00 A.M.

10 If a person gets in after 11:00 or 12:00 because
11 it's a 24-hour operation. They get it at 2:00 A.M.
12 and we're working to place them into the appropriate
13 setting as they sit in there and I have observed,
14 they may close their eyes because they're exhausted
15 and in a traumatic state of being homeless. One
16 could perceive that oh, you're sleeping at PATH
17 overnight. That's an incorrect characterization.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay and I appreciate your
19 answer. I just want to name, especially for the
20 record, that that is not what we're hearing from some
21 families who are saying that this is what they're
22 experiencing.

23 I just – one last quick question. How are you
24 arriving at your estimate for the number of asylum
25

1
2 seekers or recent immigrants in shelter and again,
3 thank you for taking my questions.

4 GARY JENKINS: No problem, thank you Council
5 Member. As I mentioned earlier, we asked those
6 questions during the assessment to determine if there
7 are asylum seekers. What we've done since then was
8 actually go back and do a reconciliation to ensure
9 that the one's that we identify as asylum seekers,
10 uhm, are actually asylum seekers and that number
11 actually over what we accounted for. So, we made
12 sure working with our providers to say, who is in
13 your system? Can you have that conversation with
14 those individuals. It was confirmed, reconciled that
15 they are asylum seekers, so that's how we arrived at
16 our number, to make sure that it was accurate.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you and just to
18 clarify the comment I had made. What we have been
19 hearing is that folks have had to wait in line so
20 long at PATH that they didn't get in till after 10:00
21 P.M., not because they weren't there on time but just
22 because of the - some of the process.

23 So, I'm looking forward to hearing on some of
24 those follow-ups that you all have committed to
25 providing and thank you again. Thank you Chair.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Council Member.
3 Council Member Brewer.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. My question
5 is this. First of all, congratulations to your
6 staff. I know they are working hard. So, a few
7 years ago, when I borough president, I was at Main
8 Lane at Catholic Charities and there were families
9 there from Venezuela. So, my question in terms of
10 the funding, since Abbott is doing his horrific, we
11 know that, but you have had families here before who
12 are asylum from Venezuela. So, were you able to get
13 funding for them? Did you try?

14 This is not the first group of asylum seekers who
15 have come to New York. So, how are we handling and
16 what have we done in the past, if anything to try to
17 get federal funding? I met the families; I know they
18 were there.

19 MANUEL CASTRO: Yes, uhm, -

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You weren't around, so.

21 MANUEL CASTRO: I wasn't around yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I was.

23 MANUEL CASTRO: Yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Before your time but I'm
25 just saying, what have we done? Do you have any

1
2 sense of what the agencies have done to try to get
3 funding in the past?

4 MANUEL CASTRO: Yes, I would just say that legal
5 service providers and other community organizations
6 we work with have done a tremendous amount of work
7 since this search began. We fund many of the legal
8 immigration services providers that work with asylum
9 seekers but what we're experiencing is a historic
10 surge. You know, no one planned for this, and we're
11 working to build capacity and provide additional
12 support to legal immigration service providers and
13 other groups that are meeting the needs of asylum
14 seekers.

15 And I would say that community organizations in
16 our boroughs are seeing as well, an influx of people
17 seeking support, not just with immigration services
18 but to find jobs and other services as well, so.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, no I just want to
20 say, was there any effort to get federal money in the
21 past for the asylum seekers? You may not know the
22 answer.

23 MANUEL CASTRO: Oh, for the asylum seekers.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's what I'm saying,
25 yup.

1
2 MANUEL CASTRO: It just you know, maybe this is a
3 good time to pass it on to Tom Tortorici. An asylum
4 seeker is not eligible for certain benefits until
5 they are deemed asylees or refugees.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

7 MANUEL CASTRO: So, let me pass this on to Tom to
8 answer.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But I'm saying, it's not
10 new. These are not new situations.

11 TOM TORTORICI: Thank you Commissioner and thank
12 you Council Member. Uhm, as Commissioner Jenkins
13 described, the city is working with OMB to estimate
14 the amount of funding that would be needed from the
15 federal government for housing but also for support
16 in legal services and there are certain programs that
17 are federally funded. That provide very basic legal
18 supports to asylum seekers and others in removal
19 proceedings.

20 But the city steps up and does its part. Invests
21 more than any other -

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, I'm not worried
23 about the city. I'm trying to get more money.

24 TOM TORTORICI: We're actively working to
25 estimate the extent of the ask.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, secondly, do we
3 know what countries, because are the Council generals
4 helping at all in any way or is it politically
5 untenable for them to do that?

6 MANUEL CASTRO: Working with the Council is
7 sensitive, given the legal considerations of asylum
8 seekers.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

10 MANUEL CASTRO: However, could you please repeat
11 your question Council Member.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, I'm just saying, I
13 work with the Council Generals as Borough President,
14 all 186 of them and they were helpful. Now maybe
15 here, this is not possible given the political
16 situation. So, I was wondering what countries
17 they're coming from and if the Council Generals; they
18 all have money. I got a lot of money from those
19 Council Generals.

20 MANUEL CASTRO: Sure.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, I'm just wondering if
22 any of them are being helpful.

23 MANUEL CASTRO: Sure, you know we probably heard
24 a lot that the Latin American asylum seekers are the
25 majority and that's true. We've seen people from

1
2 everywhere including Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador,
3 Mexico, Honduras—

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All those Council
5 Generals work together. I go to all their meetings.

6 MANUEL CASTRO: Which is why Tom said, we also
7 work with very closely with Council Generals and
8 their staff but it's quite complex to do so with
9 asylum seekers. So, we're moving carefully but I
10 should say, and I want to continue to emphasize, in
11 the past couple of months, I've been meeting with
12 groups that work with asylum seekers from other parts
13 of the world, particularly west Africa. Many of them
14 are also arriving to Mexico and crossing over, using
15 the U.S. Mexico border. We've also found asylum
16 seekers from Russia in Russian speaking countries who
17 have done the same.

18 Of course, Haiti and other countries and they're
19 making their way to New York and so, they need as
20 much support as any asylum-seeking community.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, uhm, the question
22 of course is, and I worry because we need to help
23 these individuals as much as possible. We also have
24 to be concerned about the homeless who are here, and
25 their needs and we have to make sure that the people

1
2 who are here and homeless don't feel that somebody
3 else is getting better treatment. I'm just saying, I
4 assume you are aware of that but that's something
5 that I would worry about.

6 So, I want to know how you're handling that. But
7 in terms of things like, eliminating the requirement
8 that household stay in shelter for 90 days, figuring
9 out about the City FHEPs vouchers and the work
10 requirement and so on. Are you going to figure out --
11 are you planning to change some of those rules and
12 regulations for these individuals and of course, how
13 are you going to work with DOE?

14 I mean, how are you going to make more flexible,
15 if that's appropriate but at the same time, if I was
16 in a shelter system, I would say, why not? Why can't
17 I get those kinds of supports also. So, how are you
18 handling all of that?

19 GARY JENKINS: So, Council Member, thank you for
20 those important questions and we are working
21 continuously. That has not stopped with our
22 individuals who are in shelter. So, I want to say
23 older New Yorkers, not our new New Yorkers, who are
24 asylum seekers, that process has not stopped. We --
25 as soon as a person enters our shelter system, we

1
2 start that assessment of how do we get them to exit
3 shelter into either a subsidized or permanent
4 housing. That has not stopped. We're working with,
5 as you mentioned City FHEPS, looking at the rules,
6 looking at what barriers are in place. Working with
7 our Chief Housing Officer Jessica Katz to really
8 again, not work in silos has the mayor has directed
9 us but working with HPD, NYCHA, DHS, HRA, all of
10 those housing agencies to look to say, let's take a
11 fresh look as we are doing. What barriers do we have
12 in place? What rules are not really rules but
13 something that has been in place for many, many
14 years. We're addressing that process to remove those
15 barriers to make sure that process is more seamless
16 and more efficient.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, my time is out but
18 I'm just saying, these rules have to be for
19 everybody. So that everybody feels that they are not
20 being singled out and then there's no stigma. So, I
21 hope that some of the rules that do exist and make no
22 sense. I know Jessica is working on it. I know how
23 good she is, but it doesn't, we've had some time. It
24 doesn't seem to me that they are changing fast
25 enough. You've got to get rid of some of these

1
2 barriers. Thank you very much Madam Chair, I know my
3 time is out.

4 GARY JENKINS: Thank you and Council Member, if I
5 may and I know you mentioned that you have a lot of
6 relationships and connections for resources.

7 Definitely want to take you up on that offer and have
8 a sit down with you and Commissioner Castro.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I mean, I think some of
10 those Council Generals maybe slightly different than
11 their country and they do have money.

12 GARY JENKINS: I heard you loud and clear.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Council Member Brewer has the
15 money. Thank you Council Member Brewer. Council
16 Member Ung.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: Good morning and thank you
18 both for testifying. I just have one quick question.
19 In light of what's happening and the homeless crisis
20 that we're facing and to be 4:00 looking, is this
21 efficient that we only have one PATH intake center
22 for families in the Bronx right now? Is there
23 something you know that both agencies are looking
24 into?

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

GARY JENKINS: Thank you for that question Council Member. We are evaluating our entire process. You know, been in office in this seat for eight months is really having a good opportunity to look at opportunities. We recognize that we have one path office for families with children in the Bronx. Recognizing also, we're in a financial crisis. So, in order to replicate you know, that's going to cost dollars. And we understand that the city as a whole, we're in a really tough financial position as I know you are aware of. But again, that doesn't stop us from brainstorming and looking for opportunities of how we can serve New Yorkers in a more efficient and effective manner.

COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: Now, thank you for that response. I did have an opportunity to visit the PATH intake center in the Bronx and it's good.

GARY JENKINS: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: I really do encourage uhm, you to look at you know having a PATH intake in other boroughs, also to serve the needs of you know, of different residence in the different boroughs.

GARY JENKINS: Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member
3 Ung. Council Member Restler.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you Chair Ayala,
5 it's good to be here and Commissioner Jenkins and Mr.
6 Carter and the many, many administration officials we
7 have here today. Thank you all for coming and for
8 your hard work. Especially Commissioner Jenkins, I
9 really appreciate your great partnership.

10 I will ask just for brevity in response because
11 I'd like to ask as many questions as I can sneak in.
12 So, just off the bat, I think we can all agree that
13 Greg Abbott is a world class piece of you know what
14 and that every asylum seeker coming to New York City
15 deserves care and resources and support. But I have
16 to say I bring a healthy skepticism to the premise of
17 the hearing and the approach that this administration
18 has taken on this issue.

19 Uhm, so, just first off, you mentioned the word
20 of vacancy rate of about one percent. Do we have it
21 in the family with children system? Which is I think
22 we would all agree far too low. Do we have a
23 timeline to get back to the goal of a five or even
24 three percent vacancy rate. Is there a plan in
25

1
2 place, the DSS is executing with a timeline
3 associated for when we anticipate getting there.

4 GARY JENKINS: Absolutely Council Member and that
5 work has not stopped as far as shelters in the
6 pipeline that we need to build and create, and I also
7 want to publicly thank you Council Member for always
8 being a great partner as we look for various
9 locations to open up there shelters and purpose-built
10 shelters because we know that's what's going to
11 increase our vacancy rate, so that we can have the
12 affordability to place people that come to us in a
13 time of need for temporary housing.

14 So, again, that hasn't stopped. We're still
15 working and looking and working towards building
16 additional shelters.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But you know, we always
18 see a spike in the family with children population
19 during the summer months after the school year ends
20 and especially in light of the eviction moratorium
21 being lifted. When we had gotten to record low
22 populations with the family with children census,
23 it's now spiking in a significant way and I am you
24 know, the last time you were here, we were able to
25 celebrate the fact that we had no families with

1
2 children in clusters. We had no families with
3 children in commercial hotels. Can you all affirm if
4 that remains the case today?

5 GARY JENKINS: As far as no families -

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Families with children
7 in commercial hotels or clusters that we are
8 continuing to only rely on tier II facilities for
9 every family with children that's in the shelter
10 system.

11 GARY JENKINS: No, Council Member. As a result
12 of this emergency, asylum seekers and I mentioned
13 earlier in my testimony that we started seeing a
14 surge in May. That started taking up our vacancy.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to say it's
16 very troubling to me that we have families that are
17 outside of the Tier II system. The data though is
18 confusing at best. You've, the city, the mayor has
19 said that there 4,000 asylum seekers that have
20 presented themselves to DHS, but I believe over that
21 same period, going back to May, we've seen
22 approximately a 2,000 person increase in the DHS
23 census. So, how many of the people who have
24 presented themselves are actually in shelter?

1
2 GARY JENKINS: So, over 4,000 individuals has
3 presented themselves as asylum seekers in our system.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That are in your system.
5 You're claiming that the 4,000 people that have
6 presented themselves are currently tonight, asylum
7 seekers that are in the DHS system?

8 GARY JENKINS: No Council Member, let me explain.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay.

10 GARY JENKINS: We have 4,000 individuals that
11 presented themselves that we identify as asylum
12 seekers. What's currently here today and they're
13 still in our system, I have to get back to you for
14 that data and I will.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, I mean, the
16 numbers that were in your testimony that 100
17 additional people are applying each day. I just want
18 to clarify that doesn't just include asylum seekers,
19 that's all people applying for shelter,

20 GARY JENKINS: No, the 100 folks that present
21 themselves. Not apply, but present themselves to
22 shelter, we identified as 100 per day as asylum
23 seekers.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay.
25

1
2 MANUEL CASTRO: Council Member, can I just add,
3 you'll hear from -

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: No, my questions are
5 just for DSS. I really appreciate it, I'm tight on
6 time. Thank you. I don't mean to be rude; I'm just
7 trying to be direct. I'm focused on the DHS system.
8 The new, so sorry, uhm, will the new asylum shelters
9 be subject to the existing city and state
10 regulations?

11 JOSLYN CARTER: We are working with our state
12 oversight to look at what we can, if we can make any
13 adjustments to our current regulations that we follow
14 and 900 and Part 491. And so, we are assessing that
15 with our state oversight partners.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, I want to strongly
17 encourage that you all agree with Otida to have these
18 new facilities be subject to the existing regulations
19 and I'm very concerned that we continue to have
20 families that are - we had reached an extraordinary
21 victory in getting families only in Tier II
22 facilities to now have kids outside of it and for it
23 to potentially not be subject to the Otida
24 regulations that we have in place is very concerning.
25 And so, I just want to say, I really hope that you

1
2 all figure that out the right way and we will be
3 monitoring as the General Welfare Committee and the
4 Council.

