

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND INVESTIGATIONS

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
AND LABOR

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September 9, 2022
Start: 1:12 p.m.
Recess: 6:10 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Carmen N. De La Rosa
Chairperson - Civil Service & Labor

Gale A. Brewer
Chairperson - Oversight &
Investigations

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
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Julie Won
Marjorie Velázquez
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Eric Dinowitz
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Rita C. Joseph
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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Office of Labor Relations First Deputy
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President of FDNY EMS Local 2507

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Daniel Grenier [sp?]

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Brendan Fogarty
Former FDNY Captain

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Public School Teacher

Josephine Valdez [sp?]

Lauren Orourke
NYPD Detective

Turaz

Raul Rivera
TLC Driver and Advocate

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Retired School Secretary

Mayumi Jima [sp?]

Rachel Maniscalco
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Rashaad Taylor
FDNY Ladder 61

Monica

Bernadette Mejia
FDNY Fire Fighter

Danny Hulkower
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Actress

Gabriel Dalmal [sp?]
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Tim Heaton
FDNY Lieutenant

Katherine Diab [sp?]
NYC Teacher

Sophy Medina
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Robert Banome
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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FDNY fire fighter

Maureen Hurley [sp?]

Cely Batista
NYPD Sergeant of Police

Emily Zapantis
Former Assistant Principal

Laura Hoffman

Illiana Gordon
Police Dispatcher

Carin Rosado
FDNY Paramedic

Dominick Francois
NYPD Officer

Tabitha Forte

1 COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
2 WITH COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and
4 welcome to today's New York City Council hybrid
5 meeting on Oversight and Investigations joint with
6 Civil Service and Labor. At this time, please put
7 your electronic devices on vibrate or silent mode.
8 If you want to testify, come to the Sergeant at Arms
9 desk, and you're going to have to fill out one of
10 these slips. Online, if you want to submit your
11 testimony you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov.
12 Again, it is testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you
13 for your cooperation. Chairs, we may begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Good morning. Thank
15 you very much. I am Gale Brewer, Chair of the
16 Committee on Oversight and Investigations. I want to
17 welcome, and I'm honored to be joined by Council
18 Member Carmen De La Rosa who is Chair of the
19 Committee on Civil Service and Labor. And I believe
20 we've been also joined by Council Member Velázquez,
21 Holden, Ariola, Paladino, Bottcher. I think that's
22 it, yeah. And Nurse. She just walked in. Your
23 timing is perfect. Thank you very much. So we're
24 going to focus on the staffing crisis that has struck
25 New York City's municipal workforce since the onset
of COVID. Mayor Adams has made reopening the City

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2 and returning to normal a top priority for his
3 Administration and I appreciate that, but to do so he
4 needs a capable government apparatus, and it is a
5 challenging time for municipal government around the
6 United States. I am aware of that. Additionally, it
7 appears that some of the Mayor's policies including
8 his insistence on in-person work for all employees
9 and his use of attrition to facilitate broad, blunt
10 budget cuts, maybe at cost purposes, with the goal of
11 rebuilding civic functions in a post-pandemic world.
12 I always say, for instance, that the Health
13 Department has been in the past the premier public
14 health agency in United States, if not the world, and
15 it needs staff to do that. The City's mounting
16 difficulties with hiring and retaining staff have
17 begun to impede vital parts of our local government's
18 work. Building affordable housing has to have staff
19 to be able to sign off on low-income tax credits, for
20 instance, to adapting to climate change, to
21 confronting new public health challenges like Monkey
22 Pox. After today, we will examine the causes of the
23 City's workforce crisis. That's what we're going to
24 talk about today, how the wave of vacancies have been
25 affected by City policy on attrition and remote work

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2 and the impact of unfilled positions on areas of
3 public concern. We're obviously concerned, as I
4 said, public health, housing, education, climate
5 change. While even the private sector has struggled
6 to fill many openings in the tightest labor markets
7 in decades-- and we've got lots of articles of that
8 effect-- local governments have fallen far behind the
9 national jobs recovery, New York City included.
10 Vacancy rates for City jobs have shot up from just
11 1.5 percent before COVID to more than seven percent
12 today. we have difficulties maintaining the
13 government workforce, and it's even more troubling
14 because we depend on a nuclear [sic], muscular,
15 local, public sector to stay safe and healthy, house
16 ourselves, and keep the city moving-- not easy tasks.
17 But you have to address these issues, and the
18 staffing crisis threatens to develop its own negative
19 feedback loop as a smaller number of remaining
20 workers take over the duties of departing colleagues.
21 Many people are Baby Boomers, like myself, and
22 they're retiring. I'm not retiring, but many of my
23 friends are retiring and they're getting burned out,
24 or they look for work elsewhere. The workforce
25 crisis began two years ago under a different mayor, a

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2 different presidential administration, and a
3 different stage of COVID. Many of the losses to our
4 city staff were the result of unavoidable cuts in the
5 worst days of the pandemic, before Congress passed
6 aid for state and local government when we knew how
7 the overall economy might recover. Since then, the
8 City has received, to the credit of the Federal
9 Government and our Congressional Delegation, federal
10 support. Our own tax revenues have recovered, and
11 American workplaces have learned to adapt to new tech
12 and public health situations. Why then has the City
13 had difficulty maintaining ranks of staff to their
14 fullest? This hearing will look at the economic
15 headwinds facing our government as it tries to
16 attract staff, as well and the policy decisions that
17 have made this task more difficult. Intensifying
18 salary competition from the private sector and the
19 rising cost of living have certainly exasperated the
20 situation. However, two Adams' Administration
21 policies stand out for their impact on current city
22 headcount. One, the Administration's two for one
23 requirement that agency can only make one new hire
24 for every two departures, and I know in some cases
25 there are waivers to that, and a hard line against

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2 any remote work option for office employees. And I
3 know one could argue if the City isn't fully five-
4 day-a-week, what about the rest of the City? What
5 about the private sector? But the problem is the
6 private sector is not going to be five days a week,
7 if you read the papers. They often have a remote
8 option, and people go there for the remote option.
9 The first policy has deliberately slowed the recovery
10 of the City's workforce, while the latter has driven
11 many city employees to seek new positions with more
12 flexibility, as I stated. We really, really, really
13 appreciate the representatives of the Administration
14 who are here today and we look forward to their
15 discussion and their suggestions about how they plan
16 to reverse the exodus of valuable City employees from
17 our government and avoid disruptions to vital City
18 services, because are government and we're all about
19 serving the people. I certainly want to thank-- I do
20 see here Counsel C.J. Murray, Policy Analyst Alex
21 Yablon [sp?], my Chief of Staff Schuler Puter [sp?],
22 Legislative Director Leah Bollero [sp?] for their
23 hard work, and I also want to thank all of the data
24 analysis staff. I'm a huge data nut, and I really
25 appreciate the work that they did. And now it is my

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2 pleasure to turn the podium over to Council Member
3 Carmen De La Rosa, Chair of the Committee on Civil
4 Service and Labor. And I see that we have Council
5 Member Ariola [sic] and Council Member Hanks, and
6 thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so
8 much, Council Member Brewer. Good afternoon
9 everyone. I am Council Member Carmen De La Rosa,
10 Chair of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor.
11 Thank you all for joining us for today's oversight
12 hearing on maintaining the municipal workforce. This
13 hearing is a collaborative effort, obviously, with
14 our colleagues on the Committee of Oversight and
15 Investigation, Chaired by the incomparable Gale
16 Brewer. Today's hearing will center on the root
17 causes of staffing crisis that has undermined New
18 York City's municipal workforce and the potential
19 remedies. State and local governments are woven into
20 a very-- into the very fabric and function of our
21 daily lives. The pandemic has shown how critical
22 these services are and what happens when they do not
23 function properly. To recover successfully from a
24 pandemic, the Administration must have a competent
25 and fully-staffed government to deliver vital

1 services for our city and for all New Yorkers. Yet,
2 the City's municipal workforce has struggled to
3 regain pandemic-related job losses. As of June 2022,
4 61 agencies had a vacancy rate of more than five
5 percent, and 46 agencies had a vacancy rate above 10
6 percent. The City's difficulties hiring and
7 retaining staff have weakened vital parts of our
8 essential services, including, as you heard already,
9 the building of affordable housing, educating
10 children, and vaccinating the public. It is
11 imperative that government work to address these job
12 losses and strengthen the critical workforce for both
13 constituents and workers who rely upon these jobs.
14 Public sector employees have long been a source of
15 economic security for women and workers of color.
16 Prior to the pandemic, people of color comprise 62
17 percent of the City's workforce, and women comprised
18 59 percent. These jobs were once coveted because
19 they are more likely to be unionized, well-paid with
20 benefits and protections for workers experiencing
21 compounding racial and gender income gaps. But in
22 recent months, public reports have cited city workers
23 who feel pushed out of the public sector because they
24 are burdened with the duties of departed colleagues
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2 searching for higher paying jobs due to the high cost
3 of living, or frustrated with the Administration's
4 workplace policies. Our goal should be to make the
5 civil service and public sector jobs attractive to
6 workers and ensure that working for New York City
7 government remains desirable work. Today, my goal is
8 to explore the root causes and effects of the ongoing
9 staffing crisis, but I also look forward to
10 discussing potential solutions, including greater
11 workplace flexibility to allocate and reallocate
12 headcount, re-evaluating the hiring processes and
13 procedures, as well as re-examining the
14 Administration's remote work policy. I am eager to
15 hear from the Administration's plans to avoid further
16 service disruptions and attract talented New Yorkers
17 to fill the large number of vacancies. I'd like to
18 thank our committee staff for their hard work in
19 preparing for this hearing, Senior Counsel Nick
20 Connell [sp?], Policy Analyst Elizabeth Artz [sp?],
21 as well as my own staff, Chief of Staff James Berk
22 [sp?], Legislative Director Kianna Diaz [sp?], and
23 Communications Director Frey Familia [sp?]. Thank
24 you.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear
3 testimony from the Administration. Representatives
4 from Administration, please raise your right hand, do
5 the affirmation. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
6 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before
7 this committee and to respond honestly to Council
8 Member questions? Barbara Dannenberg?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:

10 [inaudible]

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ken Godiner?

12 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: Yes.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Daniel Pollak?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK:

15 [inaudible]

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
17 begin your testimony.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I just want to say
19 Council Member Dinowitz, thank you very much for
20 joining us. Thank you.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Good
22 afternoon Chairs Brewer and De La Rosa and members of
23 the Committees on Oversight and Investigations and
24 Civil Service and Labor. I'm Barbara Dannenberg,
25 Deputy Commissioner for Human Capital at the

1 Department of Citywide Administrative Services, or
2 DCAS. I am joined today by my colleagues, Daniel
3 Pollak from the Office of Labor Relations, OLR, and
4 Ken Godiner from the Office of Management and Budget,
5 OMB. I would like to start by thanking you all for
6 this opportunity to discuss how we are maintaining
7 the City's workforce. For more than 20 years I have
8 proudly served the City of New York. I love the work
9 I do because it's filled with purpose and meaning.
10 Civil service is a calling, and it is a call we hope
11 to be answered by passionate, hard-working, and
12 knowledgeable people who want to impact the lives of
13 over eight million New Yorkers. When we talk about
14 civil service today, labor shortages, exams, we're
15 talking about people. It's paramount to our city's
16 recovery, to our progression, and to our sustainable
17 future, that we keep in mind that people keep our city
18 thriving and moving. Over the course of my career,
19 I've had the privilege of supporting the City's
20 efforts to recruit and retain a world-class
21 workforce. Through a combination of recruitment, exam
22 administration, and civil service lists based on
23 merit and fitness, we strive to develop a diverse,
24 talented pool of candidates who are eager to serve
25

1 the people of New York City. The work we do at DCAS
2 is bigger than any one specific agency. It requires
3 a cross-pollination of ideas and consistent
4 collaboration. To that end, we work closely with our
5 colleagues at OMB and OLR. Together, we help
6 recruit, fortify, and support the City's workforce.
7 We're fortunate to partner with other agencies and
8 rely on each other to tackle new challenges, lend
9 support, and prioritize the needs of all New Yorkers
10 so that City agencies have what they need to
11 effectively deliver services. Currently, the New
12 York City government is the City's largest employer
13 with a workforce of 304,000 public servants.
14 Headcount has remained flat since the start of this
15 Administration. Our employees are dedicated to
16 providing the highest level of service to all New
17 Yorkers despite the many challenges the City has
18 recently faced. Over the past two years, cities
19 around the world have been plagued with unprecedented
20 challenges as a direct result of the COVID pandemic.
21 Unfortunately, New York City is no exception. We are
22 now facing a job market that's in uncharted
23 territory. Job options for employees are at a recent
24 high nationwide. Based on the most inclusive measure
25

1 of unemployment, the unemployed or under-employed
2 share of the national labor force is the lowest on
3 record since at least 1994. Between 2001 and 2017
4 there were never fewer than 105 unemployed people for
5 every 100 job openings nationwide. Today, there are
6 currently about 50 unemployed people for every 100
7 job openings, or as in January of 2020 there were 81
8 unemployed people for every 100 openings, indicating
9 that the supply of available workers has not kept
10 pace with demand for workers. Under these
11 conditions, it's harder to fill openings. In the
12 face of the lingering impacts of the pandemic, there
13 are many positive economic trend lines in New York
14 City. Job growth is outpacing the national average.
15 Tourism is returning, and large employers are
16 expanding their footprints in New York City. Despite
17 the harsh realities that have upended the workforce
18 as we know it, we are proud that our civil servants
19 have continued to provide critical services and
20 ensure that New Yorkers have access to resources,
21 opportunities, and information. In the face of the
22 well-documented national labor shortage, our city
23 continues to make every effort to provide services
24 effectively, efficiently, and equitably, and we
25

1
2 continue to aggressively recruit talented candidates
3 to fill these roles. Our commitment to providing
4 equitable access to careers in civil service and
5 sharpening the skills of those serving the City are
6 at the forefront of our mind and aligned with our
7 mission to make city government work for all New
8 Yorkers. Central to the life of the City's municipal
9 workforce are the career opportunities afforded
10 through civil service hiring. As one of the largest
11 local government employers anywhere, we offer an
12 opportunity to serve the community and City in any
13 chosen profession. We provide a wealth of career
14 opportunities a clear path for growth and great
15 benefits. Over 80 percent of civil service positions
16 with the City are designated as competitive class.
17 These roles require an exam to qualify and range from
18 law enforcement, emergency services, administration,
19 technical positions, and more. Civil service, a
20 system based on merit and fitness, serves as the
21 foundation on which this city identifies competent,
22 skilled employees to keep New York City thriving.
23 Through the civil service system, applicants are
24 afforded opportunities based on an objective
25 assessment of their demonstrated knowledge, skills,

1
2 and abilities for every level, including entry level
3 and senior level roles at our city agencies. Civil
4 service also serves as a pathway to the middle class
5 for underserved and under-represented communities. It
6 is therefore critical that we operate the civil
7 service system competently, fairly, and
8 expeditiously. DCAS continues to work diligently to
9 introduce system improvements, strengthen
10 collaborative partnerships and reduce the provisional
11 workforce as required, all while we keep New York
12 City working. Among these improvements, DCAS also
13 integrates initiatives like Civil Service 101
14 sessions. Civil Service 101 is a comprehensive
15 information session tailored to perspective employees
16 and job seekers who want to learn more about the
17 civil service process and make it easier to
18 understand. The goal is to demystify the civil
19 service process and dissociate it with being slow and
20 arduous. By reframing the civil service process, we
21 hope to attract the best candidates to work for our
22 city. it is important to note that while civil
23 service lists establish a viable candidate pool, it
24 is indeed a process separate and apart from the
25 hiring process, executed in collaboration between our

1
2 colleagues at OMB and each respective agency to fill
3 specific roles. The hiring process hinges upon
4 vacancy availability and funding. DCAS utilizes exams
5 to equitably identify candidates who demonstrate the
6 necessary knowledge, qualifications and skills to
7 excel in specific roles. We offer open competitive
8 exams which are available to anyone who meets the
9 minimum qualifications. We offer promotion exams
10 which are available only to permanent City employees
11 who are seeking a promotion within their career
12 track, and we also offer qualified income at
13 examinations which are available to those who already
14 work for the City as a provisional employee and
15 certain job titles after two or more years of
16 service. DCAS has worked to improve the cycle time
17 of the examination process and to break down barriers
18 to careers in civil service. On average, over the
19 last five years, DCAS has administered 180 exams per
20 year to more than 100,000 candidates and established
21 over 150 eligible lists for agencies to hire from
22 each year. Paramount to DCAS' vision of ensuring
23 equitable access to civil service and city
24 government, DCAS has proudly created a community-
25 based footprint for civil service application and

1
2 examination through the opening of one computer-based
3 testing and application center in each of the five
4 boroughs. In addition to establishing a community-
5 based presence, DCAS has moved forward with the
6 digitization of our work and utilize automation to
7 provide faster service. This is evidenced [sic]
8 through our computerized testing system and our
9 education and experience exam systems which provide
10 instant tentative results as soon as the candidate
11 completes these exams. For candidates who disagree
12 with the rating received by DCAS, we allow them to
13 initiate, transmit, and track appeals of their
14 ratings within their online application system
15 dashboard. In an effort to widen the net and provide
16 more opportunities for interested candidates, DCAS
17 launched a pilot program in Fiscal Year 22 called the
18 New York City Bridge Exam. Through this pilot, DCAS
19 departed from our traditional testing process in
20 which we offer one exam for one title. The New York
21 City Bridge Exam allows candidates to apply for one
22 exam, pay one application fee, and take one test that
23 can be used for up to 10 job titles. The New York
24 City Bridge Exam opened for filing in April of 2022,
25 and DCAS received over 4,000 applications. Later

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2 this month, the multiple choice test will be held for
3 these candidates. This new test format allows DCAS
4 to offer a greater quantity of exams annually without
5 increasing the need for staffing or resources. DCAS'
6 Office of Citywide Recruitment, OCR, promotes the
7 vision that the City of New York is an employer of
8 choice with a growing, talented and diverse
9 workforce. The work done through OCR is integral to
10 our targeted recruitment efforts. OCR conducts
11 extensive outreach to educate the public and current
12 employees on civil service career opportunities and
13 manages the City's 55A program which affords
14 qualified persons with disabilities an entry into
15 city government without the need to take civil
16 service exams. Since its inception in 2015, OCR has
17 participated in more than 1,500 events and reach
18 nearly 75,000 participants. They're also the
19 division responsible for organizing and facilitating
20 the Civil Service 101 information sessions. In
21 response to the pandemic, in April 2020, OCR switched
22 to virtual events. Over 23,000 participants have
23 joined approximately 481 events between April 2020
24 and August of 2022. OCR is now back in the field and
25 participating in both virtual and in-person events.

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2 As part of these events, OCR partners with sister
3 agencies to host agency spotlight sessions to
4 highlight their hard-to-fill recruitment needs for
5 each agency. This includes partnerships with
6 agencies such as HPD, CCRB, Emergency Management,
7 FDNY, and others. To attract perspective employees,
8 DCAS also hosts City Talk panels discussions to
9 spotlight employees across various agencies. These
10 events serve as opportunities to promote city
11 careers, the many different city agencies, and the
12 work employees perform across these agencies. We
13 also issue a monthly newsletter to job-seekers and
14 career services partners across educational
15 institutions, community-based organizations, faith-
16 based institutions and others. This newsletter
17 highlights current exams that are open for filing and
18 open job opportunities across different agencies.
19 Beyond our recruitment outreach we've also
20 established other pipelines for those interested in
21 joining city service through fellowships and
22 internships. At the City's public university system,
23 the City University of New York, or CUNY, helps
24 funnel talented, college-educated candidates into
25 government through our collaborative Civil Service

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2 Pathway Fellowship. This initiative connects recent
3 graduates with fulltime careers in civil service,
4 including competitive pay and benefits. Candidates
5 selected to participate receive professional
6 development, build networking and mentorship
7 relationships and specialized training. Similar to
8 the Civil Service Pathway Fellowship, each year, the
9 Urban Fellows Program recruit nationally for a nine-
10 month fellowship program that provides participants
11 with a unique opportunity to work with a current city
12 agency decision-makers and assist in the
13 implementation of public policy. Each cohort
14 consists of 25 recent graduates who are selected from
15 a pool of hundreds of applicants from across the
16 country. It serves as an entry-point into city
17 government and public service. DCAS also facilitates
18 an annual summer internship program, collecting and
19 posting internship opportunities across the City and
20 providing learning opportunities to all interns.
21 This year, three courses were conducted: Civil
22 Service 101, Unconscious Bias/Why it Matters to You,
23 and Interviewing and Networking. DCAS also assisted
24 agencies in providing mandated training such as
25 sexual harassment prevention training to their summer

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2 interns. Recruiting a world-class workforce is only
3 a valuable investment if we can retain and develop
4 that talent. With that in mind, DCAS continues to
5 establish and maintain opportunities for professional
6 growth throughout an individual's civil service
7 career through the DCAS Citywide Training Center, the
8 CTC. The CTC provides employees with opportunities
9 to learn new skills, strengthen existing abilities,
10 and engage in career-driven programs. The CTC has
11 expanded its reach to employees by offering live
12 webinars, computer-based training modules, and in-
13 person learning at the Training Center, or an
14 alternate agency location. Although in-person
15 learning had been paused due to the pandemic, we're
16 happy to say that both agency-specific and open
17 enrollment classes have resumed. Our upcoming fall
18 training catalog will contain more than 50 class
19 titles available in-person at the CTC. Professional
20 development is available for all employees through
21 DCAS learning and development. A catalog is
22 published three times per year with hundreds of
23 programs offering across six portfolio areas:
24 executive development, management and supervision,
25 no-cost learning, personal development, and

1
2 technology skills. We also have a robust portfolio
3 of New York City-specific programming that includes
4 cultural awareness and inclusivity, programs focused
5 on professional practice areas, and programs offered
6 by sister agencies. DCAS is also working to develop
7 the City's human resources community through the
8 development and management of the New York City Human
9 Resource Academy, New York City HR Academy. This
10 program is designed for and by city HR practitioners
11 and thought leaders. The curriculum focuses on common
12 trends, best practices, emerging issues, and case
13 studies for topics related to personnel management.
14 The goal of the NYCHR Academy is to equip agency HR
15 professionals with resources and the network needed
16 to align their agency performance with the City's
17 policies, structures, and initiatives. With multiple
18 stakeholders in the City's ecosystem, we strive to
19 provide a level playing field for New York City's
20 workforce, meet the business needs of city
21 government, and ensure compliance with federal,
22 state, and local laws. We are committed to ensuring
23 that the City's workforce is diverse and inclusive
24 and that all communities are afforded opportunities
25 to engage with civil service career opportunities.

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2 To achieve this goal, we work to ensure that
3 employees who are classified as provisional have a
4 pathway to permanency. A provisional employee is an
5 employee who has met the minimum qualification
6 requirements for the job and may be serving
7 satisfactorily, but has not taken the civil service
8 exam. We have made it a priority to address this
9 issue, and I am proud to share that in tandem with
10 the City's mandate to reduce the number of
11 Provisionals serving across city agencies, the City
12 of New York currently has 10,131 employees serving
13 provisionally, which is an all-time low. This number
14 represents an overall decrease of 73 percent since
15 the start of provisional reduction efforts began when
16 the provisional count was nearly 38,000 in May of
17 2008. For the first time, the City is within
18 compliance of this mandate, and this would not have
19 been possible without the partnership of our sister
20 agencies across the City and their commitment to
21 civil service and the competitive examination
22 processes. I would also be remiss if I forgot to
23 thank our labor partners who also worked very
24 diligently to help us achieve this goal. I'd like to
25 thank you all for the opportunity to testify before

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2 you. our municipal workforce is the lifeblood of our
3 city, and we will continue to aggressively recruit,
4 identify the best candidates, works in close
5 partnership with our sister agencies, the City
6 Council, and all stakeholders to get the right people
7 in place to best serve our city. We are always
8 looking for additional ideas for how to recruit and
9 retain our world-class workforce and welcome your
10 partnership in those efforts. With that, happy to
11 answer any questions at this time.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: thank you very much.
13 I want to thank Council Member Joseph and Council
14 Member Williams for also joining us, and I think
15 Council Member Ayala didn't hear that I called her
16 name, and I'm delighted that she's here. I'm going
17 to start-- first of all, thank you for a very
18 comprehensive list of how you're doing outreach, and
19 I think-- Council Member Yeger's here, too, sorry.
20 Thank you-- of how you're doing outreach and
21 recruiting. My question is this, despite all of
22 that, just like having a, you know, a tsunami outside
23 of you that's hitting not only New York, but other
24 cities-- so you can do all this recruitment and we
25 still have some 24,000, almost 25,000, vacant full-

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2 time positions. And what I think, as I said earlier,
3 somebody like my colleagues who are always doing
4 constituent work, and you know, affordable housing is
5 not happening as quickly as any of us would like
6 because there's nobody in the low income tax credit
7 office to sign off. And the Fire Department, as I
8 know the head of the wonderful-- wonderful head of
9 the Fire Committee will tell you, it's very hard to
10 get an inspection from the Fire Department. I got a
11 restaurant now six months waiting for that
12 inspection, because there's nobody there to do it
13 because of the backlog, and I could go on. So, my
14 question is, despite all of your efforts, are there
15 other things that you think that could be happening,
16 you know, even something-- I get complaints because--
17 since I've been around such a long time, everybody
18 calls me because I'm like the 311 of complaints. And
19 one of the issues is, if you offer somebody a salary,
20 my understanding and I'd like you to comment on that,
21 it has to be within the range. It has to be the
22 lowest value on the range. That doesn't help bring
23 that staff member to city work, or to-- if you want
24 to promote somebody, it takes a long time. I think
25 also, I'm going to bring up the very controversial

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2 topic of-- I understand how we want to be back full-
3 time, but if nobody else-- other offices and
4 departments and agencies and companies are not full-
5 time, and people choose to go there. Then should we
6 have something that gives them some flexibility
7 because otherwise, are we going to be able to
8 recruit. I think the other issue, of course, is we
9 have the attorneys and accountants and tech people
10 who really can go elsewhere. So is there some
11 special way that we could be recruiting them. I know
12 they don't have to live in the City. They have other
13 kinds of ways that we try to recruit them, but it's
14 not working. So, I guess what I want to hear from
15 you, are there any other strategies? Department of
16 Buildings, according to the wonderful data analysis
17 that the City Council has done with your data, there
18 are 489 vacant positions. Department of Health,
19 which I mentioned, one of the greatest departments in
20 the world, 1,189 vacant positions. Department of
21 Social Services, goodness knows they are needed.
22 They're our net for catching, helping, supporting
23 2,256 vacant positions. Department of Environmental
24 Protection-- we want Local Law 97 to be implemented--
25 998 vacant positions and I could go on. And the

1
2 percentages are equally high. You know, I understand
3 we don't to hire too many people, because we might
4 have a recession, and as Richard Ravage [sp?] says
5 today, New York City is teetering on the edge of
6 fiscal cliffs. I swear by Richard Ravage. However,
7 I still think we have to have a workforce to build
8 the affordable housing, to make sure fire inspections
9 are done, to make sure we're climate ready, and that
10 we have all the concerns we need addressed public
11 health-wise. So what are some other strategies that
12 may be outside of what you listed that could address
13 hiring for the City of New York?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
15 you. So, as you said, there are labor shortages
16 across the country. That's well-documented. New
17 York City has not been spared from this labor
18 shortage. However, despite this challenge, we are
19 committed to providing the critical services that New
20 Yorkers deserve, effectively and efficiently, and we
21 are recruiting aggressively to fill these current
22 vacancies. Some of the things that DCAS can do in
23 order to assist agencies with recruitment and filling
24 these critical vacancies, if an agency partners with
25 DCAS, is to assist with scheduling examinations

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2 around an agency's recruitment efforts. We can
3 switch the schedule so that when if an agency is
4 diligently recruiting and we don't offer an
5 examination in the middle of that process and
6 interrupt. We can also share test-taker information
7 or folks who have applied for examinations who are
8 interested in city jobs with an agencies so that they
9 can include them in their recruiting efforts. We can
10 also include test-passers if an agency id looking for
11 that information when they recruit. I can't speak to
12 the specifics of some of the agencies that you had
13 spoken to, but these are some of the things that DCAS
14 can certainly provide. Regarding the salary
15 structure of the City's titles, I would like to turn
16 that over to my colleague from OLR.

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Thank
18 you, Barbara, and thank you, Council Member Brewer.
19 So, as you've mentioned, the salary range, our
20 employees, our civilian employees are governed-- and
21 uniformed employees are governed by collective
22 bargaining agreements, and our collective bargaining
23 agreements for civilian employees generally sets
24 forth the new hire rate, and that rate applies to all
25 employees of less than two years of city service. So

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2 that as a contractual mandate pursuant to our
3 collective bargaining agreements that they be hired
4 at that new-hire rate, and any change would have to
5 be bargained with city unions.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: IS that something
7 you're looking at as you go into contract
8 negotiations, because they are coming up?

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: So,
10 you know, I wouldn't want to comment on the content
11 of contract negotiations with our unions, but as
12 always, we're discussing all issues of concern
13 including recruitment retention issues with our
14 unions.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. We have lots
16 more questions, but I'm going to go to Office of
17 Management and Budget, and I very much appreciate you
18 being here. So, I think one of the challenges is how
19 does one get hired, how quickly? So, I wanted to
20 know within OMB, how do you participate in the hiring
21 practice? How do you establish and implement
22 personnel policies for city agencies? And I have to
23 say again, one of the challenges, I didn't mention it
24 before, is how quickly somebody can be hired.
25 Because if I'm an accountant, I can go to Deloit

1 [sp?], I can go to an agency faster than getting
2 hired by the City, so I'm out of here. And I want us
3 to have the best. The same with, you know, when you
4 want to get promoted. I want to get promoted at the
5 City, but guess what? Private agency is offering me-
6 - and in the past, we used to say, we got the best
7 benefits. Maybe we still do, but the opportunity to
8 go elsewhere is the draw, as you said earlier in your
9 testimony, because of the vacancies. Thank you very
10 much for being here to OMB, also.

12 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: Thank
13 you. Thank you, Council Member Brewer. Thank you to
14 the Committee. In terms of the process for hiring,
15 you know, there's a multi-step process, and part of
16 this is OMB's role, which is relatively quick.
17 [inaudible] too close. In addition to that, you
18 know, once our OMB process is complete, agencies
19 still have to develop a posting. They have to post,
20 they have to, you know, assemble candidates. Then
21 they have to interview selected candidates and then
22 select. Then finally after they've selected a
23 candidate assuming the candidate accepts the
24 position, right, generally speaking, you know, if the
25 person's employed somewhere else, there's a multi-

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2 week wait while they switch from one job to the
3 other. So, it's an inherently slow process to on-
4 board people, but we've been making steps to try to
5 improve that. One of the things we've doing to speed
6 up the OMB process is to try to communicate or clear
7 through the agencies the information that's required
8 so that OMB can approve them. We previously use to
9 batch the hires monthly and now deal with the hires
10 without waiting for all hires to be approved for the
11 month. We approve the ones that are in good shape
12 right away. To the extent that it's possible where
13 let's say you want to hire 50 people, you know, as
14 school safety agents right when the agency puts in
15 the request to hire those, and we give them a blanket
16 par [sic] for all 50, not a one-by-one decision on
17 each one of them. one of the problems that would
18 happen not that often by from time to time was that
19 agencies after OMB approvals would expire after 90
20 days, sometimes the agencies weren't able to find
21 candidates during that period or weren't able to
22 onboard them. We fairly recently extended that from
23 90 days to 180 days so they don't have to go back
24 through the process of re-approval. Those are--
25 those are the steps we're-- you know, we've taken and

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2 are looking at to even increase the speed in which we
3 can move. We appreciate that, you know, anything
4 that speeds up that process makes us more viable as
5 an employer. And you know, as you noted, you know,
6 both on recruiting and retention side, you know, the--
7 - there's no escaping the current economic conditions
8 and the pressure that that puts and the challenge
9 that the agencies face.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. So once the--
11 you've posted the candidate has been selected. I
12 know you gave the example of the school safety agents
13 of 50, but even-- just trying to get a public health
14 or somebody to handle the finances of HPD's
15 affordable housing, that wouldn't necessarily be a
16 group of people. It might be just a few. So, how
17 long does it take? Say for instance I'm selected
18 after posting and I'm selected as a candidate, just
19 how long does it take to go through OMB and any other
20 process, and is this longer than in the past?

21 Because you and I have been round for a long time.

22 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: Yeah.
23 Unfortunately, I have to agree with you that we've
24 been around a while.

25 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Me too.

FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER:

Nevertheless, the process is recently quick for hires. The review process at OMB is generally, you know, 15 to 30 days maximum. There are sometimes difficulties, questions that need to be answered, and that involves a back-and-forth, and unfortunately, as you know, whenever that starts some time gets lost. But you know, even on-- and that works for whether it's a batch of 50 or individuals hires, you know, and you know, there are a lot of the specific titles that you talked about which are exempt from the two-for-one hiring freeze, and we are looking to work with the agencies to speed up the process any way we can. Obviously, you know, the extent that whether the Council or anyone else has ideas about making that process quicker or more efficient, getting us-- helping us with our recruiting challenges. You know, we're ready and willing to take those suggestions.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. We certainly want to be a partner in improving the workforce of the City of New York. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, Gale. I have a question about how the decisions are made

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2 when an agency needs staffing. So, we heard Gale
3 list off some of the biggest vacancy rates like the
4 Department of Buildings or the Department of Mental
5 Hygiene, Health and Mental Hygiene, but there are
6 others. For example, we know the Department of
7 Education, the Department of Finance, the HPD for
8 example that has the need to go in if there's an
9 emergency situation and conduct inspections. So, how
10 are the decisions made and how do the agencies work
11 together, DCAS, OMB, OLR, to ensure that when there's
12 a policy shift and there is a need at an agency, that
13 those needs are met first?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: thank
15 you for your question. So, when an agency realized
16 that they need to hire and maybe they need to hire
17 very quickly, what they will do is reach out and
18 partner with our agencies. And I'll speak
19 specifically to the DCAS piece. An agency will reach
20 out to DCAS, you know, depending upon the title
21 that's needed to hire. Let's say it's inspectors.
22 HPD will say to DCAS we need to hire up very quickly.
23 DCAS will say okay, you know, we have a civil service
24 list. Here's the list of eligible people, or we have
25 an exam in the works. Should we push it out? Should

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2 we start partnering with our Office of Citywide
3 Recruitment and offer information sessions regarding
4 the job? So we'll have that back-and-forth depending
5 on what is needed all the way through to where the
6 agency is hiring. Once an agency hires, again, using
7 the HPD inspector example, those are jobs where you
8 need to be investigated before you work for the City.
9 So what DCAS will do is work very closely with the
10 agency. The agency will let us know who they are
11 interested in bringing on board, and DCAS will then
12 expedite those particular individuals' background
13 investigations so people can hit the ground running
14 and start very quickly with the agency. So that's
15 the DCAS part of the role of hiring. And I'd like to
16 turn it over to my colleagues for the-- for their
17 piece.

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: So,
19 OLR's role when an agency has issues with recruitment
20 and come to either DCAS, OMB, or OLR with those
21 issues, it's largely to advise what we can do within
22 the confines of collective bargaining agreements that
23 currently exist, as well as to assist with any type
24 of labor management issues that are related to those
25 recruitment efforts. For example, if an agency is

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2 trying to create a new civil service tittle,
3 obviously they would go to DCAS to work with them on
4 that new title, but then OLR would also be involved
5 in discussing that with the union, and obviously,
6 we're also often called upon to speak with the union
7 about any thoughts that they might have, because you
8 know, our labor partners are also our partners in
9 these issues. They have as much an interest in
10 recruitment and retention as we do. So, that's OLR's
11 role in that process.

12 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: OMB's
13 role is really to make sure that the proposed hires
14 that an agency who has needs, the clients with their
15 budget and the two-for-one freeze if appropriate.
16 With regard to, I think you sort of alluded to the
17 idea of the need, we've exempted all the hires for
18 new needs from the two-for-one process, and we try to
19 work with the agencies so that they can bring those
20 people on as rapidly as possible.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: So, a follow-up
22 is, are all agencies kind of treated the same across
23 the board? So for example, the uniform agencies. If
24 there is a need, let's say at the FDNY, and the
25 vacancy rate at the Fire Department right now is

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2 about 360, or two percent. What-- how is it treated
3 when it's a uniformed agency versus when it's a
4 service agency? Is there a difference, and is one
5 agency expedited over the other?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So,
7 from-- thank you. From a DCAS perspective, there is
8 no priority. So, if an agency comes to us and seeks
9 to partner in order to fill critical roles, they will
10 receive the same service as any other agency whether
11 they're large or small, because we do understand that
12 any vacancy is critical to-- you know, regardless of
13 the number.

14 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: To the
15 extent that needs have a life safety concern, you
16 know, OMB will prioritize those, you know, trying to
17 move to immediately fill those roles, but you know,
18 it's not by agency. It's the role that people are
19 fulfilling, and we will prioritize and continue to
20 prioritize those that have the most pressing
21 effecting upon life safety concerns.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. So, I'm
23 going to ask about the State Comptroller. The City
24 stated that the City fell short of its FY 2022 year-
25 end staffing, and I think I mentioned this number

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2 earlier, 24,000 employees or eight percent, and I
3 think we are trying to get at some of the obstacles
4 that prevent the City from reaching these year-end
5 targets, and obviously you're trying at DCAS, but are
6 there-- I keep trying to get you to think of other
7 more creative ways that we could end this shortage of
8 staffing, and I keep asking because I know there are
9 other places that we need to be looking. And before
10 I say that, I want to say thank you to the following
11 for joining us, Feliz, Council Member, Council Member
12 Cabán, Council Member Moya, and Council Member
13 Krishnan. And go ahead. There have to be other
14 strategies to fill 24,000 vacancies.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:

16 Certainly, and there are other things that we can do.
17 One strategy that I have not mentioned thus far are
18 job fairs or hiring pools. So, again, depending upon
19 the job that needs to be filled or jobs that need to
20 be filled, DCAS could host a job fair or a hiring
21 pool and call in all interested candidates, provide
22 information either virtually or in-person to any
23 large number of potential job seekers. What we've
24 done in the past is partner with community groups.
25 We partner with our agencies. We partner with Labor,

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2 and we would love to extend an invitation to partner
3 with the Council in order to tap directly into your
4 communities as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You need to come up
6 lists. I'm interested in remote. I'm interested in
7 changing that salary problem for the bottom of the
8 opportunities. We're going to have to try something
9 different. So, I know that you may not be able to say
10 that now. But if you ask me what should we be doing,
11 those are some. I'm sure the audience will have
12 other ideas, and the questions from the Council will
13 have other ideas. But now you have to try by the end
14 of this Fiscal Year to come up with some of these
15 staffing levels. And do we wonder because of our
16 concern about last year, is this 23,000, 24,000,
17 whatever the number is, a realistic goal? Are you
18 still trying to achieve that goal in terms of hiring?

19 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: So, the
20 23,000, 24,000 that does-- that's to bring ourselves
21 to the fully budgeted headcount. The budgeted
22 headcount doesn't represent a target or a goal, but
23 instead is the maximum authorized headcount. So,
24 agencies are naturally going to be below their
25 authorized headcount just on the basis of their

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2 having churn, right? They're only allowed to hire up
3 to that level. People turn over. There's going to
4 be-- there's always going to be some vacancies. You
5 know, in terms of the challenges we have in filling
6 the positions that are approved, you know, again, the
7 labor shortage that we've all talked about that's
8 across the country. You know, there's no difference,
9 you know, in New York City than the private employers
10 in New York City, the public employers across the
11 country. Everyone is finding it difficult to find
12 enough qualified employees and to be able to keep
13 them.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But we want the
15 best.

16 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: We do,
17 and we try to, you know-- everything that Barbara has
18 discussed about what DCAS does to try to recruit
19 people are, you know, are sort-- a comprehensive web
20 of benefits that we use to try to retain the best
21 workforce we can and track them, aggressively
22 recruiting to fill the positions that we have so
23 that-- agencies are out there, you remember, as well
24 as the oversight you see before you. Agencies are
25 out there working in partnership with universities,

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2 with schools, right, to make sure that they have a
3 pipeline of good candidates coming through because
4 the best way to get the best candidates is to have
5 the best people apply.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, but do you
7 have a goal that would be attainable by the end of FY
8 23, obviously next July. Do we have a goal that
9 we're aiming for to address some of the issues that
10 we know are challenging? Do we have a goal of
11 numbers?

12 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: We do not
13 have a set goal for the number of employees at the
14 end of the Fiscal Year or some point in the future.
15 We will continue to aggressively recruit against the
16 approved hires we have within the budget constraints
17 that we have.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I think
19 that's not a great thing.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yeah, I want to
21 ask about overtime cost and spending. Obviously,
22 consequence of not having fully staffed city
23 municipal workforces that a lot of money is spent on
24 overtime costs. In FY 2022, citywide overtime
25 spending totaled 2.2 billion, which is almost 600

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2 million more than the year before, and according to
3 the State Comptroller, overtime spending at the four
4 uniformed agencies, Police, Fire, Correction, and
5 Sanitation, reached a new record in FY 22 totaling
6 over 1.8 billion dollars. So, is the City concerned
7 about ballooning overtime costs? If you could go
8 into that. What is the extent of the shortage that
9 is responsible for the overtime spike? As well as,
10 what are some of the common contributing factors for
11 staffing shortages at these front line agencies?

12 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: When we
13 look at the FY 22 overtime spend, the increase is
14 driven principally by increases in uniformed overtime
15 at the Fire Department, Department of Corrections,
16 and Department of Sanitation. One thing to note is
17 that both the Police Department and Sanitation
18 Department have higher headcount now than they did at
19 the beginning of the admin. With Corrections
20 significantly down, principally they have more
21 vacancies, principally because the-- we authorized an
22 additional 400 heads and they are chasing a serious
23 retention problem. Part of that is exacerbated by
24 the difficulty of those jobs, but also--

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2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: [interposing] Can
3 I ask one question on that? For the Department of
4 Corrections, we know that the total vacancy is about
5 862, but does that count folks that are not
6 consistently coming into work as well?

7 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: People,
8 people are-- the vacancies are only reported for
9 people who are off the payroll, right?

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: okay.

11 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: And
12 that's another thing that's happening in those three
13 agencies, right? We talk about that headcount
14 decrease in Corrections where, you know, there's also
15 all those agencies that have 20-year half-pay [sic]
16 plans have naturally relatively high turnover as
17 people retire. But with regard to those three
18 agencies, we're also seeing in each case a reduction
19 in the amount of available hours per uniformed worker
20 on the front lines. So, higher levels of medical
21 leave and higher levels of modified assignment, you
22 know, like duty depending on the Department has their
23 different terms. And that is what's driving most of
24 the increase in overtime citywide.

3 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: In the case of
4 the Sanitation Department, though, it seems like-- at
5 the least the report that we have here, there is zero
6 vacant positions, at least that's the percentage that
7 we've been given. So, if that agency is considered
8 fully staffed, then what accounts for some of the
9 larger overtime costs, and is there a plan to maybe
10 hire more if the need is more in some of these
11 agencies?

12 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: Right.
13 The growth in overtime is sometimes correlated with
14 reductions or the size of the staff, but often not so
15 much. Depending on the nature of the agency in some
16 cases, I mean you know, classically we think of
17 police, right? If you have additional police
18 officers, the likelihood is they're going to observe
19 more crime and make more arrests. Arrests tend to
20 drive court appearance overtime or arrest arraignment
21 overtime. So there you see almost an inverse
22 relationship. Now they can use those guys on planned
23 events to lower overtime as well. But you know, we
24 work with the-- we're trying to work with the
25 agencies on overtime control, and obviously if it's
more efficient to hire additional staff rather than

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2 use overtime, we would do that, or encourage that I
3 should say.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: On service delivery,
5 no we have harping on this topic only because I am so
6 concerned about the affordable housing, the climate,
7 the education just as you are. I know that DCAS, you
8 stated correctly, that you don't prioritize. Your job
9 is to make it fair, do the exams, and do the
10 outreach. But somebody has to be paying attention to
11 the agencies that have critical urgent agency
12 operations that must be filled. And so who does
13 that? Who thinks about that? And then perhaps there
14 does need to be some kind of priority for some of the
15 places, some of the agencies that I suggested. So
16 are there top priorities? Are there any-- if it's
17 not DCAS, is anybody trying to identify where there
18 is the most need, and do targeting to fill those
19 positions. It doesn't seem like it's happening to us
20 in the outside.

21 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: I think
22 that the agencies themselves prioritize their hires.
23 They're out there. I think, you know, they're aware
24 of where the vacancies are and where they're most
25 critical in their agency, and they prioritize those

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2 hires when they come to DCAS for assistance, when
3 they come to OMB for an exemption for the two-for-
4 one. If they come to OLR to talk about what's
5 possible to do, they're identifying which of those
6 titles, which of those groups they think they need
7 the most help, and I think that's where the
8 prioritization takes place rather than at the
9 oversight level.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I mean, I
11 don't agree with that in the sense that, you know, I
12 think there should be an overall assistance with the
13 agencies so that they get theirs-- some wind beneath
14 their sails on trying to fill. But I appreciate-- I
15 appreciate the answer. I think we talked a little
16 bit about collective bargaining. Are there other
17 collective bargaining or other issues that limit the
18 City's ability to reallocate staff? I know when we--
19 since I've been around so long. When we did 311, we
20 worked with the agencies to move people to 311 in the
21 same title. It was very successful. DoITT and other
22 agencies work together, but that is an issue, and I
23 am very supportive of all collective bargaining
24 issues, but are we working with them to try to make,
25

1 again, some of these positions to be filled?

2 Bargaining issues.

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4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Thank
5 you, Council Member. So, I will say that, you know,
6 we work with every agency that comes to us whether
7 it's to OMB, to DCAS, or to OLR. We will work with
8 those agencies and work with the unions representing
9 those employees to see what solutions we can try to
10 figure out. You know, and as we enter, you know,
11 potentially bargaining again for the next round of
12 contracts, certainly recruitment and retention issues
13 are on all our minds and it's something that we will
14 continue to focus on.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. How do you
16 look at technology as some places to fill in gaps?
17 We want to be very clear that I'm not interesting in
18 using technology as a basis for not hiring somebody,
19 but are there-- again, I guess that would be the role
20 of the Deputy Mayor's or the DoITT, now called
21 something else, but how is technology looked upon by
22 either OMB or DCAS in terms of how it can help with
23 these staffing shortages?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
25 you. So, yes, the use of technology has definitely

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2 assisted with the service delivery both before there
3 were-- you know, before staffing shortages or after
4 staffing shortages. Technology has absolutely helped
5 us deliver our services more efficiently, more
6 fairly, and more equitably to all New Yorkers.
7 Speaking from a DCAS point of view, we have utilized
8 technology in order to make our civil service
9 examination process more widely available to people
10 during the pandemic when at the very beginning when
11 things were shut down and in-person services were not
12 available. We were able to utilize our online
13 capability through our testing platform in order to
14 continue offer examinations for jobs with the
15 understanding that, you know, one day this will end
16 and one day agencies will need to very quickly hire.
17 So we were still able to offer those services through
18 the use of technology that we would not have been
19 able to do so otherwise. And I'm sure that there are
20 countless similar stories across the City with other
21 agencies as well.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. New York
23 Housing Conference, obviously is a well-known
24 organizations, and they're stating, not Gale Brewer,
25 that the vacancy rates at-- units at HPD-- I keep

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2 going back to this-- that are signing off on
3 affordable housing are as high as 24 percent. So do
4 you know if that's-- do you have any sense, even
5 though you stated it's only up to the agency how to
6 improve that. And then, of course, at the Fire
7 Department, and we have the wonderful Chair here, and
8 I'm sure she'll ask more about the Fire Protection
9 Inspectors. Those are the vacancies rates, two
10 examples of where there is high vacancy rte. Can you
11 address what-- even though you say it's only up to
12 the agency, isn't there some other way that we should
13 be addressing? We want affordable housing. We can't
14 do it without this type of support.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Sure.
16 So speaking from a personnel standpoint, there are--
17 and again, I can't speak specifically for these
18 agencies, but some tools that they would have
19 available to assist would be to reassign staff within
20 their own agency in order to cover the shortfall of--
21 you mentioned a particular unit. They can certainly
22 do that. Agencies will also once again reach out to
23 DCAS and let us know that they need assistance in
24 either filling roles or we're going to have people
25 cover these roles, so we need some assistance in

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2 backfilling a different role. And so these are tools
3 that are available to agencies, but I can't-- again,
4 can't speak specifically for them. However, if
5 agencies wanted to partner with DCAS in any other way
6 in order to fill these critical vacancies, we would
7 certainly be available.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Is there anything
9 OMB can do? For an example, people are scared of
10 OMB, just so you know, the agencies. They complain
11 to me--

12 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER:
13 [interposing] they shouldn't be.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: about how scared
15 they are of you. So, is there something you can do
16 to un-scare them so that they can hire these people?

17 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: Well, I
18 don't know if we could un-scare them, but you know,
19 we have worked and we talk about HPD. You know, I
20 don't know the specifics about the unit you're
21 talking about. It's sort of an HPD question, but OMB
22 has approved over 700 hires for HPD in the last 12
23 months. Nearly 600 of them were exceptions to the
24 two-to-one policy. I note that during this
25 Administration, the overall headcount for HPD is

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2 basically flat. It's down about 60 people on a base
3 of 2,000. So we haven't seen a big drop in the
4 agency headcount. We work closely with the agency to
5 try to fill those vacancies, the things that need to
6 be done. You know, obviously, with this
7 Administration's historic 22 billion dollars housing
8 commitment, we're investing in affordable housing and
9 investing in staff and filling those positions as
10 quickly as possible as a priority.

11 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: I want to ask,
12 clearly, you know, this Council has been having a lot
13 of conversation around the Department of Education,
14 and the impacts that budget cuts have had, and when
15 we look at vacancies in the Department I remember
16 during the Preliminary Budget hearing this was a
17 question that was asked about vacancy and reductions,
18 and headcount reductions at the Department. What is
19 the likely impact of the vacancy rates at the
20 Department of Education on, you know, on our
21 children's education, on programs like Universal Pre-
22 K, for example?