5 GARY JENKINS: If I may, I know you're short on
6 time because 11 seconds.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I got a couple more
8 questions I'm going to sneak in if the Chair lets me.

9 GARY JENKINS: I know you are, you're Council
10 Member Restler and I appreciate that, but we are
11 working closely with the state as well. So,
12 Commissioner Teats is on board. He knows us very
13 well.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Your former colleague
15 and our dear friend Dan Teats, I know is going to be
16 looking out for immigrant families and for all
17 families in our system and I hope that they bring the
18 necessary oversight.

19 If I can, I was a little concerned by your
20 answers to questions raised by Council Member Cabán
21 earlier. There have been reports by the Legal Aid
22 Society about family spending night in PATH for the
23 first time in eight years. Could you provide a
24 specific accounting of the number of children who
25 arrived before 10:00 P.M. on any night this year and

1
2 spend the night in PATH and the number of children
3 who arrived after 10:00 P.M. this year and spent the
4 night in PATH?

5 GARY JENKINS: Council Member, let me get back to
6 you on that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, those are numbers
8 that just – they are clear violations of Callahan and
9 it's a serious problem and it's a serious concern.
10 And I've limited my questions today only to family
11 with children system because I'm very focused on the
12 wellbeing of our children in shelter.

13 The last thing I just want to say is to echo the
14 question that Council Member Ung raised around the
15 decentralization of PATH. I think that it is a wrong
16 and inhumane thing that we require every homeless
17 family to have to travel to the Bronx to apply for
18 shelter. Many travel seven time, eight times, ten
19 times. We've seen and read about the experiences of
20 families traveling 30 or 40 times. I would welcome
21 in downtown Brooklyn in the 33rd Council District, a
22 PATH decentralization site. We have many, many,
23 hundreds of shelters in the City of New York. We can
24 afford to have three or four or five intake
25 facilities in each borough, so that families can come

1
2 to a more convenient location if they are in need of
3 shelter, and I strongly support Council Member Ung's
4 legislation to that effect and I think it would help
5 us when we face challenges of increased intake like
6 we are today. And I have to say, I remain, it
7 remains unclear to me whether the increase in the
8 shelter census is being driven by the asylum seekers
9 or whether the increase in the shelter census is
10 being attributed to some people needing assistance
11 who are coming from abroad.

12 And I really hope that we can get clearer data to
13 understand what's happening. My strong suspicion is
14 that we are experiencing an increase in the family
15 with children census as a result of the eviction
16 moratorium ending and that regular spike that we see
17 over the summer months, and we are pointing to the
18 immigrant community that is growing in New York City
19 and asylum seekers at the rational. And I need a lot
20 better data to believe it.

21 So, look forward to continuing the conversation.
22 As always, I really do appreciate your leadership
23 Commissioner Jenkins. I'm sorry for the tough
24 questioning but these are important issues, and we
25 need to get to the bottom of them.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

GARY JENKINS: And no need for an apology Council Member because we're in this together, right? And these are individuals that deserve our attention and as you know, I'm personally effected by this. This work is personal for me because I actually as I stated before, my family lived in a shelter. So, these are individuals that deserve our attention and deserve the tough questions that you're asking, for us to respond to as an administration. And I know Mayor Adams has directed us that we do not work in silos, and we are transparent as possible. So, look forward to working with to get the answers to your questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Council Member Restler. Council Member Stevens followed by Council Member Hudson.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good afternoon. How is everyone doing?

GREG JENKINS: Good afternoon.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Uhm, so I just have a couple quick questions. Do you have the data breakdown by borough of the population of asylum

1
2 seekers that have come in? I think we said was about
3 4,000. Do you have that broken down by borough?

4 GARY JENKINS: Let me get back to you Council
5 Member. I know for the sites that we opened, the 11
6 emergency sites for asylum seekers is four in
7 Manhattan, three in Queens, two in Brooklyn, and two
8 in the Bronx.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And do you have it like
10 broken down by like how many is populated in those
11 different places?

12 GARY JENKINS: We can get that to you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, thank you. That
14 will be great.

15 GARY JENKINS: You're welcome.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Uhm, can you talk a
17 little bit about what does the collaboration right
18 now between DHS and DOE looks like? Because as we
19 know, we have an influx of families and things like
20 that and we're going to have a lot of school aged
21 children. What does that look like and how are we
22 preparing for that to be a smooth transition for
23 these young people?

24 GARY JENKINS: So, we have our standard protocol
25 in place with DOE, making sure that we have a strong

1
2 relationship with them and for them to understand
3 when we open up a new location, we let DOE know. We
4 let them know the population for school aged
5 children. There's a data that's shared with them. I
6 actually just had a recent conversation with
7 Chancellor Banks to say, you know we're going to make
8 sure come September that our children and within our
9 system have the appropriate busing, know what school
10 they're going to broke down by the language that's
11 spoken to ensure that the particular schools have
12 that relationship and understand who's coming in, so
13 we can provide services to those school aged
14 children.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, I mean I'm happy
16 to hear you guys are talking but it's a little
17 concerning, especially when we were just talking
18 about cuts in the education system for the last
19 couple of months and we're going to have influx of
20 young people flooding the schools. So, I think we
21 also need to be thinking about, how is that going to
22 translate for money and things like that as well.

23 GARY JENKINS: Yup, if I may, Commissioner Iscol.

24 ZACHARY ISCOL: Yeah, thank you for the question
25 Council Member. So, as Commissioner Castro

1
2 mentioned, we're in the process of setting up a
3 service center that will primarily be based for legal
4 services. Enrolling people in New York City health
5 care, NYC Cares. In addition to that, we will have a
6 DOE presence there to enroll families in the school
7 system. And so, we are closely coordinating with DOE
8 around the service center that we're in the process
9 of building.

10 MANUEL CASTRO: And can I just say before Council
11 Member Restler steps out, it's important for us to
12 acknowledge the increase in asylum seekers arriving
13 to New York because we want to find and figure out
14 the resources that they may need, particularly as
15 they enroll in the education system.

16 Many of the immigration service providers here
17 are ready to testify about the surge in asylum
18 seekers and we've witnessed extremely long lines
19 outside Plaza, and we need to ensure that the asylum
20 seekers, you know are you know, we are able to meet
21 them where they are and have the services that they
22 need.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, thank you. I just
24 have one more question. With the increased number of
25 families and individuals in shelters over the past

1
2 couple of months, because of the pandemic, uhm, could
3 you talk a little bit more about like, what is being
4 done to address those issues on top of all of these
5 things. Because you know, I think sometimes we
6 forget that we have to walk and chew gum at the same
7 time and I would just love to hear about what that
8 plan looks like because you know, we already have an
9 influx of homelessness in the city and then, we now
10 have the asylum seekers. And so, I feel like we've
11 been talking about them as if they are not in the
12 same situation but would love to hear more about like
13 how are canceling both for these things to increase
14 because we know over the last couple months, there's
15 been a huge increase in the homeless population in
16 New York City.

17 GARY JENKINS: Thank you Council Member. We
18 can't afford to not focus on all of our population
19 that enter our system. So, yes, the asylum seeker
20 has placed some pressure on us in our census, in our
21 availability of vacancies but we also recognize that
22 I said earlier, our account is 50,000 individuals
23 that's in our system and we're working with those
24 individuals each and every day to provide the
25 services they need to exit shelter. And to exist

1
2 shelter is really working with our various housing
3 vouchers that they're eligible for. Working with
4 mental health needs, working with medical needs as
5 well and that doesn't stop. We can't afford not to
6 pay attention to our most vulnerable New Yorkers.
7 So, that work continues as we also address the surge
8 of asylum seekers. We're keenly focused on – as I
9 mentioned earlier, our older New Yorkers that's been
10 with us. We have to work with them to get them into
11 – to get them to exit shelter.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Just one more question.
13 Could you talk a little bit about some of the mental
14 health services that you guys are providing to
15 families who are traveling at this rate, for months
16 to then be bused to New York City and talk about some
17 of the mental health services that you guys are
18 providing? Because this is obviously a very
19 traumatic experience for these individuals.

20 GARY JENKINS: Yes, and we're seeing that as
21 folks – as we're meeting people arriving from these
22 buses coming directly from Texas. We're working
23 closely with the Department of Health and Mental
24 Hygiene to make sure that they have the support that
25 they need. They are being connected to these

1
2 services at our homeless shelters and I would say
3 that early on in the year, we made a change to
4 eliminate the six-month eligibility, residency
5 eligibility requirement for NYC Cares for exactly the
6 same reason you know Haitian refugees, asylum seekers
7 are arriving, so our Ukrainians. We want to make
8 sure that the moment they arrive they get the medical
9 and the mental health support that they need.

10 And I should say that many of these families and
11 individuals have been in a journey that has lasted
12 months, maybe even years. They are crossing the
13 boarder and then they are being bussed to New York
14 and it's devastating the conditions they are arriving.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Council Member
17 Stevens. Council Member Hudson followed by Council
18 Member Riley.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you Chair Ayala. I
20 just have a couple of quick questions. One is
21 somewhat a follow-up to Council Member Cabán's
22 question earlier about identification. And I
23 understand that there are requirements and that you
24 are assisting families to the best of your ability.
25 But is there a concerted effort to provide folks with

1
2 IDNYC cards at all? And if so, how are you ensuring
3 privacy is protected and more specifically, how can
4 we ensure that the privacy and any related data
5 associated with these families and individuals is
6 being secured and not shared and treated with the
7 upmost care?

8 GARY JENKINS: Thank you Council Member for your
9 question. Yes, we have a concerted effort to ensure
10 that undocumented individuals have access to IDNYC
11 card. We do not ask for any type of documentation
12 that they are immigrants. We made sure, that's
13 across all city agencies. We do not ask that
14 information because we know in the prior federal
15 administration, they used that as a weapon against
16 these vulnerable populations. So, privacy is at the
17 top of our list, but we also want to ensure that
18 individuals have the photo identification card that
19 they can utilize in New York City and avail
20 themselves to all the benefits that come with having
21 an IDNY card.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Great thank you.

23 MANUEL CASTRO: Can I just add.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Absolutely.
25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

MANUEL CASTRO: This is very much — what we have — it's really important for us to be careful about the data we're collecting of immigrant populations, which makes it difficult for us to you know count and collect data and access the current situation. But we have to be committed to protecting immigrants from you know access to this data that might put them at risk. You know because of as Commissioner Jenkins said, the weaponizing of this data.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Yes, thank you. And then, sort of separately, what steps is the administration taking to reduce the risk of the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19 and Monkey Pox at the facilities where individuals and families are being housed?

GARY JENKINS: So, that's a standard protocol Council Member. When one enters our system, we do provide a COVID test and if needed, for isolation, we provide isolation as well. So, that's part of the medical assessment when one enters into our system.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, but not just COVID, also Monkey Pox.

GARY JENKINS: And Monkey Pox as you know, is rising.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: It is and particularly in
3 congregate settings.

4 GARY JENKINS: And we're working with DOHMH and
5 H+H to identify isolation for those individuals if
6 they are in deed have monkey pox.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Great, thank you so much.

8 GARY JENKINS: You're welcome.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Council Member
10 Hudson. Council Member Riley.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Chair Ayala.

12 Uh, hello Commissioner. How are you doing today?
13 Hello to everyone presented today. Just to piggyback
14 off of Council Member Stevens, do we have a number,
15 the 4,000, how many of those asylum seekers are
16 children?

17 GARY JENKINS: Council Member Riley, we'll get
18 back to you on that question, as well as in addition
19 to Council Member Stevens.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: No problem and being that
21 school is starting within a month, I did hear that you
22 guys are opening up service centers. Is there
23 approximate time that we're looking at these service
24 centers to be open? Where will they be located?

1
2 Will we be having one in each five boroughs? Is
3 there any more information on that?

4 TOM TORTORICI: Yeah, thank you for the question
5 Council Member. So, we're looking at opening up one
6 service center. We're looking at doing that in the
7 next two weeks, hopefully sooner. We are - that
8 service center will provide some core services,
9 primarily legal services, enrollment in DOE
10 facilities and NYC Cares. We're then going to be
11 primarily then referring people to community-based
12 organization for services in their communities. We
13 believe that's the best model because that helps them
14 articulate into different communities for what we're
15 doing.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you and just lastly,
17 I believe all my questions were asked but I do agree
18 with you Commissioner, we do have to work together.
19 I know a fair share with the mayor and
20 administrations agenda, we do have to get more
21 shelters open and communities. I know me and you had
22 a meeting scheduled for yesterday and it was
23 canceled. I don't know why but I really want to make
24 sure that we set up that meeting again. I believe
25 829 Tildon is coming into my district and with

1
2 communities like mine, I think we have to work
3 earlier with them to kind of educate them on why we
4 do need more shelters, and that we're trying to bring
5 fair share throughout New York City. And if we're
6 going to have any of those conversations and if it's
7 going to be easier for Council Members like me, and a
8 lot of other Council Members in the Northeast section
9 of the Bronx, I think if we had these conversations
10 earlier with our community members, how we could work
11 together, I think will be more beneficial for all of
12 us moving forward.

13 GARY JENKINS: Council Member Riley, I totally
14 agree, and you know I approach this work as in
15 collaboration. So, we will definitely - will get
16 that meeting back on the calendar. I wasn't aware
17 that it was canceled, that we had something on the
18 calendar yesterday. My team probably had me prep for
19 this hearing today.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: No problem.

21 GARY JENKINS: But absolutely want to sit down
22 with you and collaborate and strategize, so thank you
23 for that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Alright, thank you Chair.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Council Member
3 Riley. Council Member Bottcher followed by Council
4 Member Williams.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Hi Commissioner
6 Jenkins. How are you?

7 GARY JENKINS: I'm doing well Council Member, how
8 are you?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Good, thank you. This
10 is not the Committee that I'm on, but I came here
11 today because I'm very concerned about this issue and
12 because as you know and as we've been discussing,
13 there's two hotels in my district that are being used
14 for emergency placement. One in Community Board 4
15 with around 210 families and one in Community Board 5
16 with it's going to be like 600 families, right? 600
17 people?