23 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: We
24 haven't heard any reports of vacancies impacting the
25 roll out of the pre-k program. We're working very

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2 closely with DOE. We share the priority of early
3 childhood education. You know, when-- if and when we
4 hear that there are impacts on the children receiving
5 the education, we're going to partner with them to
6 try to address this.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yeah. I
8 recognize that this is probably, you know, a bigger
9 conversation, but you know, that is not what we're
10 hearing from our communities, right? We're hearing
11 about the impacts of accessing teachers and not
12 having the type of services that are needed,
13 especially when you think about special education and
14 the type of interventions that are needed. So I just
15 wanted to state that and put that squarely here, that
16 there is a lot of concern, and the Council Members
17 have expressed in different settings our concern
18 about vacancy rates in the Department of Education.

19 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: You know,
20 I thank you for sharing that with us, and to the
21 extent that there's specific things that are going on
22 that you could share with the Administration, with
23 DOE, you know, we always want to work with the
24 Council to try address issues, especially if they
25 haven't bubbled up.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. And
3 then, I guess a question I have for DCAS is, have
4 y'all considered the remote option? What other
5 conversations around that, a citywide remote option?
6 Certainly some of this work can happen remotely.
7 It's one of the things that this pandemic has taught
8 many people, and it would make the City more
9 competitive considering the vacancy rates that we are
10 faced with.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
12 you. The Mayor has been very clear in his position,
13 that in-person work allows for greater cross-
14 pollination, greater idea sharing amongst employees,
15 and the City is leading by example, while we're
16 encouraging the private sector to follow suit. I
17 would also like to note that the majority of the
18 City's workforce never worked remotely during the
19 pandemic or now, and they are the employees that kept
20 our city running. So, I just wanted to note that for
21 the record.

22 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, and
23 we certainly do appreciate them. As the Chair of
24 Labor I can tell you that we know that many frontline
25 workers that don't have the ability to work remote,

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2 right, because those industries require for them to
3 be out in the field, were not able to do remote, but
4 there's certainly a growing portion of the city
5 workforce that can be remote. And the request is to
6 let's look at it. Let's have that conversation. As
7 we continue this conversation about what the future
8 of work looks like in our city. I'm going to pass it
9 back.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I mean, I am going
11 to harp on this a little bit, because I understand,
12 for instance, have you checked with other government
13 agencies around the country? The Office of Personnel
14 Management Federal is a hybrid model, just to give
15 you an example. And I would-- I understand the
16 Mayor's positions. He and I and his staff have had
17 this conversation, but I am nervous about not
18 recruiting the kind of talent you want at least to
19 see in the next couple of years if we could have some
20 kind of hybrid. But I also understand from Hell
21 Gate, an online publication, that the City denied
22 requests for reasonable accommodations to work from
23 home, from immunocompromised employees suffering from
24 cancer. Is that something that is a position that
25 the City has or is it local to the agency? It seems

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2 to be that remote work for people who are ill should
3 be an opportunity.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
5 you for that question, and while I can't speak to
6 that particular case, I'm happy to explain the
7 process for requesting reasonable accommodation is a
8 process for employees and employers to work together
9 so that an employee is better able to fulfil their
10 role at work. And that decision is made between the
11 agency and specifically the agency's EEO Officer and
12 the requesting employee. So all agency EEO Officers
13 receive training from the DCAS Citywide Equity and
14 Inclusion Office so that all EEO Officers are working
15 from the same knowledge base when they are making
16 these decisions. And each reasonable accommodation is
17 handled on a case-by-case basis. So there's no
18 blanket policy regarding reasonable accommodator for,
19 you know, certain illnesses or anything else. It
20 should also be noted that reasonable accommodation
21 can be other than tele-work. So it can be, you know,
22 equipment in order to do your job better, or a
23 standing desk, or flexible work hours. So, it isn't
24 necessarily a work from home.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. That was not
3 a good story, however, in the paper. I know we've
4 talked about as the State Comptroller did in his 2022
5 report about trying to do the hard recruit titles,
6 and believe it or not, attorneys are on that now.
7 Architects are on that. Auditors are on that,
8 accountants, IT. And are you-- again, I keep asking,
9 but are there any other ways that you're trying to
10 recruit these professionals? They are not coming to
11 work for the City of New York. Are there any other
12 ideas that you might have? I want the flexibility.
13 I would suggest you have to work on the salary
14 issues. I think you have to figure out how to have--
15 you know, I know you're not-- you're trying to be
16 more flexible on the two-for-one policy. Are there
17 other ways that you might be able to attract? I
18 believe the headcount even at the Department of Law,
19 Law Department, is way down, because lawyers do not
20 want to work for the City of New York. Any other
21 ideas?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, I
23 would like to speak to the hard-to-recruit issue that
24 you raised, that yes, there are many titles. There
25 are almost 200 job titles within the city of New York

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2 that are designated as hard-to-recruit, and what that
3 means is that the City, the five boroughs, within the
4 five boroughs of the City it's not always accessible
5 for agencies to find an available workforce. So,
6 they are able to recruit outside of the five
7 boroughs. And as we all know, the residency
8 requirement is bound in the Administrative Code. So
9 this hard-to-recruit designation waives that so that
10 agencies are able to recruit outside of the five
11 boroughs. And in order to do that if an agency is
12 having-- you know, just because the title wasn't
13 hard-to-recruit maybe five years ago, doesn't mean
14 that today that pool hasn't dried up. So an agency
15 will approach DCAS and let us know that they're
16 having difficulties with recruitment and then we will
17 make that decision as to whether or not their
18 particular job should be included in that hard-to-
19 recruit list.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Do you have an
21 evaluation analysis of in the last year or so if
22 these tactics that you are implementing outside of
23 the boroughs, etcetera, are having any effect? Are
24 we able to have more hart-to-fill titles filled
25 because of some of these tactics?

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I believe
3 that that data would be contained at the agency
4 level. DCAS wouldn't be privy to the information of
5 whether or not those particular employees were part
6 of the hard-to-recruit or residency waiver.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Does OMB know the
8 answer to that, or that would be somebody else?
9 Somebody must know.

10 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: Yeah, we
11 don't-- I certainly don't have it with me, but I
12 don't think OMB has statistics on how the hard-to-
13 recruit has, you know-- once a title is designated
14 hard-to-recruit how that's changed the number of
15 folks that are hiring.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We may follow-up on
17 that. I know you talked about the two-for-one
18 policy. It sounds to me like you were being very
19 flexible with it. Can you be more specific? You
20 know, how-- where is it in effect or not, etcetera?

21 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: With
22 regards to the two-for-one, we implemented that back
23 in July of 2020. It's still in effect today. We
24 have made a large number of exemptions, and I think,
25 you know, the first thing to start with is that if you

1 look at the headcount of 12-31 of 21, you know, the
2 beginning of this Administration 'til today. The
3 headcount is down, but very slightly. It's down a
4 couple thousand on a base of 300,000. So, we are--
5 everyone knows we're facing attrition. We are-- we
6 are-- when DCAS' good efforts, and we are in fact
7 hiring a lot of people. You know, but finding this
8 market is difficult in terms of the two-for-one.
9 We've-- we exempt all of the uniformed forces
10 themselves, EMS-- just trying to think of the big
11 ones-- all of the inspectors, all grant-funded
12 positions. We've done at DOB, not only all the
13 inspectors but the plan examiners, the Road to
14 Recovery, development folks, the sidewalk shed
15 people, the OTA folks. At DOC we've granted them a
16 six-month full exemption at the whole agency because
17 we know they're going through significant
18 structurings [sic]. At FDNY, because you mentioned
19 that a couple times-- the Bureau of Fire Prevention
20 is completely exempt. So, you know, at HPD,
21 development, DTR, the enforcement neighborhood
22 services, the emergency housing voucher, these are
23 all exempt. So we have made exemptions on these, you
24 know, full titles or titles within agency, but we
25

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2 also make exemptions when agencies have a particular
3 need. You know, they come and they make-- you know,
4 they submit documents making a case why their
5 particular need to go beyond the two-for-one, and
6 we've been granting those on a case-by-case basis.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I guess, I--
8 suggestion--

9 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER:
10 [interposing] Sorry for the long answer.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: At this point, I
12 would just get rid of it altogether to try to get,
13 you know, people hired. A suggestion.

14 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: I think
15 what we found [inaudible] and I'm sure, you know, you
16 could-- there would be debate about this, but a lot
17 of the titles where people are you know, showing that
18 there's real problems getting those folks and the
19 shortages in those titles, those are the ones we've
20 exempted.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I know, but they
22 have to call you. Then they have to wait for you to
23 answer, etcetera.

24 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: These
25 titles are fully exempt so they're--

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] I know
3 but when they want to get a new title exempted they
4 have to call you. Then they have to wait for an
5 answer.

6 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: It is
7 true, but--

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] I'm
9 just giving you a suggestion that would cut time.

10 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: No, I
11 take that under advisement. Thank you, Council
12 Member.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. One
14 suggestion. One other suggestion, you know, we
15 talked a little bit about the bottom of the pay
16 range. Are there any other strategies to better
17 compete with private sector salaries that, you know,
18 OLR might have?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Sure,
20 thank you, Council Member. So, you know, obviously
21 as you're aware, salaries have to be bargained with
22 the unions representing those employees. You know,
23 as I mentioned previously as, you know, when we move
24 towards a new round of negotiations we certainly want
25 to focus on doing what we can to emphasize

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2 recruitment and retention. You know, we have in the
3 past tried to work with our unions during bargaining
4 to address particular areas of concern. So, you
5 know, that's something we would continue to do.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. The other-- I
7 mean I know we talked about the 15 to 30 days for
8 OMB, but just generally how long does it take to fill
9 a vacant position in city government? And obviously
10 it varies, I understand that, but is there some
11 average that you could give? Obviously you have to
12 post it. I've done that many times. And then you
13 have to select the candidate, and you know, then you
14 have to go through OMB and then you also have to go
15 through the Mayor's Office. So what's the general
16 timeframe?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I don't
18 think I have an exact timeframe or an average
19 overall, but I can speak to the process that yes, an
20 agency will post, unless of course there is a civil
21 service list is available, and an agency may just
22 call a hiring pool from that list in order to very
23 quickly fill those positions, but if an agency does
24 post, they'll post the position. They will collect
25 the resumes, you know, call people in for interviews,

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2 and at that point make a selection and request the
3 official hire.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: But I
6 can get you that information.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'll be helpful. I
8 know you talked earlier about the OMB, the 15 to 30
9 days. Would it be possible to speed the process by
10 auditing random sampling of hires and promotions so
11 they don't all have to go through OMB?

12 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: So, OMB
13 reviews the hires to make sure that they are
14 compliant with the two-for-one and that the agency
15 budgets are sufficient to be able to afford the
16 hires. A random audit wouldn't really provide that
17 level of review. We wouldn't know if any agency hired
18 and they weren't in our random sample and they were
19 over their budget we wouldn't know that until they
20 started over-spending their budget on the actuals.
21 So, while, you know, we really do welcome the
22 opportunity to try to, you know, speed up the process
23 in general, speed up our part of the process. I don't
24 think switching to that kind of system would allow
25 for the requirement in terms of the spending.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Maybe you need more
4 staff to be able to do it.

5 [laughter]

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I just have to have
7 jokes every once in a while, but I do like OMB, just
8 so you know.

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Alright. I have
10 some questions about the civil service exam. DCAS
11 reported experiencing difficulties in administering
12 in-person exams, civil service exams, which obviously
13 further complicate the hiring efforts. Were you
14 successful in resuming in-person exams, and what is
15 the plan that DCAS has made to increase testing and
16 to prioritize titles with depleted lists of
17 candidates?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
19 you for that question. Yeah, so although we were
20 closed for in-person testing during the majority of
21 the pandemic. During that time, DCAS did administer
22 183 examinations online for candidate to be able to
23 apply for and take. That being said, we have a very
24 aggressive schedule for this Fiscal Year, Fiscal Year
25 23 we are administering, I believe the count is 220
exams this year. Again, in order to make sure that

1
2 are filling those gaps and ensuring that agencies
3 have a continuous flow of job seekers for their jobs.

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: And so my next
5 question is around The Citizen's Budget Commission
6 reported that the City had been significantly delayed
7 in releasing the results of the civil service exams.
8 For instance, in the first four months of Fiscal Year
9 2022, the median time between exam administration and
10 the results was 246 day. What steps is DCAS taking
11 to provide the result for civil service exams in a
12 more timely manner, and has DCAS sought to leverage
13 technology and other process reforms to expedite this
14 process? I know in your testimony you spoke a little
15 bit about the Bridge program. If you could amplify
16 on that and what other strategies to get this done
17 faster?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:

19 Certainly. So DCAS does have a-- that number that we
20 do need to report out regarding the number of days
21 that it takes between taking the exam and
22 establishing the list, and that number should be
23 below 290. So, as you stated, we are below that
24 number. However, we-- that number has been as low as
25 75 days on average. So, and the largest common

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2 denominator is what type of exams we are giving. Some
3 of our exams are-- you know, you can take it online.
4 It's a very quick, simple process, and the turnaround
5 for those exams can be as low as 50 days. Some exams
6 have multiple parts. There might be a multiple
7 choice test. There may be a physical test or typing
8 test or something like that that is administered
9 afterwards, and that all takes time because those
10 events happen in-person and they're scheduled
11 accordingly. So that will lengthen the time that it
12 will take for somebody to get their test results.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: what about the
14 Bridge Program that you all have started to
15 implement?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: We are
17 so proud of the Bridge because this is a very clear
18 departure from the way that we have always
19 administered exams. We always give one exam for one
20 job, and that's it. And so this is a really wonderful
21 way to streamline our resources. So to give one exam
22 for up to 10 jobs, but it's also a great way for job
23 seekers to streamline their ability to apply for and
24 qualify for many more jobs through one action. And
25 again, that exam is automated. So it will take

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2 place-- it's multiple choice exam that we're going to
3 give to the end of this month to the 4,000 people who
4 applied. And we are hoping that that will have a very
5 quick turnaround as well for those job seekers. And
6 just also to note, I think it's kind of implied in
7 what I'm saying, but to just be very clear that the
8 more automated steps that we have in our examination
9 process, the faster that turnaround time will be.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, last question
11 for me and then we're going to go to colleagues. I
12 know that-- I believe half of the fulltime workforce
13 is under expired contract, and then others are to
14 expire by the end of FY 23. We've obviously had many
15 conversations this morning about what could improve
16 the workforce of the City of New York. So, I'm
17 wondering are there some ideas that you are going to
18 put into those negotiations that might help that.
19 And are there-- are there ways that the City can
20 recruit and rapidly hire new employees thinking about
21 terms that could assist in that. I know you're
22 dealing with managed care. I'm quite familiar with
23 that issue. But aside from that, re there some ways
24 that you can use the contracts to improve the
25 workforce? And I want to congratulate Council Member

1
2 Vernikov for being here, too. I just want to say
3 thank you for being here. Go ahead.

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Thank
5 you, Council Member. So, you know, as I mentioned
6 and throughout the approximately half of our
7 contracts are expired. You know, as we move to
8 renegotiate those contracts, you know, in all the
9 bargaining we do, we always think about areas where
10 we can improve recruitment and retention and try to
11 work with unions in those areas, and we'll certainly
12 take every opportunity to do so in any upcoming
13 negotiations. You know, I wouldn't want to speak to
14 specific proposals we made in the context of
15 collective bargaining negotiations, but we are
16 discussing how we can focus on those issues.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
18 I'm going to all on Council Member Velázquez,
19 Holden, Joseph, and then I'll go after from that
20 list. Council Member Velázquez?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: Hi, good
22 afternoon. So I just wanted to follow up on-- with
23 DCAS on the testing. How long between when a test is
24 given does it take to be certified and then the
25 agencies can hire off of it?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Good

afternoon. So the- currently the average number of days after an exam is administered to when the list is certified right now is 240 days. As I stated earlier, that number has been as low as 75 days on average. It depends upon a lot of factors such as the type of exam that we're giving, how much automation is involved. The other component here is that we are, you know, finally establishing lists for exams that we had given either right before March of 2020 or during March of 2020 that were-- and those exams were protracted as well because we were not in the office in order to do that work. So, I think that we're coming out of seeing that cycle, and like I said, last month we established a list within 50 days.

COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: And how often do you put out new tests for titles?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So we have an annual exam schedule and there are exams that are given monthly, sometimes multiple times per year. So any given month we can 30, 40 exams that are open and available for job seekers.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: Is there a
3 reason why some titles don't have tests out even if
4 the previous listed for that title has been
5 exhausted?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: There
7 could be several reasons. One reason could be that,
8 you know, it's a title that's used by either one or
9 just a few agencies and those agencies have indicated
10 that they don't have any vacancies at this time. So
11 we would put that to the lower end of the priority
12 list. Another reason would be that we have to give a
13 large scale exam. For example, this year we had been
14 [inaudible] Sanitation worker, and we'll be giving
15 that exam to 65,000 people starting today, actually.
16 So, and then that-- you know, that sort of takes up
17 our resources because we have the same number of
18 testing professionals regardless of what type of test
19 we're giving, but if-- there is an exam and it is
20 problematic that the list is expired and the agency
21 need another relist, we will work very quickly in
22 order to time that next exam to when agency can--
23 need to do that hiring.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: Is part of the
25 hiring challenges for the City that is-- is that the

1
2 City is not putting out the test fast enough or is
3 certification the problem?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I mean,
5 there are definitely different reasons why an exam
6 would take longer or take a short amount of time, and
7 again, luckily we can be flexible in that we can very
8 quickly get ready to administer an exam if it's
9 necessary or very quickly get that list of passers or
10 test takers to an agency if they need to hire. Or
11 you know, if an agency is not hiring, then that list
12 would not be moving forward because there's -- there
13 are no vacancies to fill.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: And then--
15 this is for OMB. Are you reviewing how staffing
16 shortages affect agency metrics, and are any of those
17 possibly affecting critical health and safety issues
18 for New Yorkers?

19 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: We have
20 not seen a meaningful change in the output of City
21 services. We would obviously look to prioritize if
22 there was a problem, especially if it impacted life
23 and safety issues. We've given exemptions for most
24 life and safety titles, but you know, to the extent
25 that we could otherwise expedite the hiring or

1
2 filling of vacancies in those jobs, we would
3 definitely do that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: What is the
5 attrition rate for-- overall for our agencies here in
6 the City?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I don't
8 have the number. I don't have the attrition rate,
9 but we can get-- we can get that for you. I'm sorry.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: That'd be
11 awesome. Thank you.

12 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: This just
13 in. So, the overall attrition rate is 8.3 percent.
14 I'm sorry, I was looking at vacancy rates. I'm
15 sorry, I gave you the wrong number. Nevermind.
16 We'll have to get back to you on attrition rate.
17 Seemed high.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member
20 Holden and then Council Member Joseph.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you,
22 Chairs. Thank you all for your testimony. I have a
23 few questions on maintaining our workforce, and this
24 has to be included in it. How many city workers did
25

1
2 the city lose due to non-compliance with COVID-19
3 vaccine mandate?

4 [applause][cheers]

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Ladies and gentlemen,
6 quiet down, please. Ladies and gentleman, quiet
7 down, please. Quiet down, please, ladies and
8 gentlemen. Folks, instead of clapping, if we can
9 just do this, alright?

10 [laughter]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Did you hear the
12 question that I-- alright. Anyone who has information
13 on that, because I want to know how many were fired,
14 how many were placed on leave without pay, how many
15 resigned, how many resigned or retired as a result of
16 non-compliance? Do you have those numbers, because
17 that affects the numbers why we haven't filled
18 positions? When-- by the way, the CDC states that
19 COVID-19 no longer presents a high risk of severe
20 disease, hospitalization, and death.

21 [applause]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So--

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Quiet,
24 please. Quiet, please--

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COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing]

Could you give us--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: so we can get the
answer. Quiet.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Please pause my
time for the, you know, that little pause there. Can
you-- anybody give us kind of a breakdown?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, we
don't-- I'm sorry, we don't have that with us today,
but we can certainly circle back.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, but, okay,
can you get us that, because that's important.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:
Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: That's important
for a hearing on workforce and vacancies. That's any
important question, because-- by the way, have you
had discussions with the Mayor's Office on lifting
the mandates because of, obviously, the CDC has
changed their guidelines. You know, has the City
discussed that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, the
vaccine mandate is still in effect within the City of
New York.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: No, but the
3 question is have you--

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:
5 [interposing] If that were--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing]
7 Things changed.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: If that
9 were to change--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing]
11 We're not--

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: we'd
13 issue a policy for it.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: We're not in
15 2020. We're not in 2021. We've gone through-- the
16 City should get back to normal, I think. That's my
17 personal opinion, and the City should lift
18 everything, because the CDC says-- if everybody reads
19 it here, and the Mayor's Office, we've discussed it
20 with them-- but your-- since your offices are very,
21 very important to this, are you discussing it? Has
22 any discussions been made with the Administration,
23 within the Administration about this, about lifting
24 the mandates? Because things have changed.

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: If there
3 were to be discussions, our agencies would be
4 involved in part of those discussions.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: You wouldn't, you
6 said?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: We
8 would.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: You would be?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. So, if you
12 would-- so you haven't had discussions?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: We have
14 had discussions regarding the current vaccine
15 mandate, which is still in effect, yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, you-- but
17 you're not-- you had no discussions about lifting? I
18 don't want to get into semantics, but no-- the way I
19 read it, there's no discussions on lifting the
20 mandate. Even though the CDC changed their view on
21 things, and by the way, the vaccine. So, if we're
22 going to discuss shortfalls in manpower, staffing
23 levels, whatever you want to call it, we need to
24 discuss getting people's lives back in shape and stop
25 affecting people's and their family's residence and

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2 their families and workers unnecessarily. It might--
3 you know that's what I would charge you with. As a
4 matter of compassion, let's put it that way.

5 [cheers]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: If we care about
7 people, we should care about all people. And by the
8 way, just talking to City workers who have been
9 suspended for a year or more or have been fired, they
10 have medical-- their doctors are saying maybe they
11 shouldn't get the vaccine, maybe that it could hurt
12 them. And I've had three-- by the way, I had the
13 vaccine and I had a booster. I went to three doctors
14 already complaining about certain things, and they
15 all kind of say, "Well, it could be the vaccine
16 possibly that's cau-- we don't know enough." You
17 know, so there are situations. There are situations
18 that we don't know yet, but at least give the benefit
19 of the doubt to workers who have served this city
20 well, who were here in 2020, who were on the front
21 lines, who did, you know, a lifetime of work many of
22 them, and were either forced to retire or forced-- or
23 fired. So we're at a point, I think the
24 Administration has to step forward. I think they will
25 eventually, but I think it takes some-- you know, we

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2 have to really, you know, beg them at this point, but
3 there's-- people's lives are affected, and families,
4 and some people invested 20 years in agencies, did
5 their jobs on the front lines, and this is how
6 they're rewarded? I just don't-- the fact-- I would
7 like those-- the answers on the breakdown, because
8 it's very, very important that we get that
9 information. Thank you, Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We will follow up.
11 Thank you very much. Council Member Joseph and then
12 Council Member Ariola.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you,
14 Chairs. Thank you. My question to you is what are
15 you doing to retain employees, one. Salaries are
16 usually very low. Promotions and raises are very
17 slow and hard to get. So what is the plan for that?
18 And as my colleague said, we're in a short area of
19 where we have-- we don't have enough staff for the
20 citywide. That includes our Fire Department. That
21 includes my fellow teachers, so-- and I would love
22 some answers as to how we answer that and remedy
23 those, the labor shortage, especially in those areas.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:
25 Certainly. Thank you for your question. So, a very

1
2 important aspect of employee retention is employee
3 and professional development, and through DCAS,
4 agencies and employees can receive all types of
5 professional development training, licensure courses,
6 training in soft skills, managerial training. We
7 have quite a robust portfolio, and again, we believe
8 that the City should invest in its employees through
9 these development opportunities. I'm sorry, what was
10 the second part? I apologize.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Salaries, how do
12 you maintain a workforce with-- New York City's very
13 expensive, food is expensive, raising children here
14 is expensive. So how do you match that when I come
15 and work for you making 30-40,000 dollars? I can't
16 support a family on that salary. How do you match
17 that versus me going to private sector?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, I
19 can't speak to salary. I'm going to turn that over to
20 my colleague from OLR.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: OMB, yay. Oh,
22 OLR.

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: I'll
24 take that, Council Member. So, you know, obviously,
25 as I mentioned before, you know, we engage in

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2 collective bargaining with our unions, and you know,
3 as Council Member Brewer mentioned, we do have some
4 expired contracts. We look forward to, you know,
5 being able to hopefully get back to bargaining those
6 contracts, and you know, the-- our goal with every
7 collective bargaining agreement is to ensure that
8 their increases are fair to the workers, while also
9 reasonable for the tax payers. In addition,
10 obviously we provide benefits which, I think, you
11 know, are excellent benefits, health benefits,
12 pension, and we work very hard, and we work with our
13 labor partners to make sure those benefits can be
14 maintained.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: In the next
16 negotiations make sure we, as my colleagues said, we
17 revisit the mandate as well.