18 GARY JENKINS: Hmm, hmm.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: And I'm concerned about
20 the kids and the school placements this fall and I'd
21 love to get more specificity on some of the questions
22 that were asked about the school placements. At one
23 of my elementary schools, they're going to be getting
24 about 30 new students from one of the emergency
25 hotels and I'm finding out in the last couple of

1
2 days, and I'll be in touch with you about this
3 because you've made it clear that you have an open
4 door and I really appreciate that. They've got about
5 30 kids coming but they've really received no
6 guidance and information other than the fact that
7 they have the 30 kids coming. And apparently they
8 don't know how many are English Language Learners.
9 Could you tell us a little bit more specifically, how
10 is that working? Who is in charge of communicating
11 with the schools and I think we definitely need to
12 have a meeting with the schools and all program
13 together and we need to sit down and make sure that
14 they're prepared. But I'd love to get more
15 information about how that's working.

16 GARY JENKINS: I want to start and then pass it
17 to Administrator Carter Council Member. I want to
18 say publicly as well, it's been a real pleasure
19 working directly with you. Uhm, working on the
20 issues addressing - you know to address in your
21 district in particular and I want to make sure our
22 relationship continues to build from where it is
23 today, so we can bring the services that necessary to
24 New Yorkers who are placed in your district.

25

1
2 So, as I mentioned earlier with DOE, we have a
3 robust relationship with them in regard to when we
4 open up a new location, DOE is informed so they can
5 start planning for those school aged children to
6 ensure that they have seats. To ensure that the
7 language spoken by the children are provided at the
8 schools. I just spoke again recently with Chancellor
9 Banks. We have a meeting on the calendar that's
10 coming up for us to really flush out with the surge
11 of asylum seekers that's coming in and the locations
12 to ensure that DOE is ready for them.

13 Again, our protocol has not changed. We have a
14 good relationship with DOE. You know again, the
15 mayor directed us not to work in silos and that's not
16 what we are doing. My team along with Chancellor
17 Banks team, they meet on a regular basis. They have
18 liaisons within our shelter system. They communicate
19 with one another to ensure that you know, their
20 children who is the main focus are – receive the
21 services in the direction that they need in order to
22 be successful once school starts in September. You
23 want to add anything.

24 JOSLYN CARTER: Oh, uhm, Commissioner you said
25 most of what was going to say. I thank you. But one

1
2 of the things that we will do Council Member is to
3 circle back to DOE because we are giving addresses
4 through our feed and you know, our staff is
5 communicating with DOE, and I know they are beginning
6 to do webinars for our folks. Want to make sure that
7 they're including the schools in that, so we'll
8 circle back to you on that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Thank you.

10 MANUEL CASTRO: And can I just add, my office
11 often works with schools to provide immigration
12 support and parent coordinators will certainly reach
13 out to us to provide that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Okay, thank you. I
15 would like to be helpful with this and I think we do
16 need to pull together. Our principals and your
17 office's and the DOE and really make sure that
18 there's more coordination happening. Thank you very
19 much.

20 GARY JENKINS: You're welcome Council Member. We
21 will follow-up with DOE as well.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Council Member
24 Bottcher. Council Member Williams.

1

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thanks Chair Ayala.

2

Hello Commissioner Jenkins. How are you?

3

GARY JENKINS: Hello, I am well. How are you

4

Council Member?

5

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Good and Commissioner

6

Castro. Sorry, I have not met you yet. So, my

7

questions are about the source of income unit. So,

8

as you all know in addition to a very limited supply

9

of affordable housing, rental assistance, voucher

10

holders persistently experience source of income

11

discrimination, I'm sure as you know is a huge

12

champion of source of income discrimination funding,

13

as well as all of my colleagues in the Council.

14

And so, we know that the Executive Plan

15

transferred uhm six positions from HRA to move them

16

to the City's Commission on Human Rights to bolster

17

the source of income unit. And so, just wanted to

18

know before the transfer, were the six positions at

19

HRA filled or vacant?

20

GARY JENKINS: Uhm, I believe, and I know, I want

21

to make sure I speak correctly because I'm the

22

record. I believe four of the six were vacant and

23

two were occupied and we transferred the headcount

24

over to Commissioner Palmer.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, uhm, so, of the
3 filled positions uhm, were the staff themselves
4 transferred to CCHR or will new staff be hired?

5 GARY JENKINS: I think that's a really good
6 question for Commissioner Palmer. I know it's a
7 competitive process, so if there are vacancies, then
8 those staff members would apply for those positions.
9 If they wanted to go over to Commission of Human
10 Rights.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, and this is
12 probably another question that's better for CCHR but
13 is HRA in any way coordinating with them? Do you
14 have any thoughts and ideas on the future of this and
15 how we could potentially address the problem?
16 Because I think it's one of those things where if we
17 can solve this, it can alleviate so much pressure on
18 other people in other spaces. Because as you know,
19 some people who currently hold vouchers are sitting
20 in shelters. So, do you have any idea or is there
21 any plans for coordination to really address this
22 issue?

23 GARY JENKINS: Absolutely, as I've said a number
24 of times, you know, Mayor Adams directed all agency
25 heads not to work in silos. So, in this particular

1
2 instance, yes, we're working with Commissioner
3 Palmer. When we hear something, we say something.
4 We make referrals and then Commissioner Palmer team
5 follows-up appropriately. But we're like the first
6 line that probably will hear about it if there's some
7 type of source of income discrimination from our
8 clients and we follow-up appropriately. So, we have
9 a good relationship with Commissioner Palmer. We
10 expect that to continue. And again, we're mandated
11 for it to continue because we know we're working on
12 behalf of our shared clients.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So, is it a specific
14 process that sort of institutionalize or does it kind
15 of happen at hawk. So, let's say a provider is
16 working with a particular client that has a voucher
17 and the client goes to find an apartment and they
18 maybe explain to their case worker that they were
19 unable to find an apartment and it's deemed, it might
20 be a discriminatory matter. And so, is that then
21 sent to CCHR? Like, I'm just trying to understand if
22 it's like institutionalized or if it just kind of
23 happens naturally. Like is there any specific plan
24 that HRA has in the pipe to really address the issue

25

1
2 from their lens in addition to what's happening at
3 CCHR.

4 GARY JENKINS: So, what I'm committed to do
5 Council Member is providing you with a road map of
6 what that process looks like when a referral is made
7 over to human rights. So, we can have a more in-
8 depth conversation along with Commissioner Palmer.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you so
10 much.

11 GARY JENKINS: You're welcome.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Council Member
13 Williams. Uhm, we will have a second round I believe
14 that Council Member Brewer has a question.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Two quick
16 questions. One is, in the papers, it did state that
17 some individuals going to 30th Street, that said no,
18 I'm going to the streets from the people who are
19 seeking asylum. Do you have any sense of how many
20 have done that? Are you able to match number one.

21 And then number two, on your vacancies. Every
22 single agency has vacancies. I understand the mayor,
23 we want to be full-time. Nobody wants to be full-
24 time. There's no private sector. It's not full-
25 time. So, are you able to fill these vacancies? How

1
2 many do you have and how is it impacting your
3 efforts? I don't know how honest you can be because
4 I know it's a political challenging issue right now
5 in this administration. I'm for more hybrid because
6 otherwise nobody's going to work for the City of New
7 York.

8 GARY JENKINS: Got it Council Member. I'm on the
9 record, so I'm definitely always going to be honest
10 in my response.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

12 GARY JENKINS: The mayor has directed us that we
13 are to return to office full-time unless if you have
14 a reasonable accommodation, that's the directive that
15 the mayor gave. I am a true civil servant and I'm
16 going to follow the directions of the mayor and
17 support him in that effort.

18 In regard to the vacancies, we are higher in our
19 vacancies. The city as a whole is not exempt from
20 the great resignations that occurring across the
21 country, not just private and not-for-profits but
22 city government as well. Folks are deciding to
23 retire, move on to other positions, take other jobs
24 in other cities. Can't stop that but what we are
25 doing and what we're committed to doing is making

1
2 sure that we are aggressively doing our recruitment
3 to get folks into jobs, so we can continue to deliver
4 the top-notch service that our New Yorkers deserve.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How many vacancies do you
6 have?

7 GARY JENKINS: I can get back to you for HRA and
8 DHS.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

10 GARY JENKINS: We can circle back to you. 30th
11 Street, again, the staff that's there and I commend
12 them, are very engaged and really trying to work with
13 those individuals as they present themselves to let
14 them know the benefits of coming into shelter and
15 having a roof over their head. You know, to pair
16 with the mayor, there's no dignity in living on the
17 streets. We don't want anyone to live on the
18 streets. And especially our asylum seekers who as I
19 said in my testimony, had this grueling trip from
20 their homeland to New York City.

21 Once they're here, we want to make sure that they
22 get the services they provide, so they can get back
23 onto a road of stability.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so hopefully
25 they're not on the streets. Obviously, the outreach

1
2 workers will know that if there are and hopefully -
3 you know, alright. Thank you. Another time to
4 discuss all of this.

5 GARY JENKINS: Yes Ma'am.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I have a couple
7 of questions. Regarding the shortage of staff
8 shortages at every city agency imaginable, how has
9 that been impacting PATH and how have you been able
10 to pivot to ensure adequate staffing ratios?

11 GARY JENKINS: So, again, Council Member I'm
12 sorry, Deputy Speaker, as we look at our vacancies as
13 I just said, we are aggressively trying to hire and
14 fill those vacancies. If we need to have a
15 reassessment with OMB, OMB continues to be a great
16 partner with us and collaborate and do that
17 reassessment. So, that's what we're working with in
18 regards to filling our vacancies. I'll get back to
19 you on the numbers that we have, but again, we have
20 hiring fairs, job fairs, and we're really focused on
21 in particular, the frontline staff that our homeless
22 individuals are eligible for to do outreach work.
23 Who best to get those jobs than someone with lived
24 life experience.

1
2 So, we have targeted job fairs for those
3 particular individuals. For all the other positions,
4 we are aggressively recruiting for those, and I
5 welcome your partnership and if we can send you those
6 recruitment flyers as well, please share with your
7 constituents because we do want the best to work in
8 New York City.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, I don't know that I heard
10 a response. Is it your sentiment that PATH is
11 currently adequately staffed?

12 GARY JENKINS: We constantly look at the staffing
13 levels as I said. And if we need to address our
14 staffing needs, our staffing levels, we will work
15 with OMB but as of right now, the resources that we
16 have PATH is sufficient to handle the workload. But
17 again, if we assess that there is a surge so to speak
18 and we can't handle, of course we work within our
19 system to see how we can redivert staff from other
20 areas from back-end offices to help us. But again,
21 we will work with OMB -

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Have you had to do that?

23 GARY JENKINS: Excuse me?

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Have you had to that?

25 GARY JENKINS: No, we have not.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: No, okay. I just wonder you
3 know how that impacts the amount of time that a
4 family is waiting if we don't have the appropriate
5 number of staff available. Now is every family that
6 going in, meeting with an actual person or is any of
7 this work – because I'm asking because I have heard
8 in the past that sometimes families are at PATH but
9 are communicating with workers via phone.

10 I don't know that that's a real thing but I you
11 know would like some clarity on that.

12 GARY JENKINS: So, each person that comes into
13 our location, is actually interacting with a live
14 person. Due to COVID, we did have to put practices
15 in place that a client may not be able to sit in a
16 cubical in close proximity with a staff person, but
17 the staff person is present, on-site and having those
18 conversations remotely. So, they may be at their
19 desk in the back while the client is sitting in the
20 waiting area and having that assessment take place.
21 But that was really based on you know the COVID
22 restrictions and to make sure that one, the clients
23 are safe, and our staff are safe.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Are those restrictions still
25 in place?

1
2 JOSLYN CARTER: Deputy Speaker, that is no longer
3 in place. So, we're doing face to face interviews in
4 our intake in all of our sites.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I mean yeah, because we
6 discussed the traumatic process that an individual
7 going into the shelter regardless of where they're
8 coming from is. And I think that that face-to-face
9 interaction and being able to be greeted by an
10 individual that is understanding and helpful, uhm,
11 it's valuable.

12 GREG JENKINS: Absolutely, totally agree and
13 again, you know we had that in place because of the
14 COVID restrictions and now, you know Administrative
15 Carter just acknowledge that that has been lifted and
16 now we're doing face to face interviews once again.
17 Of course, in a safe environment to protect both our
18 staff and our clients.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Absolutely, I agree. Uhm,
20 okay, can you tell us what the number of families who
21 requested to be reticketed was? And I'm assuming
22 that these are families that voluntarily asked to be
23 reticketed. Am I right in my assumption?

24 GARY JENKINS: Yes, we'll have to get back to you
25 on the numbers. I, myself, spoke to a handful of

1
2 families who were going onto other destinations but
3 it's really the volunteer groups that have been
4 working closely with these families and individuals
5 to support them to get to their other destinations
6 because of course, they would need to connect with
7 other CBO's there.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And does that happen
9 immediately or are families offered a space to rest
10 and you know, kind of gather themselves before they
11 are shipped out on another bus?

12 GARY JENKINS: Yes, the buses that are arriving
13 from Texas that were announced on Friday, we have set
14 up a welcome space at Port Authority, where we're you
15 know connecting with arrivals and then you know, if
16 for instance the individual that wanted to get to
17 Portland, we advise them to stay in our shelter
18 system until we figure out how to help them get
19 there. So that's an option.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, MOIA's doing the
21 reticketing, not DHS?

22 GARY JENKINS: No, the CBO's that we're
23 partnering with. Yes, and we're looking to set up a
24 system to support but again, this new - this
25 situation is very new, that the buses are arriving at

1
2 Port Authority. Prior to that, individuals and
3 families were arriving in commercial buses, and it
4 was just hard to identify them as they were arriving.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Understood. Uhm, do we know
6 how many buses are leaving Texas and Arizona? Are
7 these buses leaving daily, weekly, like what is - is
8 there a schedule or is it unpredictable?

9 GARY JENKINS: Yeah, again, the company that the
10 State of Texas has Charter, has a non-disclosure
11 agreement. That's what we've learned, so they're not
12 allowed to tell us what's happening. How many people
13 are boarding the buses and will arrive to New York.
14 We're learning that people are leaving at bus,
15 different rest stops, which is a concern. And some
16 are leaving because their destination is not New York
17 and they've been put on these buses towards the city.
18 Uhm, but yes, again the state of Texas is being as
19 disruptive as possible and we're doing all we can
20 with the information we're able to gather through
21 this network of CBO's.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: With the buses that are
23 arriving in New York City, are they arriving daily or
24 are they arriving every other day? How predictable?
25 I get the sparsity situation and how -

1
2 GARY JENKINS: It's unpredictable but it now
3 seems that they arriving basically daily. It's just
4 hard to know at what time. Again, we've learned that
5 buses arriving tonight and two more tomorrow and we
6 presume that this will continue to be the case.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you have an average number
8 of individuals that are coming in daily?