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Thank
19 you, Council Member.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member
21 Ariola and then Paladino.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you,
23 Chairs. I just want to go back to some points that
24 my colleague Bob Holden had mentioned. Right now,
25 employees that are off payroll are counted as a

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2 vacancy as per your testimony, and that means that
3 anyone that is on leave without pay, or LWOP, or was
4 unnecessarily terminated have an immediate impact on
5 vacancies in the City of New York's workforce. So,
6 my first question is, what is the DCAS timeline or
7 reasonable accommodation request timeline for a
8 reasonable accommodation request, specifically how
9 long does an agency have to respond to an initial
10 request to an appeal or a decision, and ultimately,
11 how long does the agency have to make a final
12 decision?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
14 you for your question. As I explained earlier,
15 reasonable accommodations are handled on a case-by-
16 case basis at the employing agency. DCAS does-- DCAS
17 does not review all reasonable accommodations.
18 That's done at the agency level. We certainly
19 advocate and encourage for an expeditious resolution
20 of a reasonable accommodation request, although I'm
21 not aware of any timelines or deadlines for
22 completing them. However, if there are, I will
23 certainly circle back to you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: But there were
25 deadlines beforehand, and in November and October,

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2 when many of the employees went on LWOP there were
3 two-month deadlines, three-month deadlines, but then
4 in December of 2021 the deadline, DCAS removed the
5 deadline that held all agencies accountable to a
6 deadline to let people know what the determination
7 was. How fair is that to allow people to go months
8 and months and months without pay, without knowing
9 what they can have-- what kind of work they can do
10 with an inability to get another job, because they're
11 on leave without pay? It's absolutely impacting
12 people's lives. They're losing their homes. They're
13 losing their families. Their children are at risk,
14 and yet, the City of New York is taking their time
15 and giving them any type of decision or a timeline
16 for it. It's absolutely unconscionable that you
17 would treat a workforce that put themselves out there
18 during the COVID vaccine-- the height of the pandemic
19 when there was no vaccine available to them, and yet,
20 put their lives on the line while others were dying.
21 It's just not fair. They should be able to know what
22 the timeline is, what the determination is, and why
23 two out of three who have put in for reasonable
24 accommodation for the same issue are being denied and
25 one is being granted. So, how are we fixing this?

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So,
3 again, as I explained, this is a process contained at
4 the agency, the employee agency, and each case is
5 reviewed on a case-by-case basis with the EEO
6 officer. Regarding timelines and deadlines, again,
7 I'm not familiar with any, but I certainly will
8 circle back with you with that information.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: No, but what
10 you're not getting is that DCAS oversees all of this.
11 So, who's setting these timelines? Who's telling the
12 agencies? Who's giving them the information to say?
13 You're saying it's held within the agencies
14 themselves, but DCAS is the oversight, let's face it.
15 And why are there different guidelines for different
16 agencies? And why aren't these guidelines available
17 to the public when they go and look for them? So,
18 why is it-- why is the City of New York operating in
19 a silo and making people's lives be at-- or
20 livelihoods are at risk? It's unfair, and that's the
21 major point is that it's unfair. Even when
22 promotional exams are coming up, people who are on
23 leave without pay are not eligible to take those
24 exams. So they're not even allowed to, you know,
25 promote themselves. And so it's really-- what they--

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2 what's happening is we're holding them hostage by a
3 mandate that is now debunked by the very CDC that
4 said it was necessary because the CDC, the guidelines
5 have changed and they said that now a person who has
6 had COVID and a person who has had the vaccine, a
7 person-- have the same amount of immunity or as much
8 immunity as you can to someone who was not
9 vaccinated. And again, like my Council Member, my
10 colleague stated, I'm double vaccinated and boosted.
11 So, but people who have-- need to know it's unfair
12 that they're living in limbo, and that's where we are
13 failing them as Council Members and as the City of
14 New York.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Council
16 Member Paladino and then Council Member Dinowitz.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Good afternoon
18 everybody and I want to welcome everybody who's here
19 in the gallery. I want to thank the Committee behind
20 me, both committees. I want to thank you for your
21 testimonies. But I too, like my other two colleagues,
22 have something to say. I've sat here for an hour and
23 a half and I've listened to a lot of-- we're in
24 crisis mode with hiring. We've had a lot of problems
25 getting people to get back to work. So my question

1 is-- it's not my only question, so I'm not stopping
2 there. Why do you think you're having a problem
3 hiring? Why do you think that problem is? Do you
4 think it's because the contracts aren't worth the
5 paper they're written on? Do you think it's because
6 people here in this room outside this gallery in
7 every outer borough, blue collar, all races, colors,
8 creeds have been laid off? Let me ask you this also,
9 in 2020 did we have this problem? So I think we can
10 kind of double back and actually look at today, and
11 we could look at what transpired after 2020. Now,
12 you've got a room full of workers here. They want to
13 go back to work. The CDC changed their guidelines.
14 You want your work shortage to end? Why don't you
15 rehire who has been let go? Because while you're all
16 sitting here talking and you're all worried about all
17 this other sort of stuff, how we're going to get new
18 hires, job seekers-- key words, job seekers, new
19 language. No, we've got people here. We've got
20 people in the outer boroughs and in the borough of
21 Manhattan who want to go back to work. Guess what?
22 Your job shortage wouldn't be. We would not have a
23 job shortage if we put people back to work. These
24 are qualified. Now, you want to bring in new hires.
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2 Who do you think trains those new hires if you're
3 fireman, if your police officer, those that have been
4 on the job for 20 years? Why do you think our
5 economy is failing? Another question I'll ask, but
6 I'll answer that for you, too. Our economy is
7 failing because people are leaving this City in
8 droves, in droves. Why is that? Because they can no
9 longer work here in the City of New York. They grew
10 up saying, "I want to be a fireman. I want to be a
11 teacher. I want to be a police officer." And this
12 is how we thank them. The CDC-- and this is my final
13 statement. The CDC has changed their-- we followed
14 the science, right? Everybody did what they were
15 supposed to do. Well, guess what? You won't have a
16 job shortage if you follow the CDC guidelines. So
17 enough with all this malarkey about how we're going
18 to change things. Put these people back to work.
19 You're going to see what's going to happen. You'll
20 have experienced people on the job. You'll have
21 people who can train your new job seekers, and you
22 will have what this city needs to put it back to
23 normal. Thank you very much.

24 [applause]

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Our
3 next-- Council Member Krishnan--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [interposing]
5 One other thing. One other thing.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: and then Dinowitz.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I just-- to
8 reiterate what Bob said-- I'm sorry. To reiterate
9 what Bob said, conversation with the Mayor is
10 crucial, and the Mayor, I think, realizes exactly
11 what's going on now, and we have opened the doors to
12 conversation. Nobody wants these problems. Nobody
13 does. We just want people back to work. Most
14 important of all--

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: we want the
17 City of New York back to the way it was pre-COVID.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Thank
20 you.

21 [applause]

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet please.
23 Council Member Krishnan and then Council Member
24 Dinowitz.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so
3 much Chairs Brewer and De La Rosa. My question-- I
4 just have one question, and it's clear the city
5 vacancy rate I think is five times or seven times
6 higher now than what it was before the pandemic, and
7 there are a lot of reasons, but of concern-- and
8 including the report that Chair Brewer mentioned from
9 Hell Gate about the denial of reasonable
10 accommodation requests. So there are a lot of
11 reasons that are very concerning about-- the pay
12 disparities as well that are contributing factors to
13 the vacancy rate being so high. But the one I'd like
14 to-- the one issue I want to focus on and ask my
15 question about particularly, is the Administration's
16 resistance to a hybrid work policy. As far as I am
17 concerned, I think our city should be a leader on
18 these issues for working parents, and I say it as a
19 parent of young children myself, but especially for
20 young, new mothers in the workforce, because these
21 issues of lack of hybrid policies have a huge
22 inequitable effect on gender, particularly affect
23 women and mothers in the workplace. It affects those
24 who have to care for their relatives, too, and other
25 situations where hybrid arrangements no doubt

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2 increase worker productivity, and contribute for a
3 far more equitable workplace. These are policies
4 that from the private sector exist throughout, and
5 I'm wondering why the City has not set a model for
6 the rest of the workforce, by not only catching up to
7 more flexible workplace policies, but really setting
8 the standard for what they should be.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
10 you. so, as the Mayor has repeatedly said, that in-
11 person work is a position that allows for greater
12 idea sharing, greater cross-pollination amongst
13 employees, and the City is leading by example in this
14 area while encouraging the private sector to follow
15 suit.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. I
17 just want to put on the record that I think the way
18 the City leads by example is by either staying pace
19 with or exceeding other sectors of the workforce, and
20 if other sectors of the workforce have flexible
21 policies, and it's documented the effects of flexible
22 policies on work productivity and in particular in
23 gender and worker equity, I think this is an area
24 where the City should be leading, and it's currently
25 not. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Next,
4 Council Member Dinowitz and then Vernikov and then
5 Cabán and then Nurse.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you.
7 Just kind of two questions. One is, do you have a
8 breakdown down of the vacancies of the different
9 qualifications they need? For example, x number of
10 people require a high school diploma; y need college
11 degree or bachelor's degree, etcetera?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
13 you for your question. DCAS does not have a breakdown
14 of every vacancy across the City. However, we could,
15 you know, by agency by agency we could circle back
16 and certainly get you that information. Every City
17 title has a set of its unique qualification
18 requirements, but we can certainly buck [sic] it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you. I
20 look forward to that information. I'm interested
21 because there are these vacancies, and I'm sure a
22 number of them are with people who only have a-- who
23 only require a high school diploma or an equivalent.
24 It sounds like you're struggling with recruitment and
25 even ideas for recruitment. I've worked in school
for 14 years, high school. Never seen a city agency

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2 come in. I've never seen any city agency come in to
3 try to recruit high schoolers who meet all the
4 qualifications to graduate, but for them maybe
5 college is not their path but deserve, you know, a
6 good, quality, middle-class job. And so if you're
7 working with other agencies, I would imagine you'd
8 want to work with the biggest city agency. Are there
9 any efforts to do that sort of work in your
10 recruitment efforts?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:

12 Certainly, and we do actually share our examination
13 schedule with high school students every year in the
14 event that they are interested in city government,
15 because we agree that our high school students within
16 our five boroughs are a great pool of talent that the
17 City would love to have join its ranks.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, let me ask
19 kind of a simple question. Why should I work for the
20 City? I don't want applause. Serious-- you know,
21 why should I work for the City?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, I'm
23 smiling because as a 20+ year veteran of City
24 government, I can certainly speak to why I work for
25 City government, and that is because no other job,

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2 nowhere else do you have the ability to go to work
3 every day and know that the things that you do
4 directly impact eight million New Yorkers, and that
5 is really exciting and really important work. So,
6 the City is looking for like-minded folks who want an
7 impact and who want to make a direct impact in their
8 own communities, because that is something that
9 government work provides as opposed to any other type
10 of work, not that I'm disparaging other types of
11 work.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay. I would
13 say handing someone a piece of paper and saying
14 here's the exam schedule is a lot different than the
15 very passionate speech you just gave, and I would
16 highlight that it's something that's very important
17 when doing-- yeah, good job-- doing job recruitment.
18 I would also add, as has been mentioned before,
19 paying people what they should be paid. And just one
20 other thing, this 246 days a median to receive
21 results, you know, even if I loved-- you know, if
22 someone loves New York City so much, that they want
23 to really impact people's lives, they can't wait
24 almost a year to find out if they've got a job or
25 not. And in the meantime, they've probably found a

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2 job that pays a little more. And so it's a little
3 surprising, again, having done multiple choice tests
4 for many years of my life, that it takes so long.
5 Even the minimum amount you mentioned, I forget what
6 it was, but it was still a high number, that we don't
7 have the ability to provide, you know, test results
8 and things of that nature in a more timely fashion.
9 I'll leave that one there, and I have one other
10 question. Council Member De La Rosa, she asked about
11 overtime and the cost of overtime versus just hiring
12 more people. I'm kind of interested in the cost to
13 our, you know, buildings and businesses. We've
14 spoken about the human cost, but have you calculated
15 for example, buildings have to leave up scaffolding
16 if a DOB inspector comes back and says your façade
17 work is not good enough, doesn't meet the
18 qualifications to remove the scaffolding. You have
19 to do more work. You know, a business whose gas has
20 been turned off, is waiting for a city inspector.
21 Have you calculated or considered how much lower
22 staffing impacts or costs, not the City of New York,
23 not our tax dollars, not-- but impacts how much the
24 businesses have to spend on losing business because
25 they can't get the gas back on, or how much the

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2 buildings have to spend to keep that scaffolding up
3 another month?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I would
5 not have that information. Don't know if my
6 colleagues would have any information to speak to
7 that.

8 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: Yeah, I
9 don't think we have anything calculated, but you
10 know, obviously we're aware that when there are--
11 when the service delivery is slow it has impacts on
12 New Yorkers, and we do everything we can with that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And you have no
14 metric of with x number of employees, you know, DOB
15 can respond to do an inspection in however many days,
16 but with the current number of employees you have it
17 takes longer. Do you have any sort of metric that
18 really measures how much longer it's taking to
19 deliver those services? And then perhaps from that,
20 anyone could extrapolate how much it's going to cost
21 a building or a business as they're losing their
22 money.

23 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: Yeah, I
24 do not have-- I do not have that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: You should.

3 Okay. Thank you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. I mean,
5 I think that's an excellent question, some metrics to
6 look at. Maybe we can try to do it ourselves,
7 because the list is long. Council Member Vernikov,
8 Cabán and Nurse. Go ahead.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, wait, you're
11 next. She's next. Veronica [sic] and then Cabán.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you,
13 Committee chairs, and thank you for your testimony,
14 and also I'd like to thank the incredible city
15 workers, our teachers, police officers, and fire
16 fighters who are here today, and I want to just tell
17 you that I am sorry for the predicament that you're
18 in today. My questions are surrounding the vaccine
19 mandates. My first question is how many New York
20 City police officers who applied for the vaccine
21 mandate exemption since the mandate came into effect?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I thank
23 you for your question. I don't have that
24 information.

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COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: How about
teachers?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Same
answer.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: And fire
fighters?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: DCAS
does not have that information.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Who has that
information?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: We can
circle back and get that information for you.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Do you know how
many teachers received an exemption from the vaccine
mandate?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: And how many
police officers?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So,
again, as I stated, DCAS would not have this
information, but we can certainly circle back and
talk to other agencies to see where-- see where we
are.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, but who
3 has that information?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I'm not-
5 - I'm not clear. It sounds like it might come from
6 several different agencies. So again, happy to
7 circle back and get you that information.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. Do you
9 know how many city workers were denied the exemption?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I can
11 get you that information.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. Would
13 you agree that our city has a shortage of police
14 officers?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I'm not
16 aware that there is a shortage of police officers,
17 however, you know, I think that that's a question
18 best answered by the Police Department.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: I'm sorry, I
20 couldn't hear you.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I
22 believe that that's a question that is best answered
23 by the Police Department.

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3 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. So you
4 don't believe there's a shortage of police officers
5 in our city, is that correct?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: That's
7 not what I said. What I said was I'm not aware of a
8 shortage of police officers.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, and how
10 about teachers, do you believe there's a shortage of
11 teachers in our city?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, DCAS
13 is not aware of a shortage of staff at the Department
14 of Education. That question would best be answered
15 by the Department of Education.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, and how
17 about fire fighters?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: DCAS
19 would not be knowledgeable about the state of the
20 staffing at the Fire Department.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. Thank
22 you. Does DCAS conduct exit interviews for city
23 workers?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Yes,
25 DCAS conducts exit interviews for departing managers.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. And when
3 they're asked questions about why they're quitting or
4 if there's a-- is there an indication for vaccine
5 mandate as the reason for city workers quitting?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, as a
7 part of that survey there isn't a specific question
8 to a vaccination mandate. However, we can cer-- I
9 mean, there are questions where an employee could
10 indicate that. So, I think that that information
11 could be gathered.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. So you
13 can gather from the questions--

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:
15 [interposing] Correct.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: if somebody's
17 leaving because of a vaccine, because they didn't
18 want to vaccinate, correct?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: If they
20 self-reported that, yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. Do you
22 know how many police officers quit because of the
23 mandate?

24
25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I would
3 not have that information of why anyone would leave
4 city service on their own accord.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: But you say you
6 can get that information from the interview, from the
7 exit interview correct?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I could
9 get that information from the exit interview for city
10 managers.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, so do you
12 have that information now, or?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Police
14 officers are not city managers.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Oh, okay.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: But
17 again, I mean, I can't speak for the agency. The
18 agency may collect that information upon departure.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Understood. Do
20 you believe our city is safer if we terminate fire
21 fighters because of the vaccine, because they're not
22 getting vaccinated?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: DCAS
24 does not have a position on terminations of city
25 employees.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, and how
3 about police officers? Do you believe that if we
4 terminate police officers because they're not
5 vaccinated, that our city is safer?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Again,
7 DCAS does not have an opinion on whether or not on
8 any of those questions.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Could you
10 describe the process of reviewing the exemptions for
11 the vaccine?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Are you
13 referring to the-- are you referring to the request
14 for a waiver, or--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: [interposing]
16 Yes.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: a
18 reasonable accommodation, sorry, a waiver.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: If you can
20 describe both.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:
22 Certainly. So an employee would report to their
23 agency to whichever agency they work for that they
24 are seeking a reasonable accommodation for either a
25 medical reason or a religious reason and they would

1
2 have that discussion with their EEO officer. And
3 then at that point they would have a dialogue with
4 their EEO officer and the agency would make the
5 decision whether to grant the reasonable
6 accommodation or to determine what type of reasonable
7 accommodation the employee should have.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, and how
9 long does that process take from the inception 'til
10 the final decision.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I know
12 that agencies seek to make a decision and have these
13 conversations finalized as expeditiously as possible.
14 There are no timeframes or guidelines, I'm sorry, for
15 other than as quickly as possible.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: And do you know
17 how many exemptions you're currently reviewing?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: DCAS
19 does not review reasonable accommodations for any
20 employees that are not DCAS employees.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: And EOC appeals
22 were supposed to be answered last November. Many
23 employees are still waiting appeals decisions 10
24 months after applying for their reasonable
25 accommodations. Why is DCAS EOC appeals panel

1
2 delaying determinations, especially in light of the
3 current CDC guidelines?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I would
5 have to circle back with you. I'm not familiar with
6 this panel.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member, when
8 you're done-- wrap up when you can.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Could you--

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK:

11 [interposing] I can say the panel that handles
12 appeals of those determinations is processing--
13 they're doing determinations as quickly as they can.
14 They've gotten many appeals, and they are working
15 diligently to do so.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Could you
17 comment on the rationale for not paying workers while
18 they're waiting on their exemptions and appeals?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: No, I
20 can't comment.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Well, what's the
22 reason for them not getting paid while they're
23 waiting?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: That's
25 not under DCAS' jurisdiction.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Whose
3 jurisdiction?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I can't
5 comment on that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: I'm sorry?

7 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: I can
8 clarify that workers who submitted reasonable
9 accommodation requests, when the mandate was first
10 put into place were kept on payroll while those
11 accommodation requests were pending. So, you know, if
12 you-- when the mandate was put into place there were
13 certain dates by which you had to request an
14 accommodation. If you did so, then you were kept on
15 payroll working while awaiting your determination.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Are you almost
17 wrapped up?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Yeah, just one
19 last question.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Could you just
22 explain why we still need vaccine exemptions if the
23 CDC changed their guidelines to say that getting the
24 vaccine is essentially the same as getting COVID?

25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, the
3 City's vaccine mandate is still in effect, and so the
4 city agencies are following that mandate.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
7 Council Member Cabán, then Council Member Nurse.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you, Chairs.
9 Good afternoon. So my questions relate to the remote
10 hybrid work issue, but I want to start with a little
11 bit of information released by the Abilities Research
12 Center at Mount Sinai, specifically that the CDC
13 estimates that 7.5 percent of the current adult US
14 population is now suffering with Long COVID. In just
15 the last 12 months the number of patients has doubled
16 to 150 million adults and 13 million children
17 worldwide, and additionally, adding to the human
18 cost, this brings a financial cost of 386 billion
19 just to the US economy alone. And for folks who
20 aren't aware, Long COVID, basically the science says
21 that the virus can persist in the tissue where it
22 continues to provoke your immune system. It could
23 lead to blood clotting to neuro inflammation, to
24 neuropathy to chronic fatigue, a number of other
25 issues. You combine that with the fact that

1
2 historically our work places have not been work
3 places that do right by or provide equitable
4 conditions and accommodations for folks who live with
5 disabilities, and also the reporting that was
6 mentioned by my colleagues done by Hell Gate, which
7 is incredibly concerning. And so I want to go back
8 to the Mayor's position on, you know, refusing to
9 implement a remote or hybrid work option, citing only
10 and simply idea sharing and cross-pollination. My
11 questions are, have things been considered like in
12 terms of for idea sharing/cross-pollination,
13 strategies that other work places use such as virtual
14 watercooler gatherings, again hybrid models that do
15 provide that in-person interaction, but then also
16 accommodate folks who want to keep themselves and
17 other safe, or just simply it works better for their
18 families. Is there data evidence and research that
19 the Mayor's relying on to make the statement that
20 full in-work conditions, if they weren't in place, if
21 we did remote or hybrid would it inhibit or diminish
22 the ability to perform any particular work that needs
23 to be done by any particular city employee? Have
24 employees been surveyed on workplace preferences in
25 terms of a hybrid and remote option? I will also

1
2 add, in addition to my questions that I don't really
3 find the reasoning that what we did in the past being
4 a good enough reason for how we should strive to do
5 things in the future, and-- yeah, I mean, again, when
6 we talk about the ability to fill those work
7 positions, we're seeing it all across the private
8 sector for sure. It is not diminishing productivity.
9 The studies are showing that it is increasing
10 productivity. I'm proud that my office institutes a
11 hybrid model that allows our people to work from home
12 some days and be in the office on others. So, I'm
13 eager to hear the answer to your question, to the
14 questions that I posed.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
16 you for your questions. So, as I had stated earlier,
17 the Mayor has repeated that in-person work is the
18 work model that the City of New York will be
19 following in order for idea sharing, collaboration
20 and discussion amongst its employees.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: But specifically,
22 is he relying on any data, evidence, or research to
23 back up that position or statement?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, I'm
25 not familiar with what information the Mayor is

1
2 looking at, but I can certainly circle back with
3 whatever studies and other informed information and
4 provide that to you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: That would be
6 great. Thank you. And my-- one of the other
7 questions I asked, was has employees been surveyed on
8 their workplace preferences relating specifically to
9 remote or hybrid work options?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So, DCAS
11 has not put out an employee survey regarding work
12 schedules. That might be something that is-- has
13 happened at the agency level. Again, agencies speak
14 directly to their employees. That's also a topic
15 that has an impact upon labor and labor discussions
16 so I can turn that over to my colleague for further
17 information.

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: I'm
19 not aware of any of those surveys at the agency level
20 either, although they certainly may have occurred.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member
23 Nurse?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chairs.
25 Good afternoon, everyone. My questions are pretty

1
2 light, and on the lighter side of retention. I guess
3 I was really curious. You know, we're asking people
4 to come back to work and a lot of retention is tied
5 to the fact about how much time people have to spend
6 in our work spaces, and I'm very curious if DCAS or
7 any of you all here are aware of any effort or past
8 initiative of the City to invest in understanding
9 workplace psychology and how to create invite,
10 inspiring work spaces?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Good
12 afternoon. Thank you for your question. So, I think
13 that DCAS and City agencies regularly look to ideas
14 for how the workplace can be more welcoming,
15 inviting, safe, and productive. So, over the years,
16 different topics have been discussed. We also have a
17 unit that solely focuses on employee wellness and
18 that is called Work Well NYC, and they provide
19 agencies-- and they have monthly discussions
20 regarding thee very topics and how to keep employees
21 engaged and healthy at the workplace. And I'm going
22 to turn that over to my colleague.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Well, just
24 specifically, I'm talking about the actual
25 facilities. You know, you're sitting at these drab,

1
2 outdated offices for eight hours a day. I mean, when
3 was the last time the City invested in making a nice
4 workspace for people that is competitive to what the
5 private sector is offering?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: So,
7 again, I speak to what DCAS has done in order to make
8 the workplace more inviting, welcoming for employees.
9 We had, just recently, just last week opened a café
10 on the mezzanine and that is a shared workspace on
11 the mezzanine of One Center Street. I invite you all
12 to please come visit us there. It's a beautiful space
13 where employees can-- there are vending machines for
14 fresh food options. There is a pantry and a kitchen
15 for preparation of food, and there's also workspace
16 discussion spaces that are set up for meetings or
17 just informal discussion between employees so that
18 employees have a space to go during the work day that
19 is bright and lively, and an interesting space to
20 share, and we're very proud of this space. So,
21 again, I would really love to invite all of you to
22 please come visit us there.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Besides DCAS, is
24 there any other information or investments that the
25 City can speak to around this?

3 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: So, I
4 can't speak to facilities except to say that, you
5 know, if a labor representative brought concerns with
6 certain facilities to OLR's attention, we would and
7 have worked with agencies and with DCAS to try to
8 address those issues and improve the work spaces. I
9 can speak to Work Well which my colleague mentioned
10 and which is a program at the Office of Labor
11 Relations that focuses on employee wellness across
12 the City. It's a program we're very proud of and
13 always trying to expand. We have ambassadors at
14 agencies across the City who work to engage those
15 agency's employees on various wellness initiatives.
16 We deliver programming, and that's something-- an
17 initiative that was launched only about seven or
18 eight years ago and that we continue to push and
19 expand and that we're very proud of.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: My last question
21 is, has there been a comprehensive study across
22 agencies with city workers to understand what they
23 need and what they would like and where they would
24 like to see better investments, whether it's
25 facilities, whether it's professional development?
something comprehensive that's not just agency by

1
2 agency siloed [sic] information, but what does it
3 mean to work for the City of New York, and what's
4 exciting about it? What's not exciting about it?
5 Has there ever been a comprehensive study conducted
6 or are there any plans for something like that?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I'm not
8 familiar with any comprehensive study. Again, I can
9 only speak to what we have done at my agency, at
10 DCAS, and that's exactly what we have done. We've
11 surveyed all of the staff, and one of the recurring
12 topics that folks had shared was that they wanted a
13 space within the work day to go to that is inviting,
14 that isn't some corner or some conference room, where
15 they can either take a break or have a discussion
16 with a colleague away from their desks. And so that
17 is something that DCAS put into place. But again,
18 I'm not very familiar with what other agencies have
19 done.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chairs.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
22 I appreciate this. I think there will be lots of
23 follow-up requests based on individuals who have
24 asked questions, and I hope that we can work together
25 to fill 24,000 vacancies, because every single one of

1
2 them is needed, for whatever reason they're not, and
3 we need to fill them. And thank you very much for
4 your time and information. Next, we're going to go
5 to the public.

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Thank
7 you.

8 FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR GODINER: Thank
9 you.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
11 you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now
13 turn to public testimony. For in-person panelists,
14 please come to the dais once your name has been
15 called.

16 [audience noise]

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Please, please be
18 quiet. Please be quiet. We're here. We're not
19 going anywhere and we're listening and it is online.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: For panelists who are
21 attending--

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Please
23 be quiet.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: For panelists who are
25 attending virtually--

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Please
4 be quiet.

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Be quiet or you
6 will be escorted out.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: For panelists who are
8 attending virtually, we will be calling on
9 individuals one-by-one to testify. We will be
10 limiting public-- we will be limiting public
11 testimony to two minutes each. All hearing
12 participants may submit written testimony of any
13 length by emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov.
14 For virtual panelists, once your name is called, a
15 member of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant
16 at Arms will set the timer and give you the go-ahead
17 to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce
18 that you may begin before delivering your testimony.
19 The first panelists we'll hear from today are Alice
20 Wong and Darrell L. Sims.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You may begin.

22 DARRELL SIMS: Good afternoon, Chairs and
23 Committee Members as well as attendees to this
24 hearing. My name is Darrell Sims. I'm President of
25 New York City Managerial Employee's Association,
often called MEA. I am a recent retiree from New York

1 City HPD. I spent 39 years with the agency and the
2 agency was basically my home, and when you spend that
3 amount of time, you make it work for you in terms of
4 making work fun. And I find today that it appears
5 that work is not that way for municipal workers, or
6 they wouldn't be leaving the jobs. And you know,
7 there's a lot of issues that municipal workers have,
8 which I agree with, that had come up at many times.
9 The most pressing issues, I believe, today is pay
10 raises and the ability to telework or some hybrid
11 form of it. The pay raises, it appears that those
12 are going to be stalled because of the healthcare
13 situation, and no one really make-- wants to give the
14 employees the money that they deserve. Also, we did
15 a survey on the teleworking with members of our
16 organizations, which Ms. Wong is going to present. I
17 also,-- we have in our package correspondence with
18 the New York City and as well as New York State
19 Senate and Assembly advocating for different issues
20 for managers. So, I think that's very comprehensive
21 and I wish everyone would read it. But I'm going to
22 let Alice take over, because she has some vital,
23 important information on telework.
24
25

3 ALICE WONG: Good afternoon. My name is
4 Alice Wong. I am the Executive Director for NYC MEA.
5 Thank you for taking time to listen to us. MEA did
6 actually survey our members in regards to telework
7 and its adoption as a future policy for New York City
8 employees. The survey also included questions
9 related to retention and job-related support systems.
10 We also find that moral among city employees are low.
11 We hear this from our members time and time again.
12 The two drivers are pay raises and telework options.
13 OLR mentioned union negotiations, but I'll be remiss
14 to not remind OLR that there are also non-union
15 members who work for the City, specifically managers
16 that deserve the same level of respect and attention.
17 Some statistics I want to share with you is that 95
18 percent of our members support work-from-home
19 options, 51 percent cited that commute and safety and
20 health concerns are their top priority. Seventy
21 percent of our managers have taken on additional work
22 as colleagues leave the City, and then 74 percent
23 find it's harder to fill the open vacancies and
24 believe that the lack of work from home is a main
25 factor, and 90 percent of our managers strongly want
a pay increase. Some of the top issues include IT

1
2 technology and infrastructure upgrades are needed to
3 support work from home. Investment in IT equipment
4 including computers and headsets are needed or needs
5 to be updated. A [inaudible] policy for working for
6 home for city policy versus an agency policy is of
7 concern, because work-from-home policy may not be
8 applicable or available to be offered to everyone,
9 thus it may not be a fair policy. The preference for
10 a hybrid option for flexibility to collaborate with
11 colleagues is important and flexibility will also
12 provide for improved work/life balance. More
13 importantly, this flexibility of telework will
14 provide the City to be more competitive and the jobs
15 market to be attractive for talent. Last, but not
16 least, mental health focus should be a top priority.
17 We have these complete surveys available to the
18 Council should you wish to see it. We look forward
19 to continue development working with the City and the
20 Council. Thank you for your time and attention.

21 DARRELL SIMS: I wanted to just make one
22 little-- a brief statement that retention of the
23 existing workers are just as much as important as
24 hiring new people. So, I think that part of the
25 issue is finding how to retain the existing

1
2 workforce. Otherwise, you're going to hire people and
3 they're going to come out the bottom. So, I think
4 that it's a two-part issue, the retention of existing
5 workers as well as attracting new workers to the job.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you both very
7 much. We will look at your survey very carefully,
8 and we appreciate it. Thank you.

9 DARRELL SIMS: Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'd now like to
11 welcome Oren Barzilay to speak followed by Saul
12 Fishman, Ana Champeny, and then Michael Caratzas.
13 Oren Barzilay, you may be upon the Sergeant's
14 announcement.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

16 OREN BARZILAY: Thank you. Madam
17 Speaker, Committee Chair, and honorable members of
18 the Council. I am Oren Barzilay, President of FDNY
19 EMS Local 2507, representing FDNY EMT's, Paramedics,
20 and Fire Inspectors. I am here at your invitation to
21 testify about the major problems of FDNY EMS
22 attrition and how it absolutely impacts life safety
23 in the City of New York, especially among the poor.
24 I can probably sum it up with only a few words,
25 poverty EMS wages. A difficult and stressful EMS job

1 antiquated, centrally old EMS worksites, a lack of
2 respect for EMS professionals. I could likely wrap
3 up my testimony there, but let me explain a bit more.
4 This city and FDNY has pushed its medical first
5 responder's capabilities to our breaking point, even
6 as the FDNY is unable to keep up with the existing
7 911 medical emergency call volumes. We have been
8 briefed by the agency that is seeking to reduce EMS
9 and coverage by deleting 13 24-hour units across our
10 city at a time when EMS is short by hundreds of
11 personnel. Don't believe it? There are Fire
12 Department memos about their plan. You can just ask
13 for them, and we can provide you copies as well. A
14 total lack of investment in its workforce and our
15 crappy workplace conditions certainly don't help.
16 EMS staff attrition rate is an abysmal 70 percent
17 after five years, and likely to rise. This week in
18 California, the State's Governor signed the Fast Act.
19 It seeks to set a new wage level of \$22 an hour for--

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
22 is expired.

23 OREN BARZILAY: also with automatic
24 annual wage increase of up to 3.5 percent. In New
25 York City, our FDNY EMTs survive on poverty wages of

1
2 \$18 an hour. Could you afford to live on that wage
3 without having a second or third job? Could you
4 afford to ever have children? Being--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Sir,
6 could you--

7 OREN BARZILAY: a member of FDNY EMS--

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Can you
9 wrap up? Thank you. Whenever you can.

10 OREN BARZILAY: [inaudible] the job. With
11 every single 911 call someone life is on the line and
12 we respond to about two million emergencies every
13 year. I ask you why would someone stay on this job?
14 Seventy percent of our EMTs and Paramedics run away
15 quickly from the agency in just the first five years,
16 and that's before congestion [sic] [inaudible] even
17 more unaffordable.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Sir, can you wrap
19 up? Thank you.

20 OREN BARZILAY: I have a long testimony,
21 so if you have any questions-- I would like to also
22 answer some comments that were made by others on the
23 panel if that's afforded to me.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, just we have
25 about 50 people to speak, so we'd love hearing you

1
2 but we have a lot to go. So we can read-- we will
3 read every word of your testimony.

4 OREN BARZILAY: Okay. I just want to say
5 that they were saying before that the attrition rate
6 in New York City is at eight percent for EMS. It's
7 over 20 percent. EMS and Inspectors are not treated
8 the same as they talk about the uniform promotions
9 and employment. There's so many things. I will
10 submit my testimony to you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
12 I appreciate it.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll hear from
14 Saul Fishman followed by Ana Champeny and then
15 Michael Caratzas.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

17 SAUL FISHMAN: Good afternoon. I'm--
18 have I been unmuted, by the way?

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: We hear you.

20 SAUL FISHMAN: Okay. I'm Saul Fishman,
21 President of the Civil Service Bar Association. We
22 represent the attorneys in virtually every city
23 agency. I'm here to testify about how the legal
24 divisions have been greatly diminished in staffing.
25 Our dedicated employees have had their morale

1
2 crushed. Leave city employment and how policies of
3 the City and the unrealistic Mayor have made a bad
4 situation worse every day. There's no way I can say,
5 you know, the experience of people for the agencies
6 in two minutes, but there's-- it's horrible and it's
7 getting worse. We had 1,057 members as of-- right as
8 the pandemic started. We're now down to 831 members.
9 So we've lost 226 hardworking attorneys, 22 percent
10 of our attorneys. I have an email from an attorney
11 at Taxi and Limousine Commission which very well
12 illustrates, you know, how it's become untenable and
13 how the situation is badly effecting the public, how
14 the delays are causing people not to get prompt
15 hearings, not to get all kinds of things, how delays--
16 - how it's basically untenable for the public as well
17 as the staff, and why they're continuing to--
18 expecting to continue to lose people. And this isn't
19 just the TLC. At ACS we've lost-- started at 246
20 people, down to 177, a drop of about 28 percent.
21 These are people who could protect the next-- prevent
22 the next Nyx Marie Brown [sp?] kind of murder
23 situation at the hands of their so-called guardians.
24 At Human Rights Commission where we went from 25 down
25

1
2 to 15, a loss of approximately 40 percent of skilled
3 personnel--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time is
5 expired.

6 SAUL FISHMAN: [inaudible] discrimination
7 at Department of Buildings. They've seen
8 approximately 40 percent reduction in their ranks.
9 You know, I have some specific suggestions in terms
10 of how to improve things, which I'd like to briefly
11 get to.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Can you wrap up,
13 sir. You have to-- wrap up as soon as possible.
14 Thank you.

15 SAUL FISHMAN: Okay. I'm going to suggest
16 that you closely scrutinize the delays of onboarding,
17 insist that each agency show their attempts at
18 recruiting. That given the difficulty in recruiting,
19 our title should be exempted from the residency
20 requirements, and some commissioners are-- virtually
21 all of them are afraid to take that necessary step.
22 You should also amend the administrative-- that same
23 administrative code, not only to cover difficulty to
24 recruit, but also difficulty to retain titles. There
25 are so many important things. And by the way, it

1
2 doesn't make any sense that the attorneys at
3 corporation counsel are deemed-- are exempt because
4 they're-- allegedly difficult to recruit, but not us
5 the attorneys who went to the same law school with
6 them. So there's--

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Sir,
8 you need to--

9 SAUL FISHMAN: [inaudible]

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You need to wrap up.
11 We'll read your testimony. If you could wrap up,
12 we'd appreciate it. Thank you.

13 SAUL FISHMAN: alright, and finally, we
14 need some legislation requiring each agency to
15 prepare a policy offering employees the ability to
16 work remotely, and should follow that up with
17 demanding each Commissioner come in and justify
18 people who are included-- excluded from such a
19 policy.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

21 SAUL FISHMAN: Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll hear from
24 Ana Champeny and then Michael Caratzas.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

1
2 ANA CHAMPENY: Good afternoon. I'm Ana
3 Champeny, the Vice President for Research at the
4 Citizen's Budget Commission, and thank you for the
5 opportunity to testify. As we've heard there are
6 well over 20,000 vacant positions. First, I want to
7 say the City can and should reduce the number of
8 authorized vacant positions without impeding its
9 ability to provide high-quality efficient services,
10 but it should also strategically fill the vacant
11 positions in agencies and units that are currently
12 unable to deliver the volume of quality of service
13 that New Yorkers rightly expect. And these current
14 challenges are the result of management, procedural,
15 and labor market challenges that the City should
16 address. We have five specific recommendations. I
17 submitted longer written testimony, so this will be
18 an abridged version. First, current policies and
19 procedures are inflexible, cumbersome, and better
20 facilitate control than hiring and the serving--
21 service delivery. Move available positions to where
22 they are needed, and be nimble in reallocation.
23 Agencies should be budgeted smartly and efficiently
24 and then allowed to hire to fill vacant positions.
25 The two-for-one hiring freeze is not appropriate at

1 this time. Many offices are involved and control
2 multiple steps of the hiring process, including
3 positing positions, making offers, and setting start
4 dates. Speeding up the process during adequate,
5 timely civil service tests and lists is especially
6 important in the current competitive market. The
7 City should provide training, upscaling and
8 advancement opportunities to acknowledge and retain
9 high performers. Given the tight labor market,
10 providing more skills training and negotiating
11 flexibility and work rule changes could increase the
12 attractiveness of public service. A longer term
13 solution would be to consider what changes
14 improvements to public sector employment and civil
15 service systems are needed to attract and retain the
16 next generation of talented, hard-working and
17 innovative public servants. And fifth, report
18 transparently on vacancies, hires, separations, and
19 promotions. The City's hiring processes are somewhat
20 of a black box. Shedding light on the length and
21 complexity of this process would be useful to assess-

22 -
23

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
25 is expired.

3 ANA CHAMPENY: how effective the city's
4 processes are and allow policy makers and the public
5 to identify bottlenecks. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much,
7 and I hope you submit your testimony, because it's a
8 little hard to hear from the sound. Thank you very
9 much.

10 ANA CHAMPENY: OH, I'm sorry. I did
11 submit the written testimony.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from
14 Michael Caratzas. After Michael we'll hear from John
15 Matland and then James Hogue [sp?], George-- and
16 George Gutierrez, and Marianne Pitzzitola.

17 MICHAEL CARATZAS: Good afternoon and
18 thank--

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
20 will begin.

21 MICHAEL CARATZAS: Hi. Thank you for the
22 opportunity to testify before you today. I'm a 19-
23 year employee of the Landmarks Preservation
24 Commission, appearing before you as President of
25 Chapter 41 of Local 375 DC 37, representing 34
employees of the Commission and the Landmarks

1
2 Preservation as Urban Archaeologist and Research
3 Scientist titles, and our members, nearly all of whom
4 have Master's degrees or Doctorates. Through the day
5 to day work of the Commission, reviewing work
6 applications, working on historic district
7 designations-- really all the day-to-day work at the
8 Commission is-- most of it is done by our members. I
9 did-- I realize my time is short. I did submit
10 written testimony, so I hope you will look at that,
11 which goes into a little more detail, but the one
12 point I'd like to make is this, that while the
13 pandemic and the great resignation may have
14 exacerbated the staffing crisis, they did not cause
15 them. The causes go back 20 years. Over the past 20
16 years, our pay, our salaries, our compensation has
17 declined relative to inflation, about 12 percent.
18 So, the hiring rate now is 56,000. If it were in
19 line with inflation it would be 64,000. So, salaries
20 are way down. It's hard to hire and retain people,
21 and there's no quick and easy solution to this. It's
22 not having more job fairs. It's not going to high
23 schools to recruit. You just have to pay people more
24 in line with the private sector, and you know, what
25 they need to live in this city. Something that

1
2 wasn't mentioned, I didn't hear mentioned, was the
3 shift from tier four to tier six. When I started
4 with the Commission in 2003 I started with--

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
6 is expired.

7 MICHAEL CARATZAS: [inaudible] and it was
8 a major benefit, and we hope that the City, that you
9 will actively look to raise salaries, reform tier six
10 to bring it in line with tier four, and encourage and
11 allow for permanent telework for our members. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'd now like to
15 welcome John Matland, James Hogue [sp?], George
16 Gutierrez [sp?], and Marianna Pizzitola up to the
17 dais.

18 [applause]

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet please.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: That was John
21 Matland, James Hogue, George Gutierrez, and Marianne
22 Pizzitola.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You can begin.

24 JOHN MATLAND: Hello, everybody. Thank
25 you for having us. First, I would like to say I wish

1
2 Jen Psaki stayed so we could circle back on some of
3 those things, but sadly, I have some people to
4 listen, and that's good because I have a lot of
5 people here that are still unemployed. And I as a
6 healthcare worker used to go into rooms before we had
7 data that proved that 99 percent of the people that
8 get this survive, before we had data that knows how
9 widespread it was. I took my N95, my one issued N95,
10 in a paper bag that's good for peanut butter and
11 jelly sandwiches, and I went into these rooms.
12 People with bilateral chest tubes, aerosolized,
13 freshly-vented, moving them onto my CAT scan table,
14 and then my religious exemption was denied, and after
15 18 years in the healthcare field, I had to run for
16 U.S. Congress. And I am going to proudly be on the
17 City Council in about two years, so nice to meet you
18 guys. But what we have here is a lot of unemployed
19 people, and what's the retention? We heard about
20 nice lounges. The first retention scheme would be
21 try not to have people thrown in front of trains on
22 the way to work. Also, have affordable housing
23 meaning you could raise wages or we can stop taking
24 everybody's salary and garnishing it every time they
25 drive five miles over the speed limit or 10 miles

1
2 over the speed limit in a school zone at two o'clock
3 in the morning. There's a lot of different things
4 that we find. We're overtaxed. We're overburdened,
5 and a lot of us are only here because we can't help
6 but fight. I will not stop fighting. I'll move to
7 Florida after I win the fight. How about that? But
8 I ain't moving before that. We have a lot of tyranny
9 going on, and it says right above you "government of
10 the people, by the people, for the people," and I
11 think that a lot of the people are upset with what's
12 going on.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet, so we can
14 hear him.

15 JOHN MATLAND: No, you could clap guys,
16 because unlike everyone else-- 10 seconds. I'll
17 leave you with that on the clock. Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 GEORGE GUTIERREZ: Hello, my name is
20 George Gutierrez. I was a-- I worked in schools as a
21 custodian for 21 years. Last year I was denied an
22 exemption and the exemptions are-- the mandate, the
23 exemptions are arbitrary. They don't have rhyme or
24 reason. People put in basically the same exemptions
25 I did, got them. I'm out of a job 21 years. People

1
2 at my church, there were people that were denied
3 exemptions, people that saw the writing on the wall
4 and jut left. Two teachers, 20+ years, a school
5 nurse with 18 years, that's 80+ years of experience
6 just for a mandate that had no science behind it. If
7 we'd like to close the gap that we have-- we have
8 this vacancy gap in the City that we've been talking
9 about all day today. If you'd close that, as Ms.
10 Paladino, Mr. Holden, Joann, and some of the other
11 Councilmen have been pointing out, give us our jobs
12 backs. Let's follow the science that hasn't been
13 being followed, and I would appreciate, you know, all
14 the Council people looking into that, discussing it
15 with the Mayor, and I would hope that we can have our
16 jobs back soon because there's no reason for what's
17 going on. It's been completely arbitrary, and we
18 could close that gap on vacancies. So, I'll leave
19 with 40 seconds, and appreciate your time.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

21 [applause]

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet please so we
23 can hear the speakers.

24 JAMES HOGUE: I'm a proud New York City
25 school teacher of 28 years, 28+ years who worked

1 through the entirety of the 2020-2021 school year,
2 five days a week, teaching five classes online and
3 reporting to school once a week for professional
4 duties once school opened. For half of that time
5 there was no vaccine and all treatment options were
6 callously swept aside. I did not ask for any time
7 off. Over the last year I got an opportunity to
8 relive some history and see what being involved in a
9 civil rights movement might be like. If only I could
10 turn on a fastball or dunk a basketball, I might have
11 a chance to come to back to work in this city. since
12 I didn't wish to consent to participate in the great
13 vaccine experiment, I and my brothers and sisters in
14 a movement lost our jobs, lost our freedom in many
15 respects, lost the right to go in stores, or called
16 disgusting names and compelled to wear these
17 disgusting masks graciously-- do not [sic] have on
18 right now. We're subject to quarantines. This was
19 all done without any studies or experiments to
20 validate it. Now, there is a lot of talk about
21 boosters and monkey pox vaccines using the same MRNA
22 delivery system at the COVID vaccines, which we now
23 know doesn't stay in your arm, which we now know
24 travels and settles spiked protein in an individuals'
25

1
2 vital organs, which we now know does not prevent you
3 from getting the virus or prevent the transmission of
4 it. Shouldn't' the vax, shouldn't the mandates at
5 least be halted until we find out what is happening
6 to all the young people who are getting heart issues,
7 neurological problems and blood clots t extremely
8 alarming rates. Times up? Damn.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
10 Thank you very much.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do we have Marianne
12 Pizzitola.

13 MARIANNE PIZZITOLA: Good afternoon Chair
14 Brewer, Councilman-- Chair Brewer, Chair De La Rosa
15 and the members of Civil Service and Labor and the
16 Oversight Investigation Committees. Thank you for
17 the opportunity to testify before you today on
18 maintaining the City's municipal workforce. My name
19 is Marianne Pizzitola. I am retired from New York EMS
20 FDNY. I am the President of the FDNY EMS Retirees
21 and I'm also the President of the NYC Organization of
22 Public Service Retirees, the group that sued the City
23 successfully to stop the City from forcing us into
24 Medicare Advantage or charging us a penalty premium
25 to stay in our current plans. Workers join city

1 service for many reasons, service, community, love of
2 work we do, the excitement and joy of having an
3 impact on someone's life, the lights and sirens, like
4 I did, or the benefits that we would be entitled to,
5 if we stay until retirement. We retirees counted on
6 the promise to us that we would collect a pension and
7 receive health insurance. No city worker said I'm
8 joining the City and I'm going to stay here for my
9 career because the salary is amazingly high. The
10 salaries were not high compared to our private sector
11 counterparts, but job security and benefits attracted
12 us and we stayed. Just yesterday, the Municipal
13 Labor Committee voted to support a change in the
14 Administrative Code 12-126 that would permit them and
15 the City to change the statutory cap for City health
16 insurance coverage for any class of individuals they
17 so choose. The MLC and the City tried to force
18 retirees into Medicare Advantage last year, and our
19 lawsuit stopped them because their plan violated the
20 law. That's the same law that City Council enacted
21 in 1967. These health benefits were promised to us
22 and to current city employees. We earned them, and
23 we paid for them. If you permit this amendment to be
24 introduced and adopted, your ability to attract and
25

1
2 retain workers will become even harder. Why would
3 anyone join city government and dedicate their lives
4 to work for the city, give their heart, soul, and
5 their health in some cases just to have inferior
6 healthcare during the City employment or have what
7 they have already earned in healthcare benefits
8 stripped away from them in retirement.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. If you
10 could wrap up, thank you.

11 MARIANNE PIZZITOLA: It'll be difficult
12 to attract and retain people when the fear of what
13 they were working towards can be taken away. Sitting
14 in this very Council Chamber, former Council Members
15 Mario Morolla [sp?], Edmund Farrell [sp?], Mary
16 Pinkett [sp?], Eileen Ryan, Miriam Freedlander [sp?],
17 and Peter Vallone protected retirees. I think if they
18 were all here today they would agree with me that the
19 best way to attract and maintain a loyal workforce is
20 to keep the promises made to employees and retirees.
21 I might also add that the City should not be pitting
22 unions against one another and making them give up
23 benefits promised to their retirees. I'd say in
24 short, keep your promises. You will find that people
25 will work, want to work for the City because it is

1
2 the greatest city in the world, but if the city
3 workforce sees that they are risking what they
4 earned, they will take their experience they gained
5 in city--

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank
7 you.

8 MARIANNE PIZZITOLA: employment and work
9 somewhere else.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from
12 four Zoom panelists: Brenda Walker followed by
13 Steven Vivasky [sp?], and then Michael Noonan [sp?],
14 followed by Nicholas Shearman. Brenda Walker, you
15 may begin when ready.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

17 BRENDA WALKER: To the Chair and the
18 panelists. My name is Brenda Walker-- excuse me.
19 I'm a Local 1549 Chair, Chair of the HRA Chapter--
20 I'm sorry, Chapter Chair of HRA and a Grievance
21 Representative for the State Administrative Authority
22 Division. So we're experiencing this great
23 resignation, and now hearing the vacancy rate has
24 risen to 19 percent in social services, the agency
25 that I represent. My members are minorities and

1
2 predominantly women of color, mothers, and some of
3 them which are homeless themselves. They are-- they
4 have been on the front lines providing vital services
5 to the public and have worked their mandated
6 overtime, but they did not get their essential pay or
7 the Hero's Pay, not even a thank you. So pressure
8 coming from the top-- our members are resigning
9 quicker due to low salaries, lack of affordable
10 housing, and the cost of living out of control. They
11 get blamed for not producing while experiencing a
12 breakdown in the systems equipment that don't
13 properly work. They get maltreated. It's bullying
14 behavior, and these are toxic environments that
15 they're working, disparate treatment. They're
16 experiencing mental fatigue, stress, and you know,
17 it's a silent killer, and again, the salaries are too
18 low, the horrible pension, and all these other things
19 that I'm hearing from my other-- other people that
20 have been testifying. We have been-- we have an
21 eligibility specialist list that have been in
22 existence for 10 years. The lists are only supposed
23 to be for four or five years, so I don't understand
24 how that has happened. Thank you DCAS. So, we have
25 members that have waited to be hired. So, during--

1
2 throughout that time, of course, they have gone to
3 other jobs. We are lacking clerical associates and
4 eligibility specialists that need to be hired right
5 away. These are the people that have worked on the
6 front line and SNAP, and Medicaid, HASA, Infoline,
7 servicing the public. So we cannot continue to work
8 like this. The pressure is coming from the top. It
9 is hard for our workers to continue to do the work,
10 to do more with less. We cannot go back to those
11 times. They have not worked then. They do not work
12 now. They are pigeon-holding into these positions.
13 They are not getting their promotions that they have
14 been promised, being on the list. Something has got
15 to--

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time is
17 expired.