9 GARY JENKINS: On Friday, 54 individuals arrive.
10 However, on Sunday morning, only 14 made it to New
11 York City. We learned that more people were on those
12 buses but again, they dropped off along the way.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

14 GARY JENKINS: So, we'll get a better sense of
15 the average as we continue to do this work.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Now, I understand that we're
17 having conversations with the federal government
18 about the need for additional resources. Is the
19 exact same conversation happening on the state level?

20 GARY JENKINS: Yes, we're engaged in
21 conversations with our partners at the state level.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Are we asking for anything
23 specific?

24 MANUEL CASTRO: That's what we're doing as I
25 mentioned earlier Deputy Speaker. We are doing that

1
2 assessment and working with OMB and our oversights to
3 better understand what the ask will be.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, I would imagine that a
5 lot of that is the budget right, that we just voted
6 on may take a hit? I don't know how; do we have the
7 resources in place as we speak today?

8 GARY JENKINS: The resources as far as -

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do we have the necessary
10 funding in place to open all of these hotels and
11 convert them into temporary shelter?

12 GARY JENKINS: But that's why you know working
13 with our federal oversight and our state to state
14 that we need additional resources to provide the
15 services to these new New Yorkers.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, alright and my final
17 question is related to the number, the pace, if you
18 can tell us what the pace of move outs has been in
19 the recent few weeks and months.

20 GARY JENKINS: So, on a weekly basis, around 200
21 individuals move out of shelter with some various
22 type of subsidy. We're really proud of that number.
23 Of course, we want it to increase and make sure that
24 you know our clients have a choice in regards to
25 which subsidy. Is it EHV, Section 8, City FHEPs,

1
2 state FHEPs, so we work with those individuals to
3 identify what's best for them to move out.

4 But you know, looking at our data, it's around
5 200 individuals per week that's moving out of
6 shelter.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And how does that compare to
8 last years numbers?

9 GARY JENKINS: Excuse me?

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: How does that compare to last
11 years move out rates?

12 GARY JENKINS: I'll get back to you on that
13 Deputy Speaker.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, I appreciate that.
15 Uhm, I think I have one last question. It was a
16 question that was asked to me this morning. It's how
17 do New Yorkers help? I think New Yorkers are you
18 know ready to lend a helping hand and have - we have
19 received inquiries regarding the need for clothing
20 and food. How are you handling those requests?

21 GARY JENKINS: So, before Commissioner Castro, I
22 just want to make a correction for the record. I
23 said, approximately 200 individuals. It's 200
24 households that move out per week.

25 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

1
2 GARY JENKINS: I just wanted to say that for the
3 record. Go ahead Commissioner.

4 MANUEL CASTRO: We're working with the mayor's
5 front to set up a way for New Yorkers to donate, so
6 that we can provide resources to the volunteer groups
7 and nonprofit organizations that we're working with
8 and other basic needs that asylum seekers have.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Okay, uhm, one second.
10 Okay, so when an individual comes - when a family
11 come here, obviously they don't qualify for
12 government aid. What resources are they provided
13 with in terms of clothing and I'm assuming that the
14 food is pretty much handled at the facility, but they
15 come here, and they have no clothing. How are we
16 addressing that. Is that funding that's coming
17 through the mayor's fund?

18 MANUEL CASTRO: At first instance, they are being
19 supported as Administrator Carter mentioned with
20 food, clothing, and other basic needs. And they've
21 done a tremendous job at doing so.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

23 GARY JENKINS: And that's part of our normal
24 process. If a family or individual presents
25 themselves and they need clothing, we work with our

1
2 providers to ensure that they have the basic
3 necessities to be successful.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, Council Member Williams
5 has a question.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, just about the
7 fund that you said you're setting up. I know there
8 was a fund that the mayor's office set up after the
9 fire and there was like a lot of questions around
10 like transparency and where did the money go. So,
11 how do you plan to kind of like report out on that in
12 terms of like the usage of the money?

13 MANUEL CASTRO: Yes, we're going to have these
14 conversations with the mayor's fund to ensure that we
15 are learning from this experience, and you know we'll
16 definitely get back to you on how we're going to set
17 up this fund and for what purposes they are going to
18 be used for.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, I would love to
20 have that information like I said, because you know
21 when these funds are created, there is always
22 questions about getting the money to the people who
23 need it most and often times, you don't see that.
24 So, I would love if there's transparency around where
25 this money is going to go. Thank you.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

MANUEL CASTRO: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Commissioner.

Thank you Commissioner for coming. I think that you know we'll be gathering more information in the next few week and figuring out what the next steps are, but we are at your disposal, and we are eager to be helpful. So, please use us as a resource.

GARY JENKINS: Thank you Deputy Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

MANUEL CASTRO: Thank you.

GARY JENKINS: Thank you Council Members.

MANUEL CASTRO: Thank you Deputy Speaker and my condolences to you and your family.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I appreciate that.

MANUEL CASTRO: Thank you Council Members for this.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: We're going to move on to public testimony now. Aminta Kilawan will be calling the first panel.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And as a reminder for public testimony, public testimony is going to be three minutes. You can always submit your full written testimony if it's longer than that to

1
2 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Our first public panel
3 will be in person and will be comprised of Monsignor
4 Kevin Sullivan, Kathryn Kliff, Catherine Trapani,
5 Lymaris Albors and Karim Walker.

6 Alright, we can begin with Monsignor.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Sorry guys, could you have
8 that conversation outside please. We need quiet on
9 the floor, thank you. We can begin. You want to
10 start with Monsignor.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: You can begin. Monsignor,
12 you, yeah.

13 MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: Well, Deputy Speaker,
14 you and your family are in my prayers. I have my
15 written testimony, you have that. Let me just say,
16 uhm, I'm angry, I'm frustrated, I'm proud, and I'm
17 hopeful. Okay, and in the past month at Catholic
18 Charities, we have seen 1,100 individuals who have
19 shown up at our doors in Mid-Town Manhattan in
20 addition to some who have showed up in East Harlem
21 and some in the South Bronx.

22 So, we've seen 1,100 individuals. Predominantly
23 young men from Venezuela {to Council Member Brewer}
24 we have a wonderful relationship with the various
25 consulates. The consulate of Venezuela has been

1
2 missing in action, okay. So, the other consulates
3 are very responsive, Venezuela has not been.

4 So, we've seen 1,100. Mostly young men in their
5 20's, their 30's but also women with children and
6 from some other countries. What we have done is not
7 much but yet a lot. Every one of those individuals
8 has been interviewed with compassion and with respect
9 to try to understand their situation. Giving them
10 must a small amount of food because they're coming
11 some from the bus but also some already has settled
12 in shelters. Clothes as we have a very small amount
13 of financial assistance but probably very
14 significantly, we have reviewed every one of their
15 immigration documentations to triage to see whose are
16 in difficult situations.

17 The chaos, which angers me, is we've seen over
18 200 documents that have been issued by immigration
19 authorities in Texas that have listed our office as
20 the residences of these individuals who are there.
21 We are very frightened that they are going to miss
22 court appearances because they're not going to notice
23 that they have to show up.

24 So, that's who we are. That's who we are seeing.
25 That is our experience. I want to say a word of real

1
2 thanks, and this is what makes me frustrated is that
3 this is a national problem that congress has been
4 unable to resolve for more than three, four decades.
5 We should not be surprised that these crises emerge
6 periodically. Because as a nation, we haven't dealt
7 with the immigration problem that we have. So,
8 that's what we're dealing with here. But why am I
9 proud? I'm proud because Deputy Speaker and your
10 other Council Members are holding this hearing. I'm
11 proud because as New Yorkers, they are our people and
12 we're going to respond to them. Catholic Charities
13 has already responded. We will be partners going
14 forward. I very, very, want to compliment you on the
15 questions that have been asked. We've been asking
16 them too.

17 Listen, we know they talk about silos of funding
18 and federal - New York City, with a budget of over
19 \$100 billion. New York State with a budget of close
20 to \$200 billion. There's money that doesn't need to
21 deal with some of the federal prohibitions for us to
22 be compassionate and welcoming.

23 The one word of hope that I want to add. Do you
24 know what most of the young men who have approached
25 us want? What's the first word out of their mouth?

1
2 Can you get me a job. This is a crisis; we need to
3 respond but this is an opportunity. These are going
4 to become new, vibrant New Yorkers, taking the jobs
5 that our restaurants can't fill at the moment and
6 doing construction work. They are going to make our
7 economy more vibrant. They're going to make New York
8 more vibrant. And so, in the midst of my anger, my
9 frustration, I'm proud that we're in New York and I'm
10 hopeful that this is an opportunity for us to be even
11 a better city. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Monsignor. I
13 wonder because you're seeing and thank you for all of
14 the work that you do. Uhm, I know that Catholic
15 Charities is an outstanding group and the work that
16 you do is God's work, so thank you for all of that.
17 But I have a question, because you mentioned that the
18 majority of the individuals that you are coming in
19 contact with are young men and there is this concern
20 that uh, we're separating families or that we have so
21 many singles, specifically young men that are going
22 to Bellevue and probably just you know deciding that
23 this is really not an avenue for them and maybe
24 sleeping out in the streets. Has that been your
25 experience?

1
2 MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: We have heard. Some
3 of them have told us that they went to the shelter,
4 and they slept last night in one of the parks or in
5 one of the plaza's. And since they're in the front
6 of the building where my office is, on my way in
7 every day I just talk to a bunch of them and ask
8 where they spent last night? What are you doing
9 today? Where did you come from? Etc., so I know
10 some are sleeping in the parks. You know, so that is
11 the reality.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Hmm, thank you. Any
13 questions Gale.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, one question is,
15 are you able to make the connection between the men
16 and jobs? The workforces that are opportunities or
17 are there other barriers that we should be addressing
18 as the Commissioner indicated. We're all trying to
19 address these barriers.

20 MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: So, a couple of
21 things. One is, we are doing just a modicum of
22 trying to set up some classes for basic English, so
23 they can learn English. We're also going to set up —
24 we're in the process of some OSHA training, so they
25 have a little bit of safety. The city is very good

1
2 and generous in funding work with day laborer sites.
3 So, we've introduced some of them to those day
4 laborer sites.

5 So, I would say continue to be robust in making
6 sure that those day laborer sites are there, and you
7 know it's a crisis but if it's 4,000 people, they're
8 going to just fill our economy. They're going to
9 make it because that's why immigrants come here and
10 some of them have said, yes, the busing is not
11 acceptable but when you talk to them, they say well,
12 hey, I'm coming to New York because that's where you
13 make it.

14 So, I'm convinced that with a little bit of help,
15 and we got to deal with the crisis that is now held
16 to all of that, but with a little bit of helping hand
17 to our new arrivals, they're going to become New
18 Yorkers like all of us.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but Monsignor, you
20 have to be the one that tells the city, these are the
21 barriers that have to be eliminated and don't be
22 quiet about it please. Thank you.

23 MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: Yes, ma'am. I always
24 do what you tell me, so I will.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Oh, my goodness, there she
3 goes.

4 MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: So, one thing I'll
5 tell ya, is the conversation about the reception
6 center, we got to have some services at that
7 reception center. So, it's a little bit of a one
8 stop shopping.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, you actually raise a
10 really good point about the address issue because I
11 know that in East Harlem, we have the common pantry
12 and often times, homeless men primarily used them as
13 a viable address because they know that their mail is
14 safe. They should be, I mean I would argue that.
15 There's concern about mail being lost in the
16 transition of shuffling families and singles from one
17 place to the other. More specifically with the
18 singles population. So, you know I can see why you
19 know some, I mean obviously they didn't choose to use
20 your address, but I think that we should be looking
21 at alternatives like that just to ensure that you
22 know these families have access to their appointments
23 and their schedules.

24 MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: Yeah, very good point.
25 The other thing which as you know as well, if not

1
2 better than me, the social networks among the groups
3 of immigrants, the use of WhatsApp and other things,
4 they're a network. So, we have already gathered a
5 lot of that information, so we can communicate with
6 those who have showed up at our door.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Absolutely connecting them
8 to, as Council Member Hanif mentioned to IDNYC but
9 also free phones right? I'm assuming that these
10 families haven't spoken to anyone in their country in
11 quite some time and are desperate to do that. So,
12 any way that we can facilitate that. Thank you so
13 much.

14 MONSIGNOR KEVIN SULLIVAN: Thank you.

15 KATHRYN KLIFF: Good afternoon Council and thank
16 you to Deputy Speaker Ayala and the Council for
17 holding this very important hearing. My name is
18 Kathryn Kliff; I'm a Staff Attorney at the Legal Aid
19 Society and our Homeless Rights Project. I'm here
20 today to testify on behalf of Legal Aid and also
21 Coalition for the Homeless. So, you know we heard a
22 lot of testimony about what's been happening with the
23 asylum seekers coming into the city, whether by their
24 own choice or not. You know, but this hearing was
25 focused on what's happening at PATH and I think we're

1
2 very frustrated that the city has known for months
3 that there was going to be an uptick in this summer
4 and the numbers of families coming into shelter and
5 that was regardless of asylum seekers coming. That's
6 because the eviction moratorium expired. That's
7 because we see a lot of families in the summer just
8 generally coming PATH. It's easier to go through
9 that system when your kids are not in school.
10 Families that were doubled up seeing to seek shelter.

11 So, while there is an increase in the number of
12 asylum seekers coming through, there's also just many
13 New Yorkers who are coming into the system and the
14 city should have been planning for that and instead
15 they just watched the vacancy rate fall and fall and
16 fall and now until a point where they literally ran
17 out of placements for families with children one
18 night, which they've acknowledged that violation.
19 We've seen from our own clients additional
20 violations.

21 I have multiple clients that arrived at PATH
22 prior to 10:00 P.M. but the line was so long to see
23 the front desk that they weren't clocked in until
24 after 10:00 P.M.

25

1
2 I have a client that arrived at 5:40 P.M. and was
3 not seen until after 10:00 P.M., so the city does not
4 count that as a violation, but these were families in
5 the building prior to 10:00 P.M. that slept in the
6 building.

7 We also met many families who arrived at 10:00
8 P.M. or later who slept in the building, which is not
9 business as usual at PATH. No one wants those
10 families sleeping in the building. The PATH staff
11 doesn't, DHS doesn't, we don't. And so, it was
12 really alarming that initial week after the
13 violations were reported to see how many families
14 were sleeping in the building and how many violations
15 occurred that have not been reported.