18 BRENDA WALKER: change. Yes, this is--
19 more hiring has to happen right now. I understand
20 this is the Sanctuary City, but they are now being
21 forced to service people that are coming from these
22 other communities, while our natives have been
23 waiting for years and years and years dealing with
24 this homeless crisis and all these other crises.

25 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: thank you very much.

3 BRENDA WALKER: So, I'm just asking you--
4 thank you. I'm just asking you that you take into
5 consideration this, and please, hire more workers.
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll hear from
9 Stephen Vivasky [sp?], and then Michael Noonan [sp?],
10 and Nicholas Shearman. Stephen Vivasky, you may
11 begin when ready.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

13 STEPHEN VIVASKY: Thank you. I will
14 refer-- thank you, Council for taking our testimony.
15 I will refer you to my written testimony for more
16 detail, but in brief, I would like to say I think it
17 is absolutely hilarious that anyone from DCAS or OMB
18 would use words like expeditious or quick in anything
19 those agencies do. If you listen to any City
20 employee, they will tell you those steps are the
21 longest ones in the hiring process. I would also
22 like to mention that our ability to remote work or
23 not remote work is a serious threat to our ability to
24 retain staff, especially amongst our technical
25 workers, our IT forces, and lawyers and other skilled
knowledge professionals. They can more easily get

1
2 higher paying jobs in the private sector that they
3 can work remotely. Being able to work remotely is a
4 tremendous increase to the quality of life and it is
5 a tremendous equity issue as well. And that is what
6 I will leave you with. Thank you for your time.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll hear from
9 Michael Noonan and then Nicholas Shearman. Michael
10 Noonan, you may begin when ready.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

12 MICHAEL NOONAN: Yes, I am a New York
13 City Parks and Recreation worker from Local 983. I
14 just want to ask what does the City plan to do for
15 the several 100 CPWs and CSAs that are set to lose
16 their job next week that have worked for over two
17 years or more, that they consider workers who have
18 been working for over two years or more seasonal, and
19 they're all going to lose their job next week if they
20 are not given an extension or a permanent position.
21 And these are several hundred park workers who keep
22 the parks clean. You know, they work in every single
23 sorts of weather, all five boroughs, and I think it's
24 very sad that they're all going to lose their job
25 that they've been working since 2020, 2021, five days

1
2 a week, every single day, to keep all the city parks
3 very neat for people to go there, and now they're all
4 about to lose their jobs. So how does the City plan
5 to make them not lose their job? And that's all I
6 have to say.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: I have a
8 question for a panelist. What-- what's the position
9 that you have at the Parks Department and were you
10 notified that you would be losing that position?

11 MICHAEL NOONAN: Yes, a City seasonal
12 aid, and the CPW are all losing their jobs by
13 September 13th.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Alright. We
15 will look into that, because we were understanding
16 that that was remedied in the budget. Thank you.

17 MICHAEL NOONAN: Okay, thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll hear from
19 Nicholas Shearman. After that, I'll be calling on an
20 in-person panel. If you hear your name, you can
21 start making your way to the dais. C. Smith, Eve
22 Shyer [sp?], Bonnie Skala Kiladitis, and Billy Cozas
23 [sp?]. Nicholas Shearman, you may begin when ready.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.
25

3 NICHOLAS SHEARMAN: Thank you. Thank you
4 very much. Thank you Chairs and Committee Members for
5 holding this vital hearing. My name is Nicholas
6 Shearman. I'm a New York City Parks employee as
7 well. I work at the Capital Division, and I'm a
8 proud member of DC 37. I testify today as a worker
9 and a New York City resident deeply concerned about
10 the rapid attrition taking place at city agencies. I
11 strongly recommend the City Council, working with the
12 State Legislature if necessary, pass a law to offer
13 city workers, which jobs can be done via telework, as
14 proven during the pandemic, the option to telework
15 two days a week for non-compressed schedules, and one
16 day a week for compressed schedules. I also urge the
17 City Council to advocate for substantial raises for
18 all city workers, and to urge the Mayor to start
19 negotiations with DC 37 to replace the contract which
20 expired last year. It's an honor to be a municipal
21 employee in serving the people of this great city.
22 However, the private sector has job openings that
23 offer people flexibility and higher salaries. This
24 has attracted thousands of city employees to leave,
25 as people need reduced commuting time before and
after work to help take care of their own personal

1 healthcare, child and elder care needs. This makes
2 sense to me, especially in a state where more
3 universal healthcare and paid leave has only recently
4 been introduced, and where universal healthcare and
5 elder care is not a reality even in this deadly
6 pandemic. Also, less commuting time made possible by
7 teleworking allows people to have more leisure time,
8 to de-stress from the demands of life and work, which
9 has been especially so during a global pandemic and
10 all the associated complications that came with it.
11 People realized in this pandemic that life is short
12 when they could be working a job that allows them to
13 work one or two days from home and pays a more
14 livable wage in the face of inflation. People don't
15 want to spend two or three hours a day taking the
16 train or driving to work. [inaudible] when they have a
17 more favorable living condition [inaudible]

18
19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
20 is expired.

21 MICHAEL NOONAN: Thank you. I submitted
22 the rest of my testimony via email. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next
25 we'll hear from the in-person panel. Panelists, you

1
2 can go one by one. Please just state your name
3 before you give your testimony.

4 BILLY COZAS: My name is Billy Cozas
5 [sp?] and I'm a healthcare worker. I was a
6 healthcare worker who worked for 13 years in a
7 nursing home, and I was let go because I refused to
8 put this stuff in my body, the COVID vaccine,
9 experimental. It's against my religious beliefs.
10 They accepted my religious belief, right? They gave
11 me an exemption, but they could not accommodate me,
12 which is illegal, which is unlawful. The Department
13 of Health took it upon myself to remove religious
14 exemptions from healthcare workers when they don't
15 have that authority. Okay? This is complete
16 lawlessness, and it was allowed to happen, okay? The
17 Department of Health does not make laws. The
18 Assembly, the Senate, they come together, they make
19 bills, and if they pass them, the Governor signs
20 them. This is total lawlessness, and now we're
21 seeing that the science was never followed from the
22 beginning. The masks don't work. The COVID vaccines
23 did not work. People are getting booster after
24 booster after booster, and they're still getting
25 COVID. Then they changed the goal post. They said,

1
2 "Oh, you know-- oh, it's not that it prevents COVID,
3 but it prevents you from dying. It prevents you from
4 getting sicker." It's all bull, and it's all fake
5 science, okay? And now the CDC comes out and says
6 that there's no difference between vaccinated and
7 unvaccinated, and yet we're still playing these
8 games, these pandemic games that it's not happening.
9 Okay? So when are we-- and thank you, public
10 servants who are here right now who are respecting us
11 and stayed and listened, because the other half is
12 disrespectful and disgusting who left. Okay? Very
13 disgust--

14 [applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Quiet,
16 quiet, quiet, please.

17 BILLY COZAS: We sat here-- we sat here
18 to listen to you guys, and half of you are saying
19 nonsense all day long, nonsense, and I'm here patient
20 listening to you guys. Okay? Talking about silly
21 little things, and this is the most serious thing
22 that can happen is you guys violating our rights,
23 okay? And we're gonna win this battle, whether it is
24 in the courts. Whatever's gonna happen, we're gonna
25 win this battel, because the truth is on our side.

1
2 History is on our side. Science is on our side, and
3 we got this.

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Quiet,
6 please, quiet. Quiet. Thank you. Next speaker go
7 ahead. Thank you.

8 BONNIE SKALA KILADITIS: Hi, my name is
9 Bonnie Skala Kiladitis. I thank the Council for the
10 opportunity to speak, especially my Council Rep,
11 Vicki Paladino, who has been a tremendous support to
12 me and to my family. I was a New York City public
13 school teacher for 28 years. I was hired in 1993. I
14 was fired for misconduct on March 17th, 2022. After
15 multiple attempts of applying and attempting to get a
16 religious exemption for vaccination. They were all
17 rejected. I am a woman of faith, and I was fired for
18 that faith. I must add that I also had a religious
19 exemption to vaccination in place for my children for
20 years that was approved by the Department of
21 Education. That stood until law changed. I can't say
22 anything now because he already left, but that was a
23 law that Jeffrey Dinowitz strong-armed. Why did the
24 DOE believe me in 2017 and did not believe me now? I
25 have to also add that I have a disabled child who

1 just returned to his special education program
2 yesterday after exclusion. He is now 18. The law
3 that excluded him no longer applies to him. He is
4 back in school getting his special education
5 services, despite his vaccination status. I am
6 missing picking Brayden [sp?] up from school today on
7 his second day at District 75 to be here today. I'm
8 also missing the second day of school today as a Pre-
9 K teacher which I was for the last seven years.
10 Believe me when I say that Pre-K children have been
11 harmed by the inability to properly staff classrooms.
12 The substitute who took my job in October 2021 had no
13 early child experience. I should be in my classroom.
14 I should be working. This mandate that took this
15 from me, it also took away how I provide for my
16 family and how I feed my children. The pandemic is
17 over. We are here mostly maskless. The Governor
18 just lifted the mandates for the mass transit. I got
19 20 seconds. I want to work. I have worked every day
20 in-person last year. I worked in-person, not remote,
21 the year before. I want to return to my school. I
22 will never go against my faith. The City has tied my
23 hands. It is my understanding that there are 4,000
24 vacancies in the DOE vacancy list, plus whoever got
25

1
2 fired this week. I have seen that list online. It
3 makes no sense to turn away experienced, dedicated
4 teachers who want to work.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: If you could wrap
6 up. Thank you.

7 BONNIE SKALA KILADITIS: Please talk some
8 sense into Mayor Adams. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
10 Quiet please, quiet.

11 CRAIG: Hello, my name is Craig. I'm
12 here for City workers. I want to thank Mr. Holden,
13 Ms. Ariola, Ms. Paladino, and Ms. Vernikov [sic] for
14 standing up for City workers. We won't forget when
15 it's time to vote. Y'all City Council Members who
16 haven't stood up, and you know it's wrong what they
17 doing to city workers. City workers has voted for
18 y'all throughout your political career, from Adams,
19 de Blasio, you name 'em. City workers has come to
20 bat, and City Council should not sit by and not speak
21 up for them. When y'all didn't have a vote, you was
22 begging for votes and didn't have a window to throw
23 it out. You came to city workers and asked them to
24 vote for you, and to watch them, to see what's going
25 on while they getting ready to hire 25 teachers from

1
2 another country. And you sit here and you don't say
3 nothing. And these people pay union dues for years.
4 It's a shame, and we are going to remember. You
5 better make sure we're gonna remember when you come
6 asking for our votes in front of train stations. And
7 now we got to beg. We got to beg these people that
8 sitting up here lying, while they're eating rice with
9 no gravy, and everybody else is getting a check. You
10 better talk up for them, because we going to
11 remember. We going to remember, because you're going
12 to come again. That's why they want us to vote now.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much,
14 sir. I appreciate it.

15 CRAIG: Get the book [sic].

16 [applause]

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet, please.

18 Quiet. Quiet.

19 CRAIG: We will not forget. That's how
20 all y'all got y'all jobs.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much,
22 sir.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from
24 several-- next we'll hear from several Zoom
25 panelists. I'd now like to welcome Virginia Alleyne

1
2 to testify, followed by Luda Democosguya [sp?].

3 Virginia Alleyne, you may begin when ready.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

5 VIRGINIA ALLEYNE: [inaudible] Judy
6 Garland whored out, they were all-- the child actors
7 get it the worst.

8 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Please go ahead.
9 Ms. Virginia Alleyne.

10 VIRGINIA ALLEYNE: [inaudible]

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Ms. Alleyne, go
12 ahead.

13 VIRGINIA ALLEYNE: I'm so sorry. I didn't
14 hear you. My name is Virginia W. Alleyne and I was
15 working for Yankee Stadium. At the beginning of the
16 pandemic, I had eight part-time jobs, and then I lost
17 all of these jobs in 2020. I was hopeful that I was
18 able to work two of these jobs and two of them came
19 back. When Kathy Hochul and Mayor Adams took over,
20 all hope was lost. I was suddenly fired from both
21 jobs, one of which was my beloved Yankee Stadium. I
22 worked at Yankee Stadium for 16 years, and it was my
23 favorite job, but now because of these draconian
24 mandates, I am unable to work there anymore. I am
25 the single parent of an autistic 16-year-old.

1
2 Currently, I am on welfare and starvation is the
3 norm. Eviction and homelessness is imminent, and I
4 fear that I will break, and I know that my son will
5 not be able to handle it if we have to go to a
6 shelter. I have lost everything, and the only thing
7 keeping me going is my son. We have no resources,
8 and I am losing hope every day. There are many days
9 when I cannot get out of bed due to the overwhelming
10 despair that I feel. Being unvaccinated in--

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
12 expired.

13 VIRGINIA ALLEYNE: New York City is like
14 being an untouchable in India. We are maligned and
15 demonized for no other reason than we are declaring
16 my body my choice. No one has the right to dictate
17 that I must inject myself with an experimental drug.
18 These vaccines have not been tested and the long-term
19 effects include myocarditis, blood clots, and death.
20 I will continue to stand on my square and say no to
21 these vaccines. I fight for all the workers who were
22 fired, because we all know that the panacea for this
23 virus is not found in a needle, but mostly I fight
24 for all those people that committed suicide from
25 sheer loneliness and isolation.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: thank you very much.

4 Thank you very much, Ms. Alleyne. Quiet please,
5 quiet. We want-- we want to hear the next speaker.

6 Thank you very much, Ms. Alleyne.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'd now like to
8 welcome Luda Demicoskya [sp?] followed by Matthew
9 Connor, and then Illiana Gordon. Luda Demicoskya
[sp?], you may begin when ready.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Luda, you may need to
12 accept the unmute request.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Let's come back to
15 her. I'd now like to welcome Matthew Connor to
16 testify followed by Illiana Gordon [sp?].

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 MATTHEW CONNOR: Good afternoon
19 [inaudible] City Council. [inaudible] 17-year veteran
20 of New York City Fire Department, currently a Fire
21 Lieutenant [inaudible] last year. Filed for a
22 reasonable accommodation request that is required to
23 [inaudible] claiming an undue hardship that does not
24 exist to employ me. My appeals [inaudible] DCAS is
25 the [inaudible] to be answered by last November. I

1
2 currently-- I have a family to feed. I have a career
3 to finish [sic]. I have been denied the opportunity
4 for equal opportunity employment by the City of New
5 York during this process. I'm not sure what
6 [inaudible] my request which are very well founded
7 both by medical exemption request and [inaudible],
8 but I do not consider the past nine months
9 [inaudible] and answer for a simple request for
10 reasonable accommodation. In addition to my request
11 that have been under appeal process, I have also
12 sought out medical care to find out for the safety of
13 the administration of this medical intervention
14 should I [inaudible]. During the course of that
15 investigation, I have found that I have the two known
16 components that could injure or kill me if I choose
17 [inaudible] me out of work right now. My agency, the
18 Fire Department City of New York, [inaudible]
19 accommodation for over two months, and has not given
20 me an answer.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

22 MATTHEW CONNOR: I'm [inaudible] to New
23 York City workers that have served this city during
24 the height of the pandemic. I have [inaudible] I

25

1
2 incurred during the line of duty serving the people
3 of the City of New York--

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Can
5 you wrap up?

6 MATTHEW CONNOR: and I want to my
7 request. This is--

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] thank
9 you.

10 MATTHEW CONNOR: a labor issue that is
11 not [inaudible]. I'm here to make sure that you are
12 aware that the City of New York, people that have
13 served this city well, and--

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank
15 you very much, sir.

16 MATTHEW CONNOR: [inaudible].

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet. Quiet,
20 please, please. Go ahead.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll hear from
22 Illiana Gordon. After that we'll be calling an in-
23 person panel to come up. So if you hear your name,
24 please start making your way to the table now.
25 Cassandra McFadden [sp?], Mawuli Olivierre, Patricia

1
2 Pierlow [sp?], and Marjel Kola. If I mentioned your
3 name, please make your way to the table now, and
4 we'll hear from Illiana Gordon now.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.
6 Time starts now.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: It looks like Illiana
8 is no longer on the Zoom, so we'll move to the in-
9 person panel. Panelist, you can go one-by-one.
10 Please just state your name before you give your
11 testimony.

12 MAWULI OLIVIERRE: Alright, good
13 afternoon everyone. My name is Mawuli Olivierre.
14 Born to Caribbean parents. Born and raised in
15 Brooklyn, New York. Went to school in New York,
16 Brooklyn. I'm a homeowner in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn.
17 I've taught in the City of Brooklyn starting in 1998.
18 I'm a licensed Social Studies teacher. I have a
19 Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, all of the
20 qualifications. Unfortunately, I lost my job due to
21 the COVID-19 vaccine mandate. They denied my request
22 for religious exemption. And I live in Bed-Stuy. I
23 want to highlight that I did reach out to my City
24 Council personal Chi Ossé who completely ignored me.
25 I wrote letters explaining my situation. So, I

1
2 completely am very appreciative of you guys sitting
3 and hearing, especially you're not from my district.
4 So, throughout the whole-- this whole pandemic, we
5 felt-- well, I felt basically in Bed-Stuy that I was
6 voiceless. No one was willing to hear my claim. But
7 I want to let you guys know now that we're still
8 here. We have this organization called Educators for
9 Freedom, and one of the reasons why we started it,
10 because even though the City has fired me, I am still
11 an educator. I'm still a teacher. You get what I'm
12 saying? For 23 years I worked with the City schools,
13 public school systems, young black boys in the
14 schools that need to see more people like them to be
15 role models and to show them how to make it outside
16 of this city because it's difficult. It's difficult
17 coming up in the cities of Brooklyn, New York. It's
18 hard. We need role models. I realize that the kids,
19 when I look at them, I see myself. I am definitely a
20 representative of the kids, and I'm sad that I'm not
21 able to continue to do what I'm called to do, because
22 this is not just a job for me. Like I said, I was
23 born in Brooklyn. I am Brooklyn. So when I see these
24 children, I am them, they are me. Alright? It's
25 Brooklyn raising Brooklyn. New York raising New

1
2 York. And the fact that the City and the Mayor
3 who's also a product of the City can't recognize that
4 the injustice that's done to all of us who, because
5 of what we chose, is having residual effects on
6 what's happening the City. So don't be surprised by
7 what's going on in our school systems right now.
8 Don't be surprised, because people like us who are
9 dedicated to the jobs that we are doing are being
10 deliberately barred from doing what God has called us
11 to do. Thank you for listening.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

13 [applause]

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet, quiet,
15 please. Quiet so we can hear the speakers. Thank
16 you. Go ahead.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: I want to say good
18 afternoon to everyone. Thank you for the time you're
19 giving us. I'm just going to give a brief history of
20 myself. I once was a single mother, and the City of
21 New York, God bless the City of New York, they gave
22 me opportunity. They paid for my babysitter so I
23 could finish high school. As a result, I went on to
24 higher education. Eventually got married, thank God.
25 But I'm saying is to say what, look at the

1 foundation, the wisdom of the City of New York. Once
2 I became employable, marketable, I had to go to
3 become a math teacher. By the way I'm a retired math
4 teacher, and came back out of retirement during the
5 heart of the pandemic. I did my own. Yeah, I did it
6 voluntarily. I came in always with my test results.
7 Everybody thought I was crazy. I literally did in--
8 now, listen to this. As I'm teaching I had one
9 student to my left, one to my right, and I also was
10 doing what they call online. It was against the UFT
11 contract, but because of my dedication, because I
12 never forget the bridges that carried me across. The
13 City blessed me, so I said I'm coming out. I'm going
14 to help this city. And because I did not take the
15 vaccine, I was terminated. Twenty-five years. They
16 need math teachers, and I recently saw a young boy on
17 the train. He said-- and I engage people, and he
18 said, "Oh, I'm going to the seventh grade." I said,
19 "Fantastic," and I said, "How much is if I said one-
20 half plus one-half, what would that be?" He said two
21 over four. I almost fainted. I'm going to teach
22 everyone the basic rule of fractions that takes you
23 into algebraic math and higher math. When you see
24 the denominators, the bottom numbers are the same,
25

1
2 you keep the bottom number, and you just add the top
3 number which is the numerator. Get us back in the
4 classroom. Get everybody back to work. You need us.
5 God bless you all.

6 [applause]

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet, quiet,
8 please, quiet.

9 MARJEL KOLA: Good afternoon. My name is
10 Marjel Kola. I was a police officer. I had the
11 privilege to join the Department, the New York City
12 Police Department in 2018 and also was granted the
13 religious accommodation because I keep the biblical
14 Sabbath which is Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.
15 Unfortunately, when this mandate came out, I was
16 forced or I was told don't take or you get
17 terminated. I choose to get terminated, because I
18 didn't do anything wrong to resign, and I believe in
19 normal-- I believe in-- that we should have a choice.
20 We work-- the police officer work during the pandemic
21 every single day. We worked during the riots every
22 single day without complaining, none of us, and even
23 now the police officer in transit that are exhausted
24 because they are working 12 hours a day, and
25 sometimes with no days off, because of the shortage.

1
2 So I'm here to say bring us back. End these
3 mandates. I want to tell to Mr. Mayor, tear down this
4 mandate now. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: we'll next hear from
7 a number of Zoom panelists. I'd first like to
8 welcome Daniel Querens [sp?], and then Peter
9 Kandinov, and the Lillian Fincher, followed by John
10 Macari. Daniel Querens [sp?] you may begin when
11 ready.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 DANIEL QUERENS: Good afternoon ladies
14 and gentleman. My name is Daniel Querens [sp?]. I'm
15 married. I'm married and a father of two beautiful
16 children. I was previously employed by the NYPD from
17 January 2013 to July 2022. I was a detective with the
18 Brooklyn North Violent Crime Squad, formerly known as
19 the Brooklyn North Gang Squad. As a kid, there were
20 two things I wanted to be when I grew up, a New York
21 Yankee and a police officers. Obviously, the first
22 option did not pan out, but I was able to fulfill my
23 dream and become a police officer. Ironically, if I
24 had, my testimony would not be necessary today,
25 because I would be exempt from the vaccine mandate.

1
2 Unfortunately, I am not a multi-millionaire athlete
3 or entertainer. Therefore, I am not eligible to be
4 part of this protected class in the New York City
5 caste system. Not only has the City of New York
6 violated the religious liberty of every City employee
7 who has been denied a religious accommodation, but
8 the mandate itself is completely [inaudible] a
9 majority of frontline workers have had COVID, since
10 we could not work from home when the City shutdown.
11 Therefore, we acquired natural immunity to this
12 virus. Excuse me. Going back to May 5th, 2021,
13 during a Governor Cuomo press conference, he stated
14 you cannot mandate vaccines, but these vaccine are
15 approved under something called an emergency-use
16 authorization, and by law, you cannot a vaccine
17 approved under an emergency-use authorization. I
18 myself went to a vaccine site back in June of this
19 year and requested [inaudible] spike vax, which are
20 the only two FDA-approved version of the vaccine.
21 They were not available, and I was told they have
22 never been available at the NYPD vax site. Also, as
23 of last month, the CDC--

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
25 is expired.

1
2 DANIEL QUERENS: has revised their COVID-
3 19 guidelines and sated CDC's COVID-19 prevention
4 recommendations no long differentiate based on a
5 person's vaccination status, because break-through
6 infections occur, though they are generally mild.
7 The persons who have had COVID-19 but are not
8 vaccinated have some degree of protection against
9 severe illness from their previous infection.
10 Combine all this with the fact that back in August of
11 2021 the Direct of the CDC Rochelle Wallennksy stated
12 in reference to the vaccine, what they cannot do
13 anymore is prevent transmission. That is-- that was
14 two months before the inception of the vaccine
15 mandate. If anyone could explain a reasonable
16 argument for firing thousands of city workers for not
17 receiving a vaccine that does not stop transmission
18 or infection from COVID, I would love to hear it.
19 The simple fact is that there is no logical argument
20 that can be made. You cannot make that make sense.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

22 DANIEL QUERENS: Now, nearly a year
23 later, after losing thousands of city employees to
24 termination, resignation, forced retirement, the
25 Mayor is still not budging on the mandate.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

3

4

DANIEL QUERENS: Crime is out of control
and reaching epidemic levels while COVID-- excuse me.
I'm just about done.