16 So, we really call on the city to develop a
17 comprehensive plan to deal with the capacity issues
18 and this is capacity for asylum seekers and capacity
19 for New Yorkers. You know, the reality is when you
20 have a low capacity that people who are fleeing
21 domestic violence situations, there's going to be
22 trafficking situations and need to be in specific
23 locations, the city is unable to accommodate that,
24 and it can be very dangerous.

1
2 So, we have a lot of recommendations in our
3 written testimony, and I wanted to highlight some of
4 those for you now. In addition to increasing
5 capacity, adding more shelters, getting back to the
6 goal of a five percent vacancy rate, we also need to
7 increase our supply of affordable housing, and that
8 means housing that is deeply subsidized and
9 affordable to our clients, to homeless families and
10 individuals.

11 We're calling for 6,000 new units per year. You
12 know the prior administration focused on preservation
13 but we're calling for new units. We also need to
14 help people move out of shelters. We need to fight
15 against source of income discrimination as was
16 mentioned by Council Member Williams. And as Council
17 Member Brewer mentioned, we need to expand subsidies
18 and streamline the City FHEPs process. That process
19 is far too bureaucratic, and we have many clients
20 calling us. They found an apartment, they have a
21 voucher, and they somehow can't get out of the
22 shelter because of delays. And so, that process
23 needs to be reconsidered and we include a lot of
24 specifics in our testimony.

1
2 We also need to pass Good Cause Evictions and we
3 need to support the new arrivals to New York City as
4 has been documented. I've met so many families at
5 PATH the past few weeks. I've spent a lot of time up
6 there speaking to them and they've been through
7 incredible trauma and their needs are very, very high
8 and they're not being met currently at PATH, so we've
9 been trying to connect people to what they need but
10 the need is extremely high, and it is different than
11 what PATH is used to doing. So, thank you for the
12 opportunity to speak today.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Can you share again what the
14 length of time that a person is standing in line is?
15 What the average?

16 KATHRYN KLIFF: So, that first week that the
17 violations were reported. They reported on a Sunday
18 night, the 17th. I was there on Thursday, but I had
19 a client who was there Tuesday night and she arrived
20 at 5:42 P.M. and did not make it to the line until
21 10:23 P.M. They pulled her out of line at one point
22 and made here get back in line.

23 We met another client who had arrived at 10:00
24 and didn't get to the front of the line until 1:00
25 A.M. And so, I think that week in particular,

1
2 clients were waiting two, three, four hours just to
3 get through the line.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you think that is due to
5 staffing shortages or is it something else?

6 KATHRYN KLIFF: It's staffing but it's also
7 bilingual staffing. So, because there has been an
8 uptick in the number of people who need interpreters,
9 PATH was not prepared for that and had to use
10 language line, which can take a really long time,
11 versus if you have a Native speaker available to
12 speak to clients. So, when we were there more
13 recently, they had contracted interpreters on both of
14 the floors and that had really helped move things
15 along and move things along more quickly. So, things
16 have definitely improved since I've been there in the
17 last week or two but obviously there's still a great
18 need and the capacity is still a very serious
19 concern.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Understood. Thank you so
21 much.

22 CATHERINE CLIFF: Thank you.

23 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Alright, thanks everybody.
24 My name is Catherine Trapani. I am the Executive
25 Director at Homeless Services United. I want to just

1
2 highlight a few things and I'll be submitting a
3 lengthier testimony in writing in the next day or so.

4 But as Kathryn Kliff already stated, there was a
5 capacity crisis before. Asylum seekers started to
6 arriving and you know the members at HSU are willing
7 and able partners to work with the City of New York
8 to expand shelter capacity. What we need to do this
9 well, is a reliable pipeline that we can trust and
10 so, one of the things that I find really frustrating
11 is that you know we had shelters ready to go in the
12 pipeline that were canceled at the last moment due to
13 nimbyism, political opposition and so on. Had the
14 communities and the mayor stood behind our providers
15 and said, nope, we're going to open these. It's the
16 right thing to do, we have to do it. Perhaps the
17 current capacity crisis wouldn't be the way it is.

18 So, I'm here to sort of reinforce the request
19 that has been repeated over and over in this hearing,
20 that every single community needs to raise their
21 hand. I know you have, and others need to join you
22 to welcome these households into shelter.

23 The other way you can create new shelter capacity
24 quickly is to empty the shelters that you already
25 have. So, I echo some of the recommendations that

1
2 Kathryn Kliff just made about expediting placements
3 into permanent housing, making it easier to qualify
4 for rental assistance, streamlining leasing process,
5 combating source of income discrimination and really
6 making sure that the folks that are literally
7 languishing in shelter just waiting for an apartment,
8 can be placed expeditiously.

9 The other thing that we have to do is to ensure
10 that people are not losing their homes unnecessarily.
11 There is a crisis at our housing courts. The right
12 to counsel is not being upheld because the OCA
13 refused to slow down the calendar and we don't have
14 enough lawyers. We have to make sure that everybody
15 has an attorney. That rental assistance is getting
16 provided. That it's easier to qualify for FHEPs and
17 City FHEPs from the community, so that we can reduce
18 the number of people coming in.

19 If we do these three things, prevent, shelter and
20 rehouse, we can meet the moment. So, you know more
21 full, some recommendations on that will be
22 forthcoming in writing but I really wanted to
23 emphasize that.

24 I also want to speak quickly, you've been talking
25 about the staffing challenges, and I want to really

1
2 thank the frontline workers, not just at the city but
3 also at the nonprofits. These folks are working
4 incredibly hard. Their caseloads are impossible, and
5 we really need support for our staff. The city had
6 previously authorized retention incentive bonuses, as
7 well as hiring bonuses. They promised us that that
8 money would be forthcoming. We were using accruals
9 to pay for it, so this wasn't even new money. Yet
10 the approvals to pay those out to our staff are being
11 held up by red tape. And so, we have not been able
12 to release those funds.

13 This Council passed a bill for prevailing wage
14 for shelter security guards. Those amendments are
15 still not registered. That money is not out the
16 door. We really need to be able to make sure that
17 the commitments we make to our workers are honored
18 and that the money is getting to the nonprofits in a
19 timely manner.

20 If I could just quickly finish. We also still
21 have many unregistered amendments for other things in
22 our pipeline. I know the city declared victory
23 saying that we had really cleared the backlog. Our
24 shelter providers are not necessarily feeling that,
25 so if we can't normalize our Fiscal operations and

1
2 ensure that our staff are being paid and valued at
3 what they deserve, then it's going to be very
4 difficult to rise at the challenge to open new
5 capacity when we need it.

6 So, all of these things, we have to come
7 together. The nonprofits are here, we want to help
8 but we need to make sure that we can pay our folks
9 and then you know obviously then we can do the
10 services the way our clients need and deserve to make
11 sure that people get the counseling, the care, the
12 compassion, trauma informed services and of course
13 permanent housing. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you and I know that the
15 Comptroller has been working around the clock to try
16 to get you know as many of the backlog contracts out
17 and I think that there also has to be a little you
18 know an opportunity to better educate some of our
19 nonprofits that are missing documentation or don't
20 know when to respond or how to respond or to whom, so
21 that we're not seeing the type of backlogs that we
22 have.

23 And I think in terms of the vouchers and how to
24 get people housed, I think you know obviously we have
25 to address the income discrimination issue that

1
2 continues to happen and the way the landlords seem to
3 you know be ten steps ahead of us all the time and
4 you know find creative ways of really you know
5 keeping available units out of the reach of voucher
6 holders. Thank you so much.

7 LYMARIS ALBORS: Good afternoon and thank you for
8 this opportunity. [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 2:25:45]
9 Deputy Speaker.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Are you on the mic?

11 LYMARIS ALBORS: Mic.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, there you go.

13 LYMARIS ALBORS: My name is Lymaris Albors, and I
14 am the CEO for Acacia Network. Acacia Network is one
15 of the largest Latino led organizations in New York
16 City and a provider of integrated housing, social
17 services, economic development and programs. Among
18 other services, we provide transitional housing and
19 homeless services in partnership with the Department
20 of Homeless Services.

21 We currently operate sites that serve single
22 adults, adult families and families with children.
23 Acacia don't usually come here and do testimonies,
24 however, what we have seen in the past couple of
25

1
2 weeks, have extremely touched our heart and I felt
3 compelled to come here and share our experience.

4 We estimate that close to 70-80 percent of
5 individuals and families who have been assigned to
6 our new site, our new immigrants, the majority of
7 whom are asylum seekers that we have been discussing
8 today. With that said, we at Acacia find ourself at
9 a crossroad in New York City. As a right to shelter
10 city, it is our mandate to provide beds for anyone in
11 need of a secure place to sleep. We also recognize
12 that the shelter system is already burdened and that
13 the city agencies and nonprofit entities have
14 struggle with staff burnout, turnover and loss of
15 resources, especially as a result of COVID.

16 While we recognize the challenges that serving a
17 large influx of new homeless individuals can present,
18 we also think that it is an opportunity to set an
19 example at the local state international level. New
20 York City has been built and continues to thrive as a
21 result of the millions of immigrants who have called
22 this great city their home.

23 At Acacia, rather than focusing the conversation
24 on how the immigrants got here, we must consider how
25 to serve them and address their needs now that they

1
2 are here. No matter what the families here, we have
3 a moral and legal obligation to ensure adequate
4 services for all those who are in need. Whether they
5 are new to this country or not. With that said, as a
6 provider in the frontlines who has been serving
7 asylum seeker for the past couple of weeks, these are
8 the observations.

9 The work started at the city intake centers. We
10 must ensure that works have the intake search as many
11 whom are the first point of contact for these
12 families are providing the necessary information in a
13 simple concise and linguistically manner. This
14 includes trauma informed intake procedures.
15 Bilingual workers that are able to explain to clients
16 why they can expand in a way that they can understand
17 it. Providing materials such as frequently asked
18 questions in Spanish to providing important phone
19 numbers, locations and other information.

20 At the intake center, we need to make sure that
21 they understand the needs of the families and
22 clients. That they can do a [INAUDIBLE 2:28:48] and
23 they can provide case management. Many of these
24 individuals coming into our newly opened sites are
25

1
2 disappointed that they won't immediately be placed in
3 permanent housing or be offered a job.

4 May I finish my testimony? Thank you. We must
5 work together to ensure that these clients are
6 adequately informed regarding our own processes and
7 procedures. We must also recognize that while the
8 asylum seekers share many of the same needs as other
9 clients in the shelter system, they also have a
10 unique set of needs that require increased service
11 coordination including intensive immigration
12 assistant legal services. This is key.

13 We also expediting or facilitating a temporary
14 permit for work, they can become our own peers in our
15 shelters, and they can be the one welcoming the next
16 influx of asylum seekers. If we can provide the
17 training, they can become our ambassadors. Nobody
18 knows what they went through from their own
19 experience. So, that's what we have been seeing.
20 It's key.

21 Access to primary care and behavioral health
22 services, it's very critical. I would like to finish
23 my testimony by sharing a recent story. Just last
24 week, the operation manager and chief supervisor at
25 one of our sites, delivered a baby girl before EMS

1
2 could arrive. After a very long journey to the
3 United States, this baby girl was born safe and
4 healthy in a New York City shelter. This is a
5 testament to the work that happens every single day
6 at our shelters. Yes, it is very challenging. We
7 have not slept. We are committed. We are a can-do
8 organization and to share a story like this one is
9 very rewarding. Thank you for your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you very much. Thank
11 you. I believe that one of the sites that Acacia is
12 overseeing is in the South Bronx right?

13 LYMARIS ALBORS: Hmm, hmm.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, I would like the
15 opportunity to come and visit.

16 LYMARIS ALBORS: Absolutely. You know you can
17 walk in anytime.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Thank you. Make
19 sure your mic is on.

20 KARMIN WALKER: Oh, yeah, it's on. Thank you.
21 Good afternoon, my name is Karmin Walker. I am a
22 homeless organizer and outreach worker with the
23 Safety Net Project at UJC, Urban Justice Center. For
24 the past seven months in this time in office, Mayor
25 Adams has shown that he is committed to the worst of

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

the de Blasio administration's handling of the homelessness crisis. Broken windows policy, oriented homeless, sweeps. We all know those things will not work and addressing a very otherwise a seemingly attractable problem and as of June, recently, some 68 percent of applicants to PATH have been turned away. And more than 50 percent of families who are eventually found eligible having to reapply more than once and in some cases more than three times.

Crucially, the administration has also sent a message also to landlords that they are not committed to honoring the source of discrimination law. And that of course as we know, keeps those who are voucher holders, like myself, in shelters longer than necessary. This is something that we must - that the city must do better by, especially if we want people to come in and trust the system and given them a reason that the system works for them.

Similar to the de Blasio administration, particularly in its second term, the Adams administration has put public relations far above the needs of the people. This has shown clearly with the mayor's approach to street homelessness, where the city's PR team provides virtually meaningless numbers

1
2 to score headlines while being unable to answer the
3 most basic questions (for example, what percentage of
4 people from the underground and above-ground sweeps
5 are entering and staying in shelters?.

6 As we found out from the de Blasio administration
7 routinely provided misleading and dishonest
8 information to the public regarding homelessness, an
9 increased focus on PR over substance correlates
10 closely to cruelty toward those most in need. In
11 fact, and I'd like to clarify. I know this isn't
12 part of what I was going to say but I actually, in my
13 work recently came across a sweep notice in a park in
14 parks of Brooklyn. Not far from the R train. The
15 stop on the R Train and it when I've seen some of
16 these sweeps recently, there is no - the police are
17 first and foremost at the forefront of this and we've
18 seen time and again, that will not help in addressing
19 homelessness and it is imperative that the City of
20 New York look into a solution that is housing
21 oriented, not just housing oriented but housing
22 first. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Council Member
24 Brewer has a question.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I do want to
3 thank Coalition and Legal Aid for your very specific
4 recommendations. By just getting emails, I'd be
5 interested to know Catholic Charities, not just you
6 but every homeless youth program is now on some kind
7 of a database in Texas by the border and all of them
8 who are leaving, people leaving the border are being
9 given their addresses as their home address. So,
10 it's not just Catholic Charities. Is that legal I
11 wonder, according to Legal Aid to do that.

12 I suppose it's one of those very nuance things.
13 It's probably hard to fight but I'm just wondering
14 because there are five nonprofits right here now in
15 addition to Catholic Charities that are being told,
16 that's your home, so there.

17 KARIM WALKER: DHS admitted that it should not
18 have been done and that they were going to stop it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's been done today,
20 just FYI. Right now, so—

21 KATHRYN KLIFF: So, I am not an immigration
22 attorney, but my understanding is those forms —
23 what's supposed to happen is the individual is
24 supposed to choose the address that goes on there.
25 So, obviously, if they are being provided and

1
2 address, maybe they are being told by Border
3 Protection, that's a place you can stay. They
4 believe it is and they say okay, but clearly it's
5 not. It's an administrative office or it's a place
6 that is not somewhere where they can stay. So,
7 obviously very concerning and we have met families
8 you know with those forms and confused about where to
9 go and it's really important they know to change
10 their address with ICE, so that they can get those
11 important documents. So, that is one of things that
12 I know. We've spoken with Kathryn, is trying to
13 notify families, how important it is to make sure
14 that ICE knows where you, so you don't miss your
15 hearing.

16 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Yeah, if I could just add, one
17 of the things that HSU and our members have asked is
18 for guidance that we can pass on to the frontline
19 staff at the shelters, so that we can advise people
20 on how to change these addresses, once they are
21 placed in a shelter facility. So, I've taken on the
22 task of aggregating information from my colleague on
23 this panel and from others and thank you, actually
24 all of you for having your staff inform what goes in
25 that and I'll be circulating it to our members but we

1
2 don't represent everybody and we really need to make
3 sure that there are comprehensive guides to the case
4 managers, many of whom are newly hired to do this
5 work for the first time, are going to have a step by
6 step guide so that the people that are coming into
7 our facilities understand how to update their
8 address, where to go for these concrete services
9 that everybody is talking about. How to apply for
10 IDNYC. Like all of those steps, they are not
11 necessarily intuitive, particularly if you are a very
12 new New Yorker who has been through tremendous
13 trauma.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Catholic Charities has
15 been doing this for years, so have you but all of
16 these youth programs now have 10, 12, 15 young people
17 from Venezuela in their spaces within any immigration
18 law training. So, I know you've been done. Just so
19 you know and be aware that they are all swamped, and
20 they used to refer but there's no place to refer
21 because everybody else is booked. The waiting list
22 is 200 and now they can't help the young people who
23 are already on their caseload.

24 CATHERINE TRAPANI: You are absolutely right.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And I got five emails in
3 the last ten minutes to this effect.

4 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Major capacity issues at our
5 legal services providers.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Thank you so
7 much. Next panel.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The next panel is going to be
9 a virtual panel and it will be comprised of Jasmine
10 Cummings, Anthony Feliciano, Deborah Berkman and Sara
11 Wilson and for those joining us virtually, you may
12 have to wait a couple seconds to be unmuted from
13 staff. Again, we're going to begin with Jasmine
14 Cummings followed by Anthony Feliciano followed by
15 Deborah Berkman followed by Sara Wilson. Over now to
16 Jasmine Cummings.

17 JASMINE CUMMINGS: Uhm, hi, good afternoon
18 everyone. My name is Jasmine Cummings and I'm the
19 Senior Director of Programs at Project Renewal, a New
20 York City homeless services nonprofit agency. Thank
21 you to Chair Ayala and fellow City Council Members
22 for giving me this opportunity to testify. My
23 condolences to Chair Ayala and your family as well.

24 For 55 years, Project Renewal has empowered
25 individuals and families experiencing homelessness to

1
2 renew their lives. Each year, Project Renewal serves
3 thousands of New Yorkers through out comprehensive
4 Health, Homes and Job programs. Project Renewal
5 operates seven funded shelters, one for LGBTQI young
6 adults, one for women, and five for single adult men.
7 Our shelter residents often have histories of
8 substance abuse disorder, mental health concerns or
9 criminal justice involvement and we support them with
10 the next steps in their lives. Most of our shelters
11 are either at or near capacity.

12 While we do provide services to individuals who
13 are undocumented or seeking asylum, we have not yet
14 observed a notable influx. There's a confluence of
15 factors that have contributed to capacity issues
16 across the system. The first is the end of eviction
17 moratorium, which had kept New Yorkers in their homes
18 throughout the pandemic. We are now seeing rising
19 eviction rates and more people turn into shelter as a
20 result.

21 Even prior to the pandemic, the city has long
22 operated on a very small property margin, which
23 allows little room for flexibility when crisis such
24 as the pandemic and/or influx and asylum seekers
25 arrive. Increasing the number of safe haven beds as

1
2 a sensible approach since these spaces tend to have
3 more privacy and lower barriers to entry than typical
4 congregate shelters. Building quality, purpose-built
5 shelters would also go a long way towards increasing
6 capacity. There are of course many challenges with
7 building new safe havens and shelters, including long
8 timelines, bureaucratic red tape, and frequent push
9 back from communities who do not want new shelters in
10 their neighborhoods.

11 It is important for nonprofits to have support
12 from the city to acknowledge and address
13 misconceptions that new shelters will result in
14 increased crime and/or decreased property values.
15 Another challenge when it comes to expanding shelter
16 in housing is our workforce. Open positions is
17 crucial so we can help the city respond to current
18 need. But if we don't have a staff that limits our
19 ability to adapt and add capacity. Getting quick and
20 clear guidance from the city to implement the cost-
21 of-living adjustment for human service workers would
22 help with staff recruitment and retention.

23 It is heartening that both the city and state see
24 the conversion of the stressed hotels into affordable
25 and supportive housing as a solution to getting more

1
2 housing online quickly. As a lack of affordable
3 housing has long prevented people from being able to
4 move out of the shelter and remain housed.

5 A match maker from the city or someone who can
6 connect hotels.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Go ahead, you can continue.

9 JASMINE CUMMINGS: Okay, thank you. A match
10 maker from this city and/or someone who can connect
11 hotels interested in selling of nonprofit developers,
12 would be incredible beneficial for expediting
13 conversions. Nonprofits simply do not have the
14 resources to identify such hotels, which is the
15 crucial first step in the conversion process.

16 While the factors lead into the high shelter
17 census are complex, there are ways for nonprofits in
18 the city to work together to ensure New Yorkers can
19 access shelter and ultimately move into permanent
20 housing. We look forward to working more with the
21 Committee and welcome suggestions for greater
22 partnership in the future and thank you for the
23 opportunity to provide this testimony.

24

25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Jasmine for your
3 testimony. We are now going to move to Anthony
4 Feliciano. Over to Anthony Feliciano.

5 ANTHONY FELICIANO: Thank you.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts.

7 ANTHONY FELICIANO: Chairperson Ayala, and Deputy
8 Speaker. Thanks for the opportunity to testify
9 today. My name is Anthony Feliciano; I am the Vice
10 President for Community Mobilization Advocacy for
11 Housing Works. Some of you may know me from a prior
12 work that I did at the Commission on the Public's
13 Health System but now I'm at Housing Works and part
14 of this healing community that provides a range of
15 integrated medical, behavioral health, housing, and
16 support services for over 15,000 low-income New
17 Yorkers annually, with a focus on the marginalized
18 and the most underserved.

19 Housing Works urges the Council to exercise your
20 oversight authority to ensure that the city fulfills
21 its obligation to meet the needs of all individuals
22 and families experiencing homelessness in New York
23 City, and to do so with accommodations and services
24 that are safe, appropriate, and satisfy the City's
25 duty of care owed to every person forced to rely on

1
2 public resources to meet their most basic subsistence
3 needs.

4 We are proud to live in a city that welcomes
5 rather than shuns new immigrants and asylum seekers,
6 and that recognizes the fundamental human rights to
7 safe shelter. So, while we support City efforts to
8 secure available Federal funding to provide a broad
9 range of services for asylum seekers, it is critical
10 to remember that the city has the obligation to
11 commit our own resources and efforts to ensure that
12 each individual and family experiencing homelessness
13 receives the help they need, this includes the state.

14 The right to shelter in New York City does not
15 depend upon who you are, where you come from, and
16 where you are going. Housing Works fears that public
17 back and forth on anti-immigration stunts pulled by
18 the Governors of Texas or Arizona are providing a
19 distraction from the more fundamental problems
20 underlying the longstanding failures of New York
21 City's homeless response. It is time for the Council
22 and Administration to take decisive action to
23 transform the City's inhumane and ineffective
24 response to the homelessness crisis.

1
2 It was not until our over the past two years
3 providing COVID vaccination and quarantine services
4 or people experiencing homelessness. Housing works
5 has come deeply appreciate how awful and dehumanizing
6 the city shelter system is, and the urgent need to
7 transform the way homeless people are treated in New
8 York City.

9 We must stop criminalizing and harassing people
10 experiencing homelessness through sweeps of the
11 subways and violent disruption of the encampments of
12 those who opt for survival in public rather than
13 entering frightening shelters. We urgently need new
14 approaches and a new vision for what is acceptable.
15 Addressing homelessness of course requires
16 substantial new City investments in housing with deep
17 affordability, meaningful rental assistance with a
18 single payment standards, such as the city FHEPS
19 program approved by the Council, and supportive
20 housing units for those who need it.

21 We must also meet the needs of the many sheltered
22 and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness who
23 are coping with untreated or undertreated chronic
24 medical or behavioral health issues. We must stop
25

1
2 treating mental illness and substance use disorder
3 among low-income New Yorkers -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 ANTHONY FELICIANO: As criminal justice rather
6 than public health issues. I'll go over, my
7 testimony is a little bit over, but I'll go over the
8 next line.

9 [INAUDIBLE 2:45:27] worked on plans on opening an
10 innovative new model for addressing street
11 homelessness that will combine street outreach and
12 drop-in centers and private stabilization beds with
13 onsite medical and behavioral health care. All
14 delivered employing an evidence-based low-threshold
15 approach that has been proven to enable persons to
16 leave the streets, establish stability, and connect
17 to needed care.

18 In conclusion, we need to make sure the Council
19 continues to be bold when it comes to addressing New
20 York City's unprecedented homeless crisis. We had
21 secured a hotel closed by COVID in a high need
22 Manhattan neighborhood, made the necessary
23 alterations, and were two weeks away from opening a
24 facility that would have provided 100 desperately
25 needed stabilization beds when Mayor Adams pulled the

1
2 plug on the project at the request of the Hotel
3 Trades Council, an ally and supporter of his mayoral
4 campaign. Other safe-haven and stabilization
5 facilities have been likewise abandoned in the face
6 of opposition from those with the mayor's ear.

7 And I wanted to tell you, there's a difference
8 between our stabilization beds and what is considered
9 a shelter. So, I'll end there. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Anthony for your
12 testimony, we are now going to move to Deborah
13 Berkman for testimony. Over to Deborah Berkman.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begin.

15 DEBORAH BERKMAN: Thank you very much. Deputy
16 Speaker Ayala, Council Members, and staff, good
17 afternoon. Thank you very much for the opportunity
18 to speak to the Committee on General Welfare and
19 other members of Council. I just want to start by
20 offering my condolences to Deputy Speaker Ayala on
21 the loss of your uncle, I'm so sorry to hear about
22 that.

23 My name is Deborah Berkman, and I am the
24 Coordinating Attorney of the Shelter Advocacy
25 Initiative at the New York Legal Assistance Group or

1
2 NYLAG. I represent people experiencing homelessness
3 and I work closely with NYLAG's Immigration
4 Protection Unit.

5 In recent weeks, numerous families who have
6 sought asylum in United States from Venezuela and
7 Colombia have contacted me for shelter advocacy.
8 Their stories share some similarities. All of them
9 have traveled great distances, much of it on foot to
10 escape the unspeakable horrors they faced in their
11 home countries. All of them have waited extreme
12 months of time at PATH DHS intake before they were
13 assigned a shelter with at least three families
14 staying there for over two nights. And all of the
15 report very few employees at PATH who speak Spanish
16 or who are willing to use an interpreter or a
17 language line. Instead, they report being spoken to
18 in English, which they do not understand.

19 All of them report difficult conditions at the
20 shelters they've been assigned including lack of
21 water on demand and lack of diapers. And many of
22 them report staff who subject them to harassment and
23 racial slurs.

24 One of my clients, Ms. M. who was forced to flee
25 Columbia with her husband and her two small children,

1
2 because an aggrieved business associate of her
3 brothers had threatened to set her street vendor
4 business on fire and murder her and her children.
5 They had a harrowing journey through Mexico, during
6 which Ms. M. had to run with her children strapped to
7 her body so they wouldn't be separated. When the
8 family reached the United States border, Ms. M. and
9 her husband were sent on separate planes to New York
10 city and when they were reunited at the New York
11 Airport, the airport staff found Ms. M. crying with
12 her hungry children, one of whom had a fever and sent
13 them in a car to PATH intake.

14 Ms. M. and her family slept at the PATH intake
15 office for two nights on chairs before they were
16 assigned to shelter. Once in shelter, staff refused
17 to provide her with formula for her baby or soap for
18 the family to bathe. At one point, Ms. M. asked the
19 staff for diapers for her baby, and she was told that
20 she should go to work and buy them herself.

21 And Ms. M. does report that those comments are a
22 routine part of her life at shelter. I have other
23 clients who also report similar experiences with
24 aggression from shelter staff and sleeping over two
25 nights in chairs in the crowded path intake center.

1
2 One NYLAG client Ms. P. and her husband and five
3 children had a similar journey from Venezuela and
4 eventually were given a temporary placement in a DHS
5 shelter but a few days after being placed there, they
6 were awoken at 1:00 in the morning and they were told
7 they had to leave by staff who had been hostile to
8 them since their arrival. They weren't given a
9 written notice; they weren't given an oral notice of
10 why they had to leave nor given any information on
11 how they can reapply. This family wondered the
12 streets in over 90-degree heat with their five
13 children from 1:00 in the morning to 1:00 the next
14 day.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time expired.

16 DEBORAH BERKMAN: I'll finish up. Upon returning
17 to PATH, they were told that they were incorrectly
18 kicked out of their shelter and that it had been a
19 mistake on the part of staff. PHS has to immediately
20 ensure that all families are promptly processed
21 through PATH and families should not have to sleep
22 there overnight or on multiple nights. Moreover, all
23 shelters need adequate Spanish speaking staff or
24 available translation services, and they have to be

25

1
2 provided with sufficient food, water and crucial
3 supplies such as diapers.

4 In addition to the substantial social service
5 needs our clients have, recently arrived asylum
6 seeking families are also need of urgent immigration
7 assistance and counsel. Many of our families are
8 being placed on a quickly moving dedicated
9 immigration court docket with hearing scheduled just
10 weeks after there arrival in the United States, which
11 gives them insufficient time to seek assistance and
12 prepare their asylum plans. NYLAG requests that the
13 City Council and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant
14 Affairs dedicate new funding and programmatic support
15 to legal services providers and to community
16 organizations who have already stepped in to address
17 this urgent need.