5

6

7

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
Thank you.

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DANIEL QUERENS: Excuse me, I'm just
about done. While crime is reaching epidemic levels
while COVID is now reaching endemic levels, the
mandate carries on under the guise of public safety.
Unlike COVID, there is a very simple cure to the
violent crime in our city. It's more police. It is
experienced police. What the mandate is doing is
making our city far less safe, losing thousands of
experienced police officers, myself being one.

17

18

19

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Sir, you got to-- you
got to wrap up, please. Thank you. We got to wrap
up.

20

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24

DANIEL QUERENS: Alright, one last point.
Mayor Adams may not remember me, but on the 4th day
of his day in office, he was present in my press
conference for my gang take-down I was the lead
investigator on.

25

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright thank you.

3 DANIEL QUERENS: That type of case will
4 be--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from
7 Peter Kandinov followed by Lillian Fincher, and then
8 John Macari. Peter Kandinov, you may begin when
9 ready.

10 PETER KANDINOV: Good afternoon everyone.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time begins.

12 PETER KANDINOV: I'm a police officer. I
13 was a police officer until May of this year with 11
14 years on, and I loved my job. I was lucky enough to
15 secure myself another job, but I can say this, I
16 would gladly come back to the job that I love. Now,
17 I wish DCAS people stayed back, because I really had
18 a few questions for them such as what makes them
19 religious authority over my religious accommodation
20 request, where one person of the same religion was
21 able to get it, and me with the same request not?
22 And what I find funny actually is that I worked
23 during pandemic and risking my life, and I got COVID
24 twice. Now, booster shots are not mandated, however,
25 it person took just the original shot, they already
don't have immunity from COVID. Where me, getting

1
2 COVID twice, I have more immunity probably than even
3 people with booster. So, to Mayor Adams, I ask you
4 to please remove the mandate that is not needed. We
5 have officers that are willing to come back because
6 they love what they do. the other thing is,
7 according to the latest statistics, more officers
8 left by June of this year, than all last year, and
9 officers that did not want to get vaccinated are part
10 of that number, but that's-- unfortunately, DCAS does
11 not keep record, even though it's hard to believe.
12 And the other thing I want to mention is that anyone
13 who wants to join this job, if they hear on the news
14 that officers don't have contracts for many years, if
15 officers are not treated well-- especially nowadays,
16 there is no respect for the uniform, and in many
17 cases officers, especially in the transit District,
18 sometimes not seeing their family for days. Why
19 would anyone want to have this job? You know?
20 That's all I got, guys. Please, remove the mandates.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from
23 Lillian Fincher followed by John Macari.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

25

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lillian Fincher, you
4 may begin when ready.

5 LILLIAN FINCHER: Hello, thank you for
6 having me. I will be reading portions of my written
7 statement. I currently work for the Department of
8 Education Division of Early Childhood Education;
9 however, I resign this week and I will serve my last
10 day later this month. I have resigned because I no
11 longer feel my work has impact. I am unclear how my
12 work fits into a collective mission, and therefore, I
13 don't feel I can provide my best for children in this
14 environment. It is my understanding that in the
15 nearly nine months since our Deputy Chancellor began,
16 about 200 employees have either resigned or secured
17 transfers out of our division. This has been
18 extremely destabilizing and upsetting. With each
19 person's exit, institutional knowledge has been lost,
20 and a once sustainable structure of workflow is now
21 crumbling. To my knowledge, no effort has been made
22 to assess why people are leaving or what changes are
23 needed to retain these valuable public servants. And
24 I will add, there's been no attempt to backfill these
25 positions. In fact, the division is currently
planning to transfer even more employees out of their

1
2 current roles within the division. This swift
3 reduction of staff is also troubling given that our
4 division's current leadership lacks extensive
5 systems-level experience, which is essential when
6 serving thousands of children and early childhood
7 educators. I'm deeply concerned by the environment
8 I'm working in, how decisions are being made, and I
9 worry that the damage done to our early childhood
10 system over the past nine months will take years to
11 repair. To retain city workers we need strong
12 leaders. I urge the City Council to provide more
13 oversight regarding the selection of new leaders for
14 the Department of Education. I also urge the City
15 Council to mandate a minimum level of programming
16 continuity during DOE leadership transitions so that
17 the uncertainty, frustration, and inefficiencies--

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
19 is expired.

20 LILLIAN FINCHER: I've experienced over
21 the past nine months are not repeated for thousands
22 of additional children, families, and city employees.
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next
3 we'll hear from John Macari and then I'll be calling
4 up a number of in-person panelists. If you hear your
5 name called now, please make your way up to the
6 table: Daniel Grenier [sp?], Joy Amanda, Brendan
7 Fogarty, and Catherine Jean [sp?]. You can make your
8 way up to the table now, and we'll hear from John D.
9 Macari next.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 JOHN MACARI: Hello everybody. Hello
12 everybody. This is John D. Macari. I was forced
13 into retirement. I am 18-year lieutenant. I have
14 zero disciplinary history. I've been involved in
15 thousands of arrests. I have hundreds to my own
16 name. I've been involved in thousands of emergency
17 incidents without incident. I was denied a religious
18 exemption for my sincerely-held religious beliefs, as
19 well as a medical exemption for the COVID-19
20 infection that I received in the line of duty while
21 serving New York City during the early days of the
22 pandemic. I have natural forming antibodies that were
23 proved, and that was denied. New York City has
24 failed to tell the unvaccinated who are now the most
25 marginalized community in New York City history what

1
2 undue hardship we are causing New York City that
3 others are not. This marginalized community along
4 with our children have been segregated, forced to be
5 masked and tested when others were not, not allowed
6 to eat in restaurants, partake in society, play in
7 sports, attend after school events, and eventually we
8 were forced from employment without even the ability
9 to collect unemployment. We are being told our lives
10 do not matter. City workers-- city workers and
11 residents accused of crimes are afforded due process
12 and a trial before facing such consequences. Many
13 continue working even after they are found guilty.
14 All of this has cause irreparable harm to our mental,
15 physical, and financial health as well as a strain on
16 all of our relationships. Murders, rapists, and
17 pedophiles are treated better than the unvaccinated.
18 All I am asking is for New York City to be true to
19 what it said on paper. Be true that you respect
20 religious liberty and equal protection under the law.
21 Be true that you respect medical freedom and truly
22 believe the words, "My body, my choice." Be true to
23 that you respect other's philosophical opinions and
24 want to give everyone a voice at the table. be true
25 to the United States Constitution and the New York

1
2 States Constitution, the Human Rights Act of New
3 York, save the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Federal,
4 State and City OEO laws, as well as OEO policy of
5 every New York City agency, all who enforce this
6 mandate, all of which clearly define these mandates
7 are illegal. All I am saying to our elected
8 officials and to Mayor Adams is be true to what you
9 say on Twitter. New York City is no longer an equal
10 opportunity employer. That title is earned by
11 following the law, not given by winning an election.
12 End the mandates. And to--

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
14 expired.

15 JOHN MACARI: And to our colleagues in
16 OLR, OMB and DCAS, the fact that you had no answers
17 to these questions, it's either incompetent or it's
18 intentional, and either way it's unacceptable. You
19 should be the one [inaudible] job, not us.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

21 [applause]

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet please, quiet.

23 Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Panelists, you can go
25 in order, just state your name before you begin.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We're going to try
3 to-- we're going to try to do panelist next in-
4 person, because you guys have been here all day, and
5 I appreciate it. Go ahead.

6 DANIEL GRENIER: My name is Daniel. I'm
7 just an angry citizen of New York. So, if you wanted
8 to fill 24,000 jobs, one thing, end the illogical,
9 stupid, anti-science mandates. And I'll mention that
10 they're a crime against humanity. Anyone who
11 perpetuated or pushed this is complicit in that. And
12 I haven't heard one person, not-- since I've been
13 here today talk about treatments for COVID, not a
14 stupid MRNA gene therapy, which causes people to get
15 blood clots, myocarditis, you name it. There's
16 literally over a thousand side effects listed on
17 Pfizer's documents. But Ivermectin,
18 hydroxychloroquine, zinc, vitamin D, vitamin C,
19 [inaudible], the list goes on and on. A study came
20 out last week, 92 percent effective rate for
21 ivermectin against COVID mortality. 100 percent
22 effective against preventing hospitalization, over
23 80,000 participants. Nobody talks about it. I
24 haven't heard oen mention of that. We've known since
25 March of 2020 that hydroxychloroquine treats COVID,

1
2 and we're still going on and on about this stupid
3 gene therapy. So, if you want to fill 24,000 jobs,
4 step one is end the stupid mandate. Point blank,
5 simple. I'm tired of hearing about flowery cafes.
6 That ain't gonna do nothing. But we'll circle back
7 to that. And I want to touch on this, too. I know
8 this is an employment crisis, but what we're doing to
9 the children is another crime against humanity. I
10 just saw a study from the CDC, they took a survey,
11 13,000 participant survey of children two years old
12 and younger, over half of them have systemic side
13 effects from the shot. And from two month olds to--
14 no, six month old to five years old, there's over
15 1,000 in the VAERS reports of little babies and
16 toddlers side effects from the shot, and over 200 of
17 them had to have an emergency room treatment.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much,
19 sir. Thank you.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: Hello. Thank you for
21 having us. To those that did stay, thank you for
22 waiting. Thank you for being patient. To my fellow
23 New Yorkers back there, thank you for being patient
24 as well. We strong together. I just have a few
25 things to read. I'm trying to do it real quick. I

1 know I have one minute and 40 seconds. A portion of
2 what I want to read and what I want to express to you
3 all. First and foremost, of course, I am a New
4 Yorker, born and raised. I am third generation
5 Puerto Rican, second generation Columbian. I'm a
6 single mother. My son will be 19 next month, and he
7 didn't get to finish high school because of the
8 mandates. I was here this time last year to give
9 testimony about how the school can open back up with
10 the DOE because I was also a DOE employee, and today
11 marks 365 days that I've been terminated. And my son
12 sent me a statement last year that I wanted to read.
13 I'm trying to read it within 10 seconds. "I won't
14 cry over losing the graduation I had always
15 envisioned that was rudely changed by the new system,
16 but it did damage my willpower and will-- it damaged
17 my willpower and will scare me for the rest of my
18 life, as graduation is only once in a lifetime
19 experience." That's from my son, 19, who also wrote
20 me a statement. I won't read it right now, but he let
21 me know that seeing me struggle, knowing what I did
22 and knowing what has gone on, it breaks him, but he
23 sees how strong I am. Again, today makes 365 days
24 that I have been terminated. I have to face a choice.
25

1
2 I was put in a position to choose stability over
3 virtue and morality, but I chose virtue and morality.
4 I committed my life to staying true to my morality,
5 as of 365 days. I was forced into a decision that
6 eventually became comfortable to choose, because my
7 principles mean more than a paycheck, and my virtue
8 means for than value. I realize my life struggle's is
9 destiny and prepared me to testify in front of God
10 and testify in front of you to let you know that you
11 need to repent. 365 days I had no courage or fire,
12 but that 365 days being terminated lit a fire in me
13 that said go out and fight for your people, fight for
14 New York City. Just know that the people are coming,
15 and we will be on that side where you are as you sit
16 quiet. We will be there. Best believe it.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

18 [applause]

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet, please,
20 quiet. Go ahead.

21 CATHERINE JEAN: Good afternoon everyone.
22 Thank you for having me here. My name is Catherine
23 Jean. I am a registered nurse. Before I was
24 wrongfully terminated, I used to work for the City
25 Hospital Queens and also a Young Adult Institute. On

1
2 September 27, 2021 I was placed on leave without pay
3 and was terminated on November 28, 2021 from Queens
4 Hospital, and on January 14th of this year, I was
5 also terminate from YAI. Both of these companies
6 terminated me without acknowledging my sincere
7 religious exemption letter, which I submitted to both
8 company's human resources. I was discriminated
9 against my religion which violates my Title VII of
10 the Civil Rights Act. We the people have the right
11 to choose what goes in our body, especially if it's
12 against our belief. And also, I believe my body is q
13 temple of God as it says in the Bible, and therefore,
14 by forcing me to take an experiment vaccine, which
15 until now there is no transparency on what's in this
16 vaccine-- also myself, I had COVID in 2020, and I
17 developed natural immunity, and since then I've been
18 fine with no COVID. This left a big impact in my
19 life and also in my family, because now I'm left
20 without a job. I love what I used to do working as a
21 nurse taking care of my patients, which also is a
22 great reward for me, because it was always my dream
23 as a young girl to become a nurse, and now I feel
24 that for the past year it went down the drain. This
25 has caused great impact which is financially-- I had

1
2 to remove my children from Christian school because I
3 couldn't afford to keep them there. You know, a lot
4 of bills, I'm in a lot of debt, and it's been very
5 harsh. And I hope--

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Please
7 wrap up.

8 CATHERINE JEAN: And I hope the mayor
9 change their mind and give us back our jobs. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

12 [applause]

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet please.
14 Quiet. Go ahead, sir.

15 BRENDAN FOGARTY: Hello, everyone. My
16 name is Brendan Fogarty. I was a Captain for the New
17 York City Fire Department. I served for 20 years and
18 I went from being essential to being disposable from
19 the mandates, and my religious exemption was denied,
20 and I received those threats of termination, and I
21 retired. I would love to go back to my job. I
22 normally get nervous when I speak in front of-- in
23 places like this, and I always say this prayer: God
24 grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
25 change, the courage to change the things I can, and

1
2 the wisdom to know the difference. We're going to be
3 on the right side of history. The people who are
4 against us are against civil rights and religious
5 freedom. We deserve to have our jobs back. I could
6 fill this crisis you have of people who can't figure
7 out how to close this gap. Get rid of the mandate,
8 okay? We'll get our jobs back. That'll narrow the
9 gap. Get rid of the mandate so you can attract more
10 people who actually have values in their lives and
11 will come and work in this city, okay? I never took
12 this job to be rich. I took it to be secure, okay? I
13 knew I wouldn't get rich, but I was told it was a
14 secure job. I have four children and a wife, and
15 then they say it's over. I would have been better
16 off becoming a Met or Yankee, but I gave up that
17 dream in fourth grade, alright? Fifth grade MVP
18 right here, Good Shepherd Little League, alright. I
19 had a shot. Not anymore. Okay? I gave my best
20 years to this city, 20 years, from 21 to 41, and then
21 they take it away at the peak of my earning career.
22 I made it to Captain. I went through that process.
23 You should be ashamed of yourselves. You should be
24 ashamed of yourselves. Eric Adams is going to be on
25 the wrong side of history. The people who

1
2 [inaudible] are the same people who thought slavery
3 was okay. The same people who thought--

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank
5 you very much.

6 BRENDAN FOGARTY: segregation in Shay's
7 Stadium was okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Thank
9 you very much, sir.

10 BRENDAN FOGARTY: Okay? You segregated
11 us. I was allowed to work in this city, but I wasn't
12 allowed to eat in a restaurant in this city.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Thank
14 you very much.

15 BRENDAN FOGARTY: I was allowed to work
16 through the pandemic, but I wasn't allowed to eat in
17 a restaurant.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Thank--

19 BRENDAN FOGARTY: [interposing] I could
20 wear the uniform, go to a burning building, but not
21 eat here.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much,
23 sir.

24 BRENDAN FOGARTY: What's wrong with you
25 people? Trust the science.

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CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

BRENDAN FOGARTY: You guys are fucked up.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

[applause]

BRENDAN FOGARTY: Quiet. Quiet, please.

Quiet. Quiet, please, quiet.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet down, please.

Quiet down, please.

[applause]

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet. Quiet please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'll now call up the next panel. If you hear your name you can come up now. Margaret Chu [sp?], Lauren O'Rourke [sp?], Ingrid Romero [sp?], Paul Rivera [sp?], Josephine Valdez [sp?], and Teraz Sabidniak [sp?]. Since we have three more open chairs, let's also bring up Brian Fain-- Flynn [sp?], Christina Fayala [sp?], and Nuwaka Gayo [sp?], Nuyi Fejokawa [sp?].

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go ahead whomever would like to start.

BRIAN FLYNN: hello, can you hear me?
I'm Brian Flynn, for the record. I was a climber, pruner, Local 1506 with the Department of Parks and Recreation for the City of New York. For the record,

1 none of the discharged employees did anything wrong.
2 They did nothing wrong legally or morally in order to
3 lose their positions with the City of New York.
4 Secondly, our previous panel, the Department of
5 Citywide Administrative Services was the Review
6 Board, the Appeal Board, for the exemption process.
7 How do I know that? My emails will prove that. Also
8 the Department of Citywide Administrative Services,
9 on their appeal website said if you do not have a
10 city employee email, you are automatically
11 disqualified from the appeal process. Fact,
12 provable, admissible in a court of law, municipal,
13 state, and federal. They have the numbers. Okay.
14 On another note, I was told to say, "Brian, when you
15 get there tell them how the mandates impacted your
16 life." I have a question for everybody here, masked
17 and unmasked, vaccinated and unvaccinated. I want to
18 ask you all a question. How did these mandates not
19 impact your life? Can any of you answer me that
20 question? Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
23 much.

24 CHRISTINA FAYALA: my name is Christina
25 Fayala [sp?]. Like many others out there, I'm just

1
2 one teacher who have become greatly affected by these
3 mandates. Before I begin, I'd like to mention that
4 I've submitted a longer version of what I'm about to
5 say. I beg you all to really read it. Don't just
6 skim through it, but please read it. [inaudible] not
7 just for what I've lost due to these mandates, but
8 what these mandates have taken away from our
9 students, because they're the ones who are affected
10 the most.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, keep-- you're
12 fabulous. Keep going. We want to hear you. You're
13 wonderful. We appreciate you very much.

14 CHRISTINA FAYALA: In order to better
15 understand my story, I must first give you a little
16 background. I had four goals in life: to go to
17 Italy, to be a wife, a mother, and a teacher. These
18 mandates took what should have been amazing, happy
19 moments of my life [inaudible] to sad and stressful
20 times. In May of 2021 I was married and became a
21 wife. A week later I had laparoscopic laser removal
22 surgery for endometriosis, which is one of the many
23 obstacles that my husband and I had to go through in
24 order to become pregnant. It was on my honeymoon
25 that I found out I would become jobless because the

1 news about the teacher mandate broke out. A week
2 after we returned home, I learned that I was
3 pregnant, and less than a month later I lost my job
4 because I refused to take an experimental shot that
5 had no effectiveness and a ridiculous amount of
6 negative side effects, many of which directly
7 affected my health. Begin a high-risk pregnancy, I
8 applied not for a medical exemption, but for a
9 medical accommodation. This was because I did not
10 fall into the DOE's slim category of accepted medical
11 reasons for an exemption. I was also told by
12 numerous doctors that they thought that they were not
13 allowed to write an exemption letter for being
14 pregnant. I did however get one doctor to recommend
15 working remotely or in limited capacity, since the
16 CDC did consider being pregnant a high risk for
17 dangerous forms of COVID. While waiting for the
18 decision on my medical accommodation, I also tried to
19 apply for religious exemption. As Roman Catholic,
20 there are multiple I refuse this injection. When I
21 attempted to submit my exemption in the [inaudible]
22 system, I was blocked from applying.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: If you can wrap up.
25 We will read every word of your testimony.

3 CHRISTINA FAYALA: Essentially, I wasn't
4 allowed to apply for religious exemption, because by
5 the time I got my denial, the deadline was over. I'm
6 sure many people think why can't you just go to
7 another state and teach, but the answer is simple,
8 it's impossible. Working as a New York City public
9 school teacher in this system, you give a gift you
10 can't receive anywhere else. As a New York public
11 school teacher, we're blessed to work with a diverse
12 group of kids, each with their own stories, their own
13 needs, and the very way they touch our hearts leaving
14 a lasting impression. Being a New York public school
15 teacher changes the way you see the world. I'm just
16 one teacher. I'm one staff member, but there are
17 thousands like there out me.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much
19 and thank you for coming today. Next? Really I
20 appreciate it.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: Before I start, I just
22 want to say I'm reading this on behalf of Josephine
23 Valdez.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, go ahead.

25 UNIDENTIFIED: she had to leave.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, go ahead.

1
2 UNIDENTIFIED: she's was a
3 paraprofessional for the DOE and she had to leave
4 for--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Go
6 ahead.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: So, Josephine states: "I
8 will not conform to the political corruption that has
9 taken over this nation. I am not here to beg for my
10 job back. I am here to simply state the truth. The
11 fact that we are heading into 2023 and New York is
12 still under unlawful mandates solidifies my distrust
13 in our government. While I sat here, I looked up at
14 the ceiling and read the following quote from Abraham
15 Lincoln, a government of the people, by the people,
16 and for the people. Does that not hold true anymore?
17 I never consented nor supported any of the
18 unconstitutional abusive lock-down procedures and
19 mandates. They helped to increase the destruction of
20 our humanity. Like most abuse victims, we were
21 placed in isolation and held captive in our own
22 homes, deprived access to our daily activities under
23 the guise of public health and safety. Firing me and
24 many others while coercing and threatening us is not
25 about safety. It is about control. My parents came

1
2 from the Dominican Republic to seek a better life in
3 America. Living here is no longer an American dream,
4 but instead has become the American nightmare. I
5 will never forget what has been done to us, even with
6 the attempts to love bomb us, just like an abuser
7 does, into thinking we are going back to normal. You
8 cannot undo the humiliation, the division of
9 families, the many children that have committed
10 suicide, the denial of basic human services, the
11 increase of drug and alcohol abuse, businesses
12 destroyed, and trillions of dollars that went to the
13 corporations while we the people suffered. Anyone
14 with a moral compass knows that these mandates are
15 wrong and was done to punish the rebels and truth-
16 seekers that can see through the manipulation. This
17 meeting mentions job loss and open vacancies, as if
18 many of you in this room didn't accept and consent to
19 that removal of our God-given freedoms. When it
20 comes to this supposed pandemic, the solution to a
21 problem shouldn't cause more problems, unless this
22 was purposely designed to create all the issues that
23 we are facing right now. So many experts and not one
24 in psychology that could call out all of this that
25 has been taken out of the playbook for cycles of

1
2 abuse. I know the true answer, and I know that some
3 if not all of you know it as well."

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
5 Next.

6 LAUREN O'ROURKE: My name is Lauren
7 O'Rourke. I'm a retired NYPD Detective from the
8 Fugitive Enforcement Division. I'm speaking to you
9 today on behalf of my former colleagues who are too
10 afraid to speak out due to retaliation from the upper
11 management of the NYPD, which I'm sure Mayor Adams
12 himself can attest to. Thousands of NYPD officers
13 were mandated to vaccinate or be terminated by
14 October 29th of 2021. The vast majority of those
15 officers had already contracted and recovered from
16 COVID during the height of the pandemic. They
17 contracted it due to poor ventilation and inadequate
18 PPE while they worked. We brought up natural
19 immunity at the time in lieu of vaccination. We were
20 scoffed at, even though thousands of years of science
21 dictates naturally acquiring a disease and recovering
22 form it is the best protection against severe illness
23 from a virus. The CDC and the rest of the experts
24 are finally acknowledging what we have said all
25 along. The exception being the New York City Health

1 Commissioner Ashwin Vasan in his appointed role. The
2 City Council just a few weeks ago passed landmark
3 legislation for women named the Maternal bill.
4 Hundreds of NYPD officers who were pregnant or
5 undergoing the grueling process of fertility
6 treatments were treated like pariahs. They were
7 forced to choose between their unborn children and
8 putting food on the table. They were forced between
9 taking a shot for a disease that they had already
10 acquired and their own chances at motherhood. Their
11 medical accommodation requests were denied in the
12 cruelest way, as we all watched unvaccinated
13 millionaires play a sport or hold a concert without
14 the same mandate. The fact that the City of New York
15 cannot grant these women even a temporary
16 accommodation was just cruel, unscientific, and it
17 was elitist. There are no long-term studies on these
18 vaccines and their effects on reproduction and
19 fertility. As usual, women's health is pushed to the
20 back burner by a man who knows better. The mandate
21 is inhumane, unscientific, and unforgivable. The
22 damage these mandates have caused will not be
23 forgotten quickly. The men and women of this
24 department deserve better. The residents of New York
25

1
2 City deserve better. Our student athletes deserve
3 better. Our teachers, firemen, sanitation--

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank
5 you.