18 Also, we would want to note that New York City
19 welcomed displaced Ukrainians who arrived in the New
20 York immediate aftermath of Russia's invasion and
21 still continue to seek refuge in the U.S. and New
22 York City provided both emergency and long-term
23 support to triage legal issues, offer cash assistance
24 and social services and articulated a welcoming
25 message. To do any less for asylum seeking families

1
2 from other areas of the globe would be shameful. So,
3 we ask that City Council respond with parity with
4 this crisis as they have to others.

5 I will submit more full written testimony. Thank
6 you very much for your time.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Deborah for your
9 testimony. We're now going to move to Sara Wilson
10 for testimony. Over to Sara.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

12 SARA WILSON: Hi everyone. Good afternoon. My
13 name is Sara Wilson. Among many things, I am a
14 formerly homeless housing advocate and that's how I'm
15 going to be speaking to you today. Previous
16 administrations have left you tasked with an obscene
17 amount of persons who are unhoused. While there has
18 been great progress made, there still is a lot more
19 that needs to be done. I'm praying and implore
20 everyone in this hearing to please expedite all the
21 existing shelter residents vouchers and voucher
22 holders immediate housing to make room for the new
23 population of asylum seekers that are seeking refuge
24 and need additional resources in the system.

1
2 While I commend the actions that you are taking
3 for new asylum seekers who I proudly stand in
4 solidarity with, I want to ensure that any emergency
5 expedited policies we're able to create are also made
6 eligible for those who are already existing in
7 shelter and that we be purposeful that our new policy
8 do not negatively affect the existing population the
9 administrator adopted when they took office.

10 I have as seven-year friend who started - excuse
11 me, who went through school last year in shelter.
12 He's had to start school this year in shelter. His
13 mother died in prison and there's about 20,000
14 children in the shelter system already. I want to be
15 clear; I do not feel negatively about asylum seekers.
16 My working housing advocacy says definitely I fight
17 for all to have access to housing resources and
18 opportunities. Like legislation that could help get
19 undocumented residents eligible for housing vouchers.

20 Like we tried to before with the housing access
21 voucher, I know that there's still a lot of work to
22 be done. I'm not here to pick on group of at-risk
23 persons against another. I'm here to seek the same
24 legislations that we create and that we're able to
25 make - be eligible for all persons living in New York

1
2 to get the same expedited resources. And I have
3 faith in this room that they'll be able to offer the
4 same single rooms, stabilization beds, safe havens,
5 expedited vouchers and very low-income housing,
6 supportive housing, whatever would fit the criteria
7 to transition all of these people out into real
8 affordable housing. And I'll leave it at that.

9 Thank you all very much for everything. God bless.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Sara and thank you
11 to this entire panel for your testimony. I'm not
12 going to call up an in-person panel of those who are
13 here. The panelists will be in the following order,
14 and I apologize if I mispronounce your names.
15 Magalie Bomhomme, Milton Perez, Susan Lee, and Yesnia
16 Mata.

17 MAGALIE BOMHOMME: Hello, my name is Magalie
18 Bomhomme, I am currently a shelter resident at West
19 End TLC. I'd like to begin by offering my
20 condolences to Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala. My
21 condolences to you and your family. Sorry, I'm a
22 little nervous.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Slow and easy, we all get
24 nervous.

1
2 MAGALIE BOMHOMME: I just want to highlight some
3 of the things that goes on in the shelters. Uhm,
4 I've been in the shelter system for almost 13-months,
5 and I found that in competent seems to be the rule
6 and that greatly concerns me. I don't think asylum
7 seekers deserve that. At my shelter currently, it's
8 woefully understaffed and staff is under paid. I
9 currently don't have a case manager. There aren't
10 any case managers at my shelter at the moment and
11 I've heard stories about uhm, case managers and
12 housing specialists in other shelters who are
13 indifferent to the jobs that they're supposed to do.
14 They uhm, they just neglect the paperwork that
15 they're supposed to do, and they spend their time on
16 the computer shopping or even watching porn.

17 I'm also - my shelter is relatively safe, but
18 I've also heard stories about violence that takes
19 place in other shelters. You know drug dealers
20 dealing drugs in the shelters. Pimps coming in and
21 beating up security and I just, current DHS clients
22 don't deserve that and asylum seekers fleeing uhm,
23 you know escaping trauma in their homelands
24 definitely don't deserve that. So, I just wanted to
25 highlight briefly.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I agree and thank you so much
3 for coming today. You did great.

4 MILTON PEREZ: Let me take off my mask.
5 Greetings. First of all [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
6 2:571:12-2:57:19]. My name is Milton Perez. I'm
7 from the Bronx Puerto Rico. I'm a member of Vocal
8 New York Homelessness Union and I was in the shelter
9 over five years. You know, I stopped counting at
10 five years, because people did not believe me. But
11 some of those people you know have been in the
12 shelter now three or four years themselves.

13 As far as the asylum seekers, welcome them. You
14 know this is New York. This is what we do
15 traditionally, so there should be no questions as far
16 as them being welcome. Whatever we need to do, reach
17 out to Senator Schumer or Representative Ocasio
18 Cortez to get that federal funding. It needs to be
19 done, no questions but let's remember the hundreds,
20 maybe thousands of people in shelter that have
21 immigration issues whether they are undocumented, or
22 they may have trouble with a green card or birth
23 certificate. You know I knew a roommate who five
24 months in, was still trying to get help to get his
25 birth certificate so he could get a voucher.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

A lot of these people that are undocumented been here 20, 30, 40 years working and are now elderly you know with health issues, and they get no help. They have no hope to get out as of now. But there are things that could be done. City FHEPs could be expanded to include undocumented people on a citywide level. On a state level, we could pass HAVP the House Access Voucher Program that will include undocumented people and the people upstate and let's not forget the right to shelter in the city is founded on state law. So, I actually know all the politicians, you know the people here, the people who stay behind. Thank you to advocate for those social things that are possible to do.

In closing, I do want to thank all the good people that do work in the system. I hear a lot of positive stuff that's being said about staff in these shelters, and I have to say, yeah, there are people that do want to help but that's not everybody. There's a lot of bad actors, a lot of people that do not care at all. It's just a check to them and people have to deal with this on a day-to-day basis and it's very difficult.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

In closing, you know I want to thank the advocates, the organizers who have educated me as far as what's been going on in these years and even the new City Council and even the positive things that the mayor's been doing, you know we agree on some things and disagree on others. But at the end of the day, we are all fighting for housing for justice. And the saying is, that we've been saying for a couple of years now. Housing justice for all. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

SUSAN LEE: Good afternoon Deputy Speaker Ayala. My name is Susan Lee, and I am the founder of the Alliance for Community Preservation and Betterment. I am a life-long New Yorker and currently reside in City Council District 1.

This fiscal year's budget allocated \$2.4 billion to homeless services. Median rents are reaching record highs and evictions will increase. While we need to assist New Yorkers who rely on the shelter system, we must, at the same time, hold shelter providers accountable.

1
2 As you've just heard from the Speaker and our
3 panel – the first speaker in our panel, violence
4 against residents are documented in these shelters.

5 I strongly urge the New York City Comptroller's
6 Office to audit these shelter providers to make sure
7 that our tax dollars are used in an efficient way to
8 help our unhoused homeless individuals back on their
9 feet and into housing, so that they can provide for
10 their families and their loved ones.

11 New Yorkers need responsible government and
12 strong leadership to implement policies to get
13 homeless individuals off the streets and into
14 shelters with wraparound services. With New York's
15 right to shelter law, we are obligated to provide
16 shelters to migrants bussed from Texas. At CB4
17 meeting on July 27th, Council Member Bottcher said
18 that his office received a call from the city
19 notifying him about placement of 600 border families
20 in various Times Square hotels in the coming weeks.
21 This is already in addition to 100 men house at the
22 Traven Inn and 210 homeless families at the Skyline
23 Hotel. A huge percentage of families are asylum
24 seekers who just arrived from the border. The
25 Alliance is concerned that the hotels in Council

1
2 District 1 will also be used to house border families
3 with little to no notification to the public as in
4 the case of Council Member Bottcher's district.

5 I just want to emphasize that I am here to
6 testify, not because of NYMBE but because there has
7 been lack of community engagement in our council
8 district in terms of placing homeless shelters in our
9 neighborhoods. Our group inquire about the status of
10 a former hotel at 231 Grand Street and Council Member
11 Marte's office responded on August 2nd with the
12 following: We have not been informed about any
13 activity at 231 Grand Street in regards to providing
14 housing for immigrants.

15 As you have heard earlier this year, 231 Grand
16 Street is no longer going to be moving forward as a
17 shelter. It is currently not being used as a hotel,
18 so it is not even possible for people to stay there.

19 I strongly hope that there will be public
20 engagement when hotels in our community are used for
21 asylum seekers and homeless individuals. We must all
22 act together and provide a welcoming environment for
23 our homeless individuals and asylum seekers but also
24 at the same time, we need to be respectful of the
25 quality of life that our neighbors have created.

1
2 They live, work and build the community that they're
3 living in, and they deserve a voice in that
4 discussion. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

6 YESENIA MATA: Good morning Chair Ayala and
7 members of the Committee on General Welfare. My name
8 is Yesenia Mata, Executive Director of La Colmena.
9 An immigrant right center committed to empowering the
10 immigrant community and Staten Island. I am also a
11 Commissioner of the New York City's Racial Justice
12 Commission. Thank you for holding this hearing at a
13 time when asylum seekers are searching for
14 opportunities and a better life in all five boroughs
15 including on Staten Island.

16 At La Colmena, we are helping asylum seekers from
17 Venezuela and other parts of South America. For
18 those who will call Staten Island their home, our Day
19 Laborer Center is there to connect them to essentials
20 including food, and with free workforce training,
21 such as SST, OSHA, carpentry and welding classes.
22 And most importantly, a community.

23 For those who were forcibly bused to New York
24 City by Texas far right Governor, we will help them
25 connect with their families in other states. La

1
2 Colmena will step up as it has done time and again to
3 work alongside the NYC Council to address the needs
4 being highlighted at this hearing. We are doing our
5 part because we know the City of New York can't do
6 this alone. The Council has been a critical ally to
7 La Colmena. Without your support, hundreds of
8 families will not be receiving the important
9 culturally competent services our immigrant
10 communities in Staten Island need. We provide these
11 services despite receiving constant threats against
12 our community, including vans with Trump flags,
13 parking in front of our center with the aim of
14 intimidating us.

15 But La Colmena will continue to persevere as long
16 as our families and community members need us. And
17 right now, our community needs us more than ever.
18 Considering all these challenges and the growing
19 needs of our immigrant families in Staten Island, La
20 Colmena's funding is at risk, as there is an effort
21 by some to defund our center and leave us out of the
22 NYC Fiscal Year 2023 budget.

23 During the pandemic, La Colmena was the only
24 immigrant right center on Staten Island to keep its
25 physical doors open to support essential workers and

1
2 families. We distributed 6,000 meals to those who
3 had lost their incomes, gave out more than one
4 million in emergency cash assistance, counted our
5 immigrant neighbors during the 2020 Census and
6 empowered day laborers to fight for their safety and
7 wages.

8 Thus, we ask you Chair Ayala, Speaker Adams,
9 Council Members for your support to include La
10 Colmena in the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative. In
11 order to receive our funding of \$615,000. To fight
12 against Texas and humane political stunt that is
13 putting innocent lives at risk and to push back
14 against the hostile climate faced by those we serve.
15 On behalf of my membership and those I come here in
16 representation of, I urge the City Council to
17 continue to support organizations like La Colmena.
18 Thank you Chair Ayala for giving me time to testify.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I have a question
20 for you regarding the Venezuela Council, you
21 mentioned that they've been - well, the Council has
22 been helpful, I'm assuming that that's the Venezuela
23 Council? This is for Yesenia; I think you mentioned.

24 YESENIA MATA: Chair Ayala, La Colmena works very
25 closely with day laborers and immigrant families in

1
2 Staten Island. Every day we see many people from
3 South America, including Venezuela that come to our
4 day laborer centers to seek resources and to receive
5 the workforce development training that they need.

6 As mentioned, we provide culturally competent
7 services such as SST, OSHA, welding, carpentry, and
8 English classes, so they know that as soon as they
9 step in La Colmena, they are able to join the
10 workforce and for their families and as mentioned,
11 most importantly, we provide them with a community
12 and protection.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

14 [UNIDENTIFIED]: Quick thing. I'm volunteering,
15 let's go get them. Let's get some plane tickets and
16 bring them on over, so let's get them some plane
17 tickets. Mr. Governor want to play, let's play.
18 This is what we do, we take care of people.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this entire
21 panel for your testimony. We're now going to move
22 back to virtual testimony.

23 For virtual testimony, in the following order, we
24 will have Molly Cohen, Sarah Newman, Jackie Wong,
25

1
2 Shawn Hill, and Rachel Miller Bradshaw. Beginning
3 now with Molly Cohen.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 MOLLY COHEN: Good afternoon, my name is Molly
6 Cohen, and I am a Senior Supervising Attorney at the
7 Urban Justice Center Sex Workers Project. My
8 organization provides direct legal services to
9 immigrants who have sex work experience across the
10 spectrum of choice, circumstance and coercion. The
11 vast majority of our client are survivors of
12 violence, human trafficking and the majority identify
13 as LGBTQ.

14 We represent many recently arrived asylum seekers
15 in their immigration pieces and I'm here to testify
16 regarding the realities that sex worker asylum
17 seekers face when navigating the New York City
18 Shelter system as well as recommendations for vital
19 improvements. Our clients arrive in New York in the
20 immediate aftermath of having escaped violent
21 persecution to home countries. The stakes of
22 fighting for asylum here, I can personally testify as
23 an immigration attorney are truly life and death.

24 The unhoused LGBTQ asylum seekers that we
25 represent at the sex workers project are pushed to

1
2 the fringes of the formal economy without the
3 prospect of work authorization until at least a year
4 after applying for asylum.

5 Our clients trade sex work for many reasons and
6 they too deserve safety, dignity, support, and self-
7 determination, especially when navigating the shelter
8 system. Our asylum-seeking clients currently living
9 in the shelters report many practical logistical
10 frustrations. As well as serious safety concerns.
11 Every day, they tell us about feeling unable to
12 disclose sex work involvement or safely work when
13 navigating strict curfews, sex work stigma, and a
14 lack of inclusivity or safe spaces for LGBTQ
15 individuals.

16 They report the extreme difficulty in getting NYC
17 ID's, receiving mail and accessing the benefits and
18 health care needed to survive. For example, one of
19 the many clients that I'm currently representing is a
20 recently arrived transgender woman from Jamaica. Who
21 I am representing in an asylum case with the New York
22 Immigration Court.

23 She currently lives in a shelter in the Bronx.
24 She is HIV positive, and her passport was confiscated
25 like many others by customs and border patrol at the

1
2 border. She simultaneously trying to access HASA
3 benefits, HIV and gender affirming healthcare and
4 obtain a New York City ID while preparing for an
5 adversarial asylum hearing, where she must recount
6 the most traumatic experiences of her life.

7 The sex workers project recommends increasing sex
8 worker and LGBTQ sensitive resources directly
9 available at NYC shelters, especially by providing
10 NYCID and HRA benefits enrollment coordinators and
11 social workers on site to connect asylum seekers with
12 the vitally needed resources in the most direct and
13 impactful way possible.

14 As immigration practitioners, we are here every
15 step of the way, zealously representing clients in a
16 very adversarial system to fight for safety and
17 security in the United States but there's so much
18 more that's needed, and this is where the city can
19 really step in in a vital and transformative way.
20 Thank you all so much for your time.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Molly for your
22 testimony. We'll now move to Sarah Newman for
23 testimony. Over now to Sarah.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you.
25

1
2 SARAH NEWMAN: Thank you. Thank you to Chair
3 Ayala, and to the members of the General Welfare
4 Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My
5 name is Sarah Newman and I'm the Director of
6 Organizing for the Open Hearts Initiative. OHI
7 supports communities across New York City who welcome
8 homeless neighbors and advocate for housing justice
9 in our own back yards and what I want to emphasize
10 today is the importance of welcoming all neighbors,
11 regardless of housing status, regardless of when they
12 arrived here and the world that every community in
13 New York City has to plan on doing so.

14 As new shelters open up in your districts, you
15 will likely hear from some constituents who say that
16 they don't want that. They may ask for additional
17 community engagement before these emergency shelters
18 open, simply because the new neighbors moving into
19 these sites are experiencing homelessness. Even
20 though no one asks for veto power when new tenants
21 move into a regular building. But here is what we
22 know, people experiencing homelessness are just like
23 any other neighbor. They are also your constituents.
24 By welcoming homeless neighbors with warmth and
25

1
2 empathy, we can build the strong community bonds that
3 keep us all safe and help our neighborhoods thrive.

4 Our chapters and affiliated groups across the
5 city represent hundreds of housed New Yorkers who
6 stand in solidarity with and organize alongside
7 homeless neighbors. You have many constituents who
8 want to welcome and support homeless neighbors and
9 we're ready to work together to do so.

10 One powerful step that you can take as a Council
11 Member is connecting with shelter residents
12 themselves. Finding out what they need and using
13 your platform to make sure those needs are met.
14 Advocating alongside your homeless constituents is
15 always important and it's especially crucial right
16 now. One very clear need that we're hearing about
17 from long time residents and more recent arrivals and
18 that so many people have testified about today is the
19 need to make it easier for people to exit shelter
20 into permanent housing.

21 Right now, the average length of stay in shelter
22 is over 500 days. No one should have to stay in a
23 shelter for that long. An immigration status can be
24 an additional hurdle in accessing housing as folks
25 have said today. The city must expedite this process

1
2 when making sure that every shelter, whether it's
3 serving asylum seekers or serving longtime residents
4 has a dedicated housing specialist to help people
5 secure housing and by streamlining processes for
6 vouchers like City FHEPs. Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Sarah for your
8 testimony. I'll now move to Jackie Wong for
9 testimony. Over to Jackie Wong.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 JACKIE WONG: Thank you. Thank you, good
12 afternoon. My name is Jackie Wong, I am a Director
13 at the Greater Chinatown Civic Coalition. We hear a
14 lot today from service agencies. I want to talk
15 about perspectives from communities. First, I want
16 to discuss DHS homeless data. As Mayor Adams housing
17 blueprint points out, DHS only counts homeless crises
18 within their own systems and the schools funded by
19 other agencies, such as HPD, DYCD, and HRA. This
20 practice not only reduced transparency but also make
21 programs difficult to track. City Council is
22 considering a bill that would require DHS to
23 prioritize the true members of people staying in all
24 shelters.

1
2 We request the government to take one more step.
3 Create a digital map that will show shelter and
4 homeless statistics throughout New York City but that
5 should include a 0.5-mile radius around all shelter
6 sites that indicate all community district
7 boundaries.

8 As Commissioner Jenkins mentioned before some
9 arears of the city are over saturated and some areas
10 are under. The availability of accurate data would
11 support good planning enough for the public to see
12 that the city upholds the intent of Fair share
13 throughout five boroughs and ensure that no
14 communities, regardless of demographics, also
15 economic standings is overburdened with shelters.
16 That's how we can eliminate nimbyism as the Speaker
17 brought up earlier.

18 Certainly, Chinatown already has six shelters in
19 a very condensed area but still pushing two more
20 shelters into our neighborhood and converting a
21 family shelter to adult only. At the same time,
22 they've closed the only shelter in June, leaving the
23 wealthier part of lower Manhattan with no shelters at
24 all, while pushing a total of eight shelters in the
25

1
2 poorer Chinatown area. DHS must explain the rationale
3 for the public.

4 We have a very old senior immigration population
5 in Chinatown who does not speak English at all.
6 There have been numerous attacks and harassment
7 against them by individuals who are mentally ill
8 during the pandemic, and it shows no sign of slowing
9 down. Many seniors would rather go hungry than go
10 get groceries because they don't want to get hurt, a
11 proportionately high number of single men shelters in
12 Chinatown not only is a Fair Share issue but also a
13 life-threatening risk to the most vulnerable seniors.
14 This is not based on fear or anything else. It's
15 happening. Even NYPD cannot effectively stop this
16 trend. DHS must tell us how do you ensure the safety
17 of our senior after placing three additional adult
18 only shelter in Chinatown.

19 We've been pushing DHS to restore a site in our
20 area as a shelter for family with children. It will
21 provide the much-needed service for homeless families
22 to stabilize and children to grow and thrive. DHS
23 just ignore us. I would appreciate if DHS can have
24 genuine conversation with the communities regarding
25 shelter locations. I also ask HRA to fund home based

1
2 program. This is really a good program and speed up
3 the City FHEP application to make sure homeless
4 families can get into housing faster. I personally
5 know an application that has been pending for at
6 least four months.

7 Lastly, seven overburdened neighborhoods have
8 requested a meeting with Speaker Adams to discuss -

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Expired.

10 JACKIE WONG: How we can all be part of the
11 effort to ensure housing for all while building
12 health and diverse communities. I hope Chairwoman
13 Ayala, maybe you can help us to set up this meeting.
14 Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Jackie for your
16 testimony. I'll now turn to Shawn Hill for
17 testimony. Over to Shawn Hill.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 SHAWN HILL: Thank you very much. Uh, hello
20 Deputy Speaker Ayala. It's great to see you. Uhm,
21 so I want to piggyback on what Jackie was saying,
22 which is to present a community perspective on the
23 issue and specifically on the issue of the
24 oversaturation of certain communities and Deputy
25 Speaker Ayala, I would really like you to kind of

1
2 think back to your early time as a politician and
3 even as a candidate and I suspect that you and so
4 many of your colleagues, wherever they fall in the
5 political spectrum, had a core set of values that
6 brought you to this world, to this field, to this job
7 and I suspect that in many cases, the issue of
8 fairness was one that drove you to public service and
9 to wanting to serve your community.

10 The Greater Harlem Coalition of which I'm one of
11 the Cofounders, wants to ask you to once again center
12 the idea of fairness and to apply it to the
13 distribution of shelter facilities in New York City.
14 We ask this simply because it is the right thing to
15 do and also because you and New York City does this
16 every single day with other key part of the city's
17 social infrastructure. Think about the distribution
18 of libraries. Think about the distribution of police
19 stations and fire stations and think about the
20 distribution of schools.

21 In all these case, New York City has funded and
22 supported an equitable distribution of these
23 facilities. Because we know that at a tragic and
24 unjust result would occur if we packed for example,
25 all the fire stations in one neighborhood or we

1
2 packed all of the schools in some communities but not
3 others.

4 Shelters, as many of the speakers today have
5 said, care for support and hopefully transition some
6 of the most vulnerable individuals in our society, in
7 our community. But by packing these into communities
8 that are already saturated, the Department of
9 Homeless Services, both ignores the City Council's
10 doctrine of fair share and is exemplifying an
11 egregious model of poor planning that you probably
12 would not tolerate if the Department of Education
13 said, we are going to pack even more schools into
14 this, in this particular neighborhood.

15 So, our coalition is asking you simply this. As
16 Council Members and also for you Deputy Speaker that
17 we ask that you demand fairness. We ask that you
18 demand DHS and the city treat all communities
19 equitably. We ask you to renew your commitment to
20 justice -

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 SHAWN HILL: And your commitment to equity.
23 Shelter over saturation must end and all New York
24 neighborhoods must take their fair share and thank
25 you for your time.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I would like to address that
3 only specific – because it was specifically addressed
4 to me. In regards to the Fair Share issue, I don't
5 think that there is much dis-agreement. I think that
6 all communities should be looked at individually
7 right and the needs you know have to match the
8 resources. I get that. However, what drove me to
9 government was also in large part, my own personal
10 experiences.

11 And part of those experiences included being in
12 shelter twice and in my time in shelter, I had – it
13 never dawned on me that individuals that lived in the
14 community where I was seeking shelter, looked at me
15 as a burden. And that troubles me. I think that the
16 language that we used sometimes to describe the
17 situation is blatantly you know disrespectful and
18 sometimes borders on racist. And that I will not
19 tolerate.

20 I think that the city, communities that are
21 bearing the bigger burden, deserve to be compensated
22 as such but for the most part, and I speak as a
23 member who has you know a serious oversaturation
24 issues, you know that it may not necessarily all be
25 related to homeless services, then I want the

1
2 community to understand that these people are in
3 communities where these are primarily Black and Brown
4 people that many of them don't speak you know English
5 and they are in communities where they can
6 communicate, where they can visit with families.

7 They are not there to bother anyone and for the
8 most part, I think, I would argue that we have a lot
9 more shelters than you think that we do, and you
10 don't even know where they are because those people
11 are probably not even in your spear. They're not
12 creating issues in the community, so I get the fair
13 share issue. I respect it. I will do because I do
14 again. I see that there issues, but I really want to
15 be very careful with the way that we address the
16 situation because it is - it can be very insensitive
17 sometimes and I'm sure that that's not the way that
18 anyone here intended to come across.

19 So, thank you so much for your testimony today.

20 SHAWN HILL: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'm now going to call on
22 Rachel Miller Bradshaw. Over to Rachel.

23 RACHEL MILLER BRADSHAW: So, hello Council.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

1
2 RACHEL MILLER BRADSHAW: And condolences Diana
3 Ayala. So, my name is Rachel Miller Bradshaw, and I
4 was recently elected state committee of the 78
5 Assembly.

6 So, in my capacity, I am representing the Fordham
7 Road area as an elected and also a board member
8 Fordham Hill Owners Corporation. Bronx, even though
9 it's one of the smaller boroughs, has the highest
10 number of shelters. For lack of a more politically
11 correct word, it's become a dumping ground to address
12 the states homeless epidemic. While Staten Island
13 only has one shelter and Queens is second as far as
14 the leased shelters.

15 You know I'm a shareholder in Fordham Hill Owners
16 Corporation and in 2017, a BRC 200 men shelter was
17 placed near us at 233 Landing Road with no community
18 engagement. Even though Fordham Hill Owners
19 Corporation shareholders are the highest grossing
20 taxpayers in the area. DHS and BRC actually were
21 quite disengaging until we got the media involved and
22 then the workforce to engage the community.

23 Just this year, DHS assisted Acacia and actually
24 speaking a men stabilization shelter right at 2287
25 University Place and only went to the Community Board

1
2 the same month that it was about to open, when they
3 were supposed to give a 30-day notice to the
4 Community Board.

5 Now, Fordham Hill Owners Corporation is boxed in
6 by four shelters. Fordham Hill Board has worked into
7 the quality of life and property of value of our
8 minority shareholders with the largest minority and
9 majority privately owned cooperative in the
10 neighborhood and we are now having an issue with
11 homeless men congregating on church steps, near
12 schools and in our public parks. Communities of
13 colors are meant to bear the brunt of this issue,
14 spreading the ideology that the majority of New York
15 homeless look like us, which you just said Deputy
16 Ayala.

17 Uhm, while this issue should be a fair share
18 spread among all the communities in New York State,
19 but we have to also look at it this way, if all the
20 communities of color bear the brunt of this homeless
21 epidemic that we have, we can't bury these
22 communities in adject poverty and expect the
23 communities to emerge. So, we have to kind of think
24 of this and the problem in New York City's Human
25 Services Administration and Department of Social

1
2 Services, Administration for Children Services and
3 the Department of Homeless Services, and all the
4 charitable institutions is that none of them are
5 actually speaking to each other. They don't talk to
6 each other effectively.

7 Plus, the nonprofit and private section don't
8 either, just to make their numbers. Therefore,
9 poverty and homeless getting worse and the need for
10 more shelters now that the mayor wants emergency
11 shelters for our migrants throughout New York City,
12 actually putting those -

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 RACHEL MILLER BRADSHAW: Behind in housing. So,
15 you know, I think that we definitely do need to
16 actually think of more ways to handle the homeless
17 epidemic in New York State. Maybe we should
18 reconsider New York State being a right to housing.
19 Whether you only stayed in the country, that's this
20 way but also we need to definitely address the
21 overburdening of shelters and communities of color.
22 Because communities of color have had enough,
23 especially in the Bronx and we fear that we have now
24 taken on our responsibility as far as the homeless

1
2 epidemic in New York State and New York City in
3 particular. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this entire
6 panel for your testimony. At this time, we do not
7 have any other witnesses that we see are scheduled to
8 testify. However, if we have inadvertently missed
9 anyone here physically in City Hall right now to
10 testify. If not, if there's anyone on Zoom who we
11 have inadvertently missed, if you could please use
12 the Zoom raise hand function.

13 Seeing none, I will turn it now back over to
14 Deputy Speaker Ayala to close out our hearing.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you all for coming.
16 This hearing is adjourned. [GAVEL]

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

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 31, 2022