6 LAUREN O'ROURKE: workers and nurses
7 deserve better.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

9 LAUREN O'ROURKE: And the blue collar
10 workers that keep this city going deserve better.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

12 LAUREN O'ROURKE: Please end these
13 mandates.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

15 Gentlemen, you're next. Sir, you're next.

16 TURAZ: Hi, yes, my name is Turaz. Were
17 you listening closely earlier today? I think that we
18 heard some news from "Circle Back Psaki" little mini
19 Jen Psaki who was sitting right here. She used the
20 following phrase. She said, "during the pandemic, or
21 now." Play back the tape. What does that mean? It
22 means that the Mayor's office considers the pandemic
23 to be over. "During the pandemic or now." Now is
24 now. It's after the pandemic. A couple of weeks ago
25 a good friend of mine was giving an ultimatum by her

1
2 NYC employer, get the COVID jab or you're fired.
3 Violate your medical and bodily autonomy with
4 experimental injections or you cannot earn a living.
5 Mayor Eric Adams violated my friend's body. He
6 violated the bodies of thousands, perhaps millions of
7 New Yorkers. This makes me sick and it resonates in
8 a terrible human history. It does not matter that
9 Mayor Adams doesn't enforce the private mandate.
10 Reputable employers will never knowingly violate
11 standing law. Therefore, the cruelty and human
12 rights violations remain exactly the same. Why is
13 the worker mandate still on the books if it's not
14 even enforced and there's no emergency. Imagine that
15 politicians ripped away your ability to earn a living
16 if you didn't submit to a medical intervention that
17 you did not want, that can be medically dangerous to
18 you, that you don't need because you already have the
19 disease, that causes heart problems, strokes, blood
20 clots, and suppresses your community, that doesn't
21 prevent infection or transmission, that we know has
22 been lied about for over two years by politicians,
23 public health officials, the media, and people who
24 wear white lab coats and call themselves scientists
25 and physicians. The consequences of making your own

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2 medical decision is that you'll be unable to pay your
3 rent, to buy food for yourself, to buy food for your
4 children, to pay your bills, to buy gas for your car
5 for an entire nine months. What I've described is
6 pure cruelty and I will go so far as to call it pure
7 evil, anybody who does not stand against this, pure
8 evil. The Nuremberg Code prohibits governments from
9 leveraging coercion and forcing unwanted medical
10 interventions. The code is clear, the voluntary
11 consent of the human subject is absolutely essential.
12 This means that the persons involved should exercise
13 free power of choice without the intervention of any
14 element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, over-
15 reaching, or other ulterior form of constraint or
16 coercion--

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Can
18 you--

19 TURAZ: [interposing] I am nearly
20 complete. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, thank you.

22 TURAZ: I must put the Mayor's COVID
23 hypocrisy on the official record. Barely a day goes
24 by without pictures of Mayor Eric Adams plastered in
25 dense crowds all over social media, no masks

1
2 anywhere, no social distancing, packed events every
3 single day. There is no emergency anymore in New
4 York City. Mayor Adams is fully injected. He's
5 fully boosted. He still got COVID, and he likely
6 spread it to others. New York City is the greatest
7 city in the world. We're the people who live here.
8 End the Mayor's worker jab mandate. Let New Yorkers
9 work. Stop violating human rights. Look right up
10 there. It says let us have peace.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

12 TURAZ: Let us have peace.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much,
14 sir.

15 TURAZ: thank you everyone. Have a great
16 day.

17 [applause]

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Quiet. Quiet,
19 because I want to hear the next-- we want to hear the
20 next speaker. Thank you very much.

21 : If possible, I wanted to be sworn in,
22 if possible. Is it possible?

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You're-- go ahead,
24 you're fine.

25

1
2 RAUL RIVERA: Okay. My name is Raul
3 Rivera. I'm a New York native. I'm a TLC driver and
4 a TLC driver advocate. Taxi drivers in New York
5 City, if they get pulled over and they can't show
6 proof of vaccination, they're going to get ticketed.
7 But I have a challenge for you, Ms. Breer, and for
8 the Council-- and thank you for staying because I
9 spoke to the other two Council Members, and they just
10 walked right out. Mayor Eric Adams knows who I am.
11 A lot of the Council Members know who I am. Mr. Eric
12 Adams used to be the Borough President of Brooklyn.
13 When he was the Borough President of Brooklyn--
14 listen carefully, because this is a challenge for you
15 guys-- he was letting his staff at Brooklyn Borough
16 Hall get tested while everybody else had a deadline
17 of October 29. I have audio from a staff member that
18 he knows that's been with him for many, many years,
19 working in Brooklyn Borough Hall. I have the audio
20 from her. She worked at Brooklyn Borough Hall and
21 now she's working at City Hall, and she says she
22 doesn't want to get vaccinated. She said her mother
23 got fired because she refused to get vaccinated, and
24 she had a union. So I have the audio here. You
25 could ignore it, but I have a fellow driver. We got

1
2 other people here recording it. I reached out to
3 Council Member from District 48 months ago. I spoke
4 to her before she left, and she looks at me like I'm
5 an idiot. I myself am not vaccinated. I'm against
6 mandates. I'm against mandates, and this Mayor is
7 doing that at Brooklyn Borough Hall. You don't think
8 he's doing it here at City Hall? I have the audio.
9 If you guys don't want to do nothing, if you think
10 I'm some kind of quack, fine, no problem. I'm
11 working with a reporter with the New York Post who's
12 doing a story on it. You can ignore it or do
13 whatever you please. It's all out there no. it's all
14 up to you now.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Thank
16 you very much. And I say that because we want to
17 hear the next panel in-person. Thank you very much.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If you hear your name
19 called, please come to the table now. Audrey Denise
20 [sic], Rachel Maniscalco, Myumi Ujima [sp?],
21 Bernadette Mejia, Rashaad Taylor, and Monica N.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go ahead whoever
23 wants to start.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And please just state
25 your name before you begin.

3 AUDREY DENNIS: Hi, good afternoon. My
4 name is Audrey Dennis. I want to first thank all
5 those who came to put this common sense hearing
6 together for us to come and express ourselves, and I
7 want to thank all my fellow coworkers in all the
8 different agencies who expressed themselves today,
9 and thank you Committee for hearing us. Well, I'm a
10 school secretary. I've been in the system over 29
11 years, and I didn't take the vaccine. It was against
12 my belief. I also did file for religious and medical
13 exemption and I was denied. And I just want to say,
14 I was out of the country when I first got wind of
15 this notice that we needed to be vaccinated by
16 September. And Michael Mulgrew who was the UFT
17 President, he is pro-vaccine, and instead of him
18 recusing himself, he didn't. We went on to cheer on
19 vaccination without ratifying a vote with the
20 members. So now this Mayor de Blasio, the former
21 Mayor, he too was always pushing for the vaccine with
22 Chochki Martin Shyman [sp?] who is the arbitrator
23 who-- they all colluded to create this mandatory
24 vaccine. And it was at that time when the president
25 of the union, the UFT, decided to have this
accommodation. But accommodation was overseen by

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2 people who didn't have any belief, any religious
3 belief. So now we have to file appeals, file court
4 cases, and these appeals are going on with lawyers
5 and judges, and these judges have their hands all
6 dirty because they have stock-- they have shares in
7 this vac-- in all these different vaccines. So, I
8 just want to say something too with this "my body my
9 choice." When we saw the case write the Wade-- Roe
10 versus Wade, we saw where our Michael Mulgrew and
11 others who refused to allow us to have our own rights
12 said that he is for "my body my choice" but yet,
13 whose body was it when they were asking us to
14 vaccinate? Whose body?

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time's
16 expired.

17 AUDREY DENNIS: Was it his body? Is my
18 body his body? Alright, so I want to say--

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Wrap
20 up.

21 AUDREY DENNIS: As leaders we need to
22 have people who are courageous, people like we have
23 this gentlemen here, Mr. Holden, and Joann Ariola,
24 and sister who-- her name it's failed me now, and the
25 other lady next to her. We are thankful for people

1
2 like that, because my-- in my community Leroy
3 [inaudible] when he saw me voting in June, he said
4 that it was the unvaccinated who caused him to get
5 vaccinated.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, can you wrap
7 up, because we want to hear from your colleagues.

8 AUDREY DENNIS: Yes, ma'am. I do want to
9 say a few more things to wrap up.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

11 AUDREY DENNIS: I just want to say with
12 the-- with us not working. There should have been
13 due process. 3020A process like was mentioned
14 before, that we all should have been charged. Our
15 union failed us again, because they allowed the DOE
16 to take us out of our jobs. We're invested and
17 tenured, and need to get our benefits. I was only
18 just waiting to pay off my student loan, and these
19 people got me and my husband out. My husband had to
20 finally say, okay, I'm going to retire, just because
21 we needed to get some money coming in.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright.

23 AUDREY DENNIS: they devastated all our
24 lives.

25 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

1
2 AUDREY DENNIS: And so I'm glad to let
3 this go out, because Mayor de Blasio-- Mayor Eric
4 Adams did not speak with us.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Alright.

6 AUDREY DENNIS: He went on doing the same
7 thing de Blasio did.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

9 AUDREY DENNIS: Either you take the job
10 or no paycheck.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

12 AUDREY DENNIS: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I want to hear from
14 the next speaker, go ahead.

15 MAYUMI JIMA: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Mayumi [inaudible] Jima [sp?]. I thank you for the
17 opportunity to speak here. I'm here because I'm
18 concerned about the vaccine mandate that has affected
19 thousands people, including my family, and also I
20 seen so many people jobs have been terminated as you
21 already-- have already heard. I came here from Japan
22 as an adult, because Japan-- New York City was my
23 dream city, the United States a great country. I was
24 so happy to be here until the pandemic happened. I
25 thought New York City was greatest city in the world,

1
2 but my conception, my view has completely changed
3 since the pandemic. After the pandemic happened, the
4 lock-downs, thousands of small businesses are killed,
5 but I thought it's going to be-- it's just
6 temporarily, okay. And the vaccine came. I made my
7 personal medical choice because an experimental
8 vaccine, I [inaudible] not gonna take it. At least I
9 was going to see how it works. And vaccine mandate
10 came. I couldn't go to restaurant, was excluded from
11 the in-dining-- dining at the restaurants, gyms, you
12 name it, but I thought it's gonna past, temporarily.
13 And December last year Mayor de Blasio then enforced
14 the vaccine mandate for employer, private employer,
15 and that actually shocked me, that United States, New
16 York City has still freedom. What happened to this
17 country? What happened? I came here for freedom,
18 for a better opportunity. What happened to this
19 country? I'm so disappointed. And this-- okay, and
20 I thought it's going to be temporarily. In March, I
21 know the athlete, professional athlete exempted.
22 Okay, I'm going to wrap it up. So I thought, okay,
23 vaccine mandate's going to finally be lifted. And
24 CDC guidelines came, and what happened? Nothing. New
25 York City still has a vaccine mandate for all

1
2 employees and college student. Okay, sorry. So I
3 just demand, I just want the vaccine mandate to be
4 lifted--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank
6 you.

7 MAYUMI JIMA: at all costs.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

9 MAYUMI JIMA: Thank you. Thank you for
10 the opportunity.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Next.

12 RACHEL MANISCALCO: Hi, again. So I'm
13 speaking on behalf of Rachel, and just like myself
14 Rachel was with the Department of Education and she
15 was terminated in April of this year. She was on
16 hold. She was on leave without pay. They had her in
17 limbo, and from what I understand with those who are
18 on leave without pay, they were not able to go and
19 find another job, and they were never able to apply
20 for unemployment, which makes it different from me.
21 You know, we all have different stories. But as far
22 as with the Department of Education, and even if we
23 have a shortage in the Department of Education, we
24 have so many seasoned teachers, we have so many
25 veteran even paraprofessionals, people that want to

1 do the job, but they were let go. So now you have a
2 shortage, and you have so many people. All they have
3 to do is lift it. All they have they have to do is
4 lift the mandates and allow these people to come back
5 to work. Those that want to come back to work--
6 there are some, myself included and a few others that
7 I know personally, that they don't even want to go
8 back even if you do lift the mandates. The trauma,
9 the PTSD, honestly, this-- we all have suffered some
10 form of PTSD, CPTSD, Complex PTSD. We will never be
11 able to truly heal from what has happened, because
12 we've been humiliated, discarded. For those who have
13 taken it, because they thought that was the only
14 choice they had. Now they will forever be maimed.
15 They will never go back to the City, but the ones who
16 are dedicated, the ones who took their body into
17 their hands and made their choice their own, if you
18 lift these mandates, they will gladly come back and
19 serve the city that they love so much. But then
20 there has to be the incentive and what will happen as
21 far as an apology, back-pay. There has to be some
22 kind of incentive or something that says, you know
23 what, we did you wrong and we are responsible, and
24 we're going to take accountability for it. Give them
25

1
2 back back-pay and give them whatever it is that they
3 desire. Give unlimited PTO, whatever they deserve,
4 because the City, New York City is nothing without
5 the people. You guys don't have your seats unless we
6 vote.

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

8 Next, sir?

9 RASHAAD TAYLOR: My name is Rashaad
10 Taylor. I was a fire fighters in the Bronx six years.
11 I worked at Ladder 61, and I was born and raised in
12 the Bronx. I'm here because I feel it in my soul
13 that there is something I need to confront and take
14 care of. I ask if you're-- I ask for you to truly
15 open your ears to listen and open your heart to feel.
16 I believe we are living in fear, and that fear has
17 many disguises. I fooled myself into thinking I
18 wasn't, and that I was being strong, but I was, I was
19 living in fear. I was placed on leave without pay in
20 October right after having a newborn daughter. It's
21 been terrible, honestly. But I was put on leave
22 without pay for five months, and I was terminated in
23 February. I never thought I would have to look for
24 another job again. I loved my job. I was told, and I
25 believed, that was the best job in the world. I had

1
2 tremendous respect for it, but it slowly diminished
3 when they started persecuting their members and
4 dispose of them like a number for standing up for
5 themselves. The Mayor, City, and the Fire Department
6 arbitrarily made decisions for what's convenient for
7 them at the expense of others' livelihoods that has
8 no scientific basis at all. I was slapped in the
9 face with the rehiring letter in June, and I don't
10 care if I go back or not, because it's bigger than
11 any job. I don't care about what you choose to label
12 yourself with or identify as. We are all humans
13 first. Before I'm a fire fighter, I am a human
14 first. Pretty much all labels and categories are
15 divisive constructs. We are not separate. We are
16 all one. Stand for what's objectively right.
17 Policies and mandates are not laws, if you guys
18 didn't know. There is only one law, and that is
19 natural law and that comes from our Creator, God.
20 Anything that conflicts with that is null and void.
21 Rights can never be bought, sold, given, or taken
22 away. We are all inherently sovereign beings and we
23 have to enforce this illusion that are contrary to
24 those facts about our rights. I just have one more
25 point. Has this ever been about health? Really

1
2 think about all the events that has transpired and
3 the stories we are led to believe that has caused
4 fear, chaos, division, and a lot of aspects of our
5 lives. For what? It isn't justifiable. My health is
6 no one's responsibility but my own. Everyone's
7 health is their responsibility and I owe nothing to
8 them but honorable due regard based on objective
9 fact, because there's no scientific facts about any
10 of this. I'll leave this by asking everyone to
11 embody truth, love, light, justice, freedom, and
12 peace. And I appreciate you guys.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Thank
14 you very much. Go ahead. Appreciate it. Go ahead.

15 MONICA: Hi, I'm Monica, and I just
16 wanted to say, I didn't lose my job due to the
17 mandates like so many people here. I lost my job
18 because it shut down due to lock-downs, but I'm
19 seeing the effects every day of what these mandates
20 have been doing to everybody, and it's actually been
21 hard for me to find a new job because of these
22 mandates, and it's been over a year. I refuse to get
23 vaccinated because it is my body, my choice, and I
24 don't need any other reason than that. All you have
25 to do is look around to other states to know that

1
2 these mandates are not about, like, being necessary
3 to keep us safe, and they're the reason that
4 everybody is jobless in New York and fleeing New York
5 to go to places like freedom-loving Florida who
6 doesn't have mandates. I heard some of you asking
7 for solutions to the large number of unemployment in
8 New York City, and the solution is simple: remove
9 the mandates, period, for all companies not just city
10 jobs, but for the whole city. and how about using
11 the funds that were wasted on advertising for these
12 vaccines and ads for people to comply with masking,
13 etcetera, on job trainings instead. Use the funds
14 for lower crime in the City like hiring more NYPD and
15 removing their mandates as well so that people
16 actually want to stop leaving and stop being scared
17 to be here. And maybe use some of that money also to
18 help businesses stay open and/or reopen the ones that
19 couldn't survive the plandemic, I mean, the pandemic.
20 New York City is suffering and it will only get worse
21 if something isn't done now. Use your voices. I'm
22 imploring you, not just as our public servants, but
23 also as fellow New Yorkers to fix what has been done
24 to all of us. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
4 Go ahead.

5 BERNADETTE MEJIA: My name is Bernadette
6 Mejia. I'm a Hispanic single mother who had worked
7 for the Fire Department for over 22 years. I was a
8 female fire fighter. I was forced to retire after
9 being threatened that I would lose my job and my
10 pension if I would not get vaccinated. I was denied
11 a religious exemption. My right to privacy of
12 medical information was violated by the Fire
13 Department, and I was outcast and alienated from the
14 coworkers I had worked for so many years because of
15 my right to medical choice were being violated. The
16 very freedom this country stands for, and I knew this
17 was wrong. This was not just my job. My lifelong
18 career was being taken, it seemed like in the blink
19 of an eye. I am still in disbelief that this
20 happened. I worked during 9/11. I worked during
21 Hurricane Sandy, and I worked during the most recent
22 disaster of COVID-19. I would just like to remind
23 everyone what fire fighters and many city workers
24 experienced during that time. while working
25 throughout the pandemic tirelessly every other day at
risk to my health and safety and the risk of

1
2 contaminating family members without the appropriate
3 protective equipment, because even the Fire
4 Department of the City of New York did not have
5 adequate resources for protection of its workers,
6 while being exposed to coworkers who had tested
7 positive for COVID-19 and were told by the Fire
8 Department to report to duty. And while personally
9 exposed at home, who test-- with my fiancé who tested
10 positive, had an active [inaudible] fever, and I was
11 still told to report to work for duty at the risk of
12 countless further contaminations all while being told
13 I was essential. I was an essential worker. I was
14 essential until my civil rights were violated, my
15 right to choose; my body, my choice. I was essential
16 until the vaccine mandate. I ask you now, with all
17 of the new data concerning vaccines and its efficacy,
18 new treatment availability, the information of
19 transmission, as well as no differentiation between
20 vaccinated and unvaccinated, why are the leaders of
21 this city still imposing a vaccine mandate? My
22 future stability was taken from me. The future of a
23 stable pension to provide for my family is now gone.
24 Return all workers who were affected and punished for
25 their right to a medical choice. Restore justice to

1
2 a civil rights violation that was imposed by failed
3 city leaders. End this vaccine mandate.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Can you wrap up?
5 Thank you. Thank you very much, I appreciate it.

6 [applause]

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We got to keep
8 moving, because we have-- ma'am, if you don't mind,
9 we have--

10 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] Just one
11 thing.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: we have some--

13 UNIDENTIFIED: The PR code, the problem
14 code, many of us were not working because--

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Yeah,
16 we know that--

17 UNIDENTIFIED: there was code that was
18 placed on our record.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: thank you very much.
20 That's good to know.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you so much.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'll now call up the
23 next panel. If you hear your name called, please
24 come up now: Imoya Monroque, Gabriel Daltay [sp?],
25 Daniel Hulkower, Tim Heaton, Mandel Bailey [sp?],

1 Akila Norris [sp?]. We'll call up a few more names.

2 Paul Schweit, Thomas Olsen, Sophy Medina, Robert
3 Banome, and Katherine Diab [sp?].

4
5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Is there anybody in
6 the audience who singed up who has not spoken who
7 have signed up? They can hear me. Oh, they're
8 coming down, okay. Thank you. If there's anybody
9 whose name has been called, please feel free to join
10 us at the table. And if there's anybody who's been
11 signed up, but hasn't been called, please join us.
12 Go ahead and start, please.

13 IMOYA MONROQUE: My name is Imoya
14 Monroque. I have been in New York for many years, a
15 city that I love. I've worked as an actor and I'm
16 being discriminated against since the mandates.
17 There are many actors who were background work or who
18 work principle work, or who work in theater. I'm
19 also going to speak on behalf of artists that the
20 city claims essential part of the City. They're the
21 ones who enter whether comedy or whatever to get
22 people to survive this pandemic mentally whether they
23 were watching TV or otherwise. We're not able to
24 work, those who were unvaccinated. We're ask-- those
25 who are unvaccinated, we're asking that the City

1
2 investigate the union, the Screen Actors Guild, along
3 with other unions, because I listened today and I
4 realized the union is the roadblock. It's a
5 loophole. It's all of that. They're claiming to
6 represent us but they're not. So looking at what the
7 union is doing will be very important. I'm about to
8 lose my health insurance that I had accumulated
9 before because I worked right after the vaccine.
10 Mayor Eric Adams pleased us and gave us hope by
11 saying that entertainers and sports people would get
12 exemptions. Who got the exemptions? The people
13 with the fat bank accounts. Many of us do not have
14 that, and we have had to turn to the city, and it's
15 an expense on the City to pay rent, to pay-- to give
16 food stamps and all of these things, which also puts
17 a strain on having workers. I have friends who work
18 in the system who've lost their jobs as well. Then
19 the food stamp people have to go for food stamp when
20 the City is not paying them. In the meantime that
21 they're asking for exemptions, they're not getting
22 it. They're entitled to it, and there is no payment
23 while they wait, and I listen to the lady who was
24 circling and circling and circling the globe. She
25 has a job and she should lose that job. So that's

1
2 what I want to say. My body us my choice for
3 abortion. My body is my choice for sex reassignment
4 if I choose and the City will pay for it, but my body
5 is not my choice for what I don't want to put in it--

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank
7 you.

8 IMOYA MONROQUE: and participate in an
9 experiment, the great experiment that is happening
10 that is a clinical trial. I did to sign up for it--

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing]
12 Alright, thank you.

13 IMOYA MONROQUE: and I need to be
14 compensated for it. I'm losing pension. I'm losing
15 insurance. I'm losing income, and the City cannot
16 adequately provide what I need to survive. Thank God
17 I do not have a kid.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

19 IMOYA MONROQUE: I really feel it for
20 these other people.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
22 I want to hear form the next speaker. Go ahead.

23 IMOYA MONROQUE: Thank you.

24 DANNY HULKOWER: Hi, my name's Danny
25 Hulkower. I was a-- I worked for the New York City

1 Department of Sanitation. I was terminated for
2 refusing to take the vaccine. I think the hardest
3 part of this is the fact that we could have actually
4 ended all this. My Department could have done it,
5 but our union said to us the mandates weren't going
6 to happen, and it went from the union-- they went
7 from, "It's not going to happen, they can't do that
8 to you," to "Oh, just take it. Just take it." It
9 was disgusting the way that they handled it, and it's
10 disgusting the way the City handled it, because we
11 don't even work around the public. You see us
12 working, you don't coming running up to us. I mean,
13 it's not like we're interacting with people all day
14 long, and there weren't even that many of us that the
15 union would have had to fight for, but they just
16 didn't bother. And the worst of this is the fact
17 that I begged my guys, I said, listen, "Fight this
18 now. Whether or not you're going to take, whatever
19 you believe in it, fight for it now. Get-- end this.
20 Do not let them do this to you. Why? Because
21 they're going to step up next and take something else
22 from you." And just yesterday morning the MLC voted
23 to slash 12-126 of the City Admin Code which is the
24 City subsidizing the healthcare for both retirees and
25

1
2 current workers. So, everybody is pretty much
3 affected by this. And then what's going to happen
4 is, is they're going to force you on to a single-
5 payer, for-profit health service, that is not going
6 to benefit anybody but them. And this is going to go
7 before the City Council soon, and nobody knows about
8 this. I go, I talk to my guys. Nobody knows it. We
9 went to our union meeting yesterday to at-- to
10 confront Harry, and these guys-- and there's no shop
11 stewards there. No-- I had information to give to
12 these shop stewards. Nobody's there. Nobody knows
13 what's happening. These guys are living in a tunnel
14 vision, I'm just going to retire and I'm out of here.
15 Well, good luck with that, because the minute you try
16 to go down to Florida and your healthcare service is
17 gone, you're not going to have any options. You're
18 going to be coming up to New York every time. You
19 can still get GHI in Florida, there's still places to
20 go. It's not gonna work if the City has a specific
21 plan, just for everybody that's going to be for their
22 benefit only.

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: thank you very much.
24 Go ahead, next.

25

1
2 GABRIEL DALMAL: Hi, my name is Gabriel
3 Dalmal [sp?]. I worked for the Department of
4 Sanitation for about five years. I remember feeling
5 proud when I first got the job. I'm a welder.
6 Welding on garbage trucks is not glamorous at all. A
7 lot of the City jobs that we take and that we do are
8 not glamorous, but we show up every day, even during
9 a pandemic, nurses, fire fighters, teachers, EMTs,
10 police, you name it. We were there. We were good
11 enough then. We should be good enough now. In April
12 of 2020 my mother Cynthia-- God bless her soul-- she
13 passed away. I took my four days bereavement and I
14 went back to work. I work back to work every single
15 day during the pandemic. When my mother passed away,
16 took my four days. I went back to work. It's not
17 because I'm an outstanding employee or anything like
18 that, it's because it's my job. That's what I chose
19 to do. I said I'd rather be at work keeping my mind
20 busy and doing something at least for the city in my
21 own little small way to help out rather than be at
22 home going crazy. We're not where we were before.
23 These things don't make sense. The mandates don't
24 make sense while people are hurting out there.
25 People are losing their jobs, their homes. All the

1
2 people to be called on when we're in trouble, police,
3 fire fighters, EMT, nurses, school teachers, all
4 those people, they were good enough then, but they're
5 not good enough now. How does that make any sense?
6 All I got to say is that end the mandates. It's
7 unconstitutional. It's illegal, and it's just
8 downright not human the way that we've been treating
9 people. We got treated like yesterday's newspaper.
10 We got treated like the trash that we help to take
11 out all the time, and the same with a whole bunch of
12 other people in this city. this great city that we
13 love that we all signed up to take care, that we're
14 all a part of, we need to be less divisive and more
15 inclusive and get everybody back to what they do
16 best, because you cannot replace the amount of
17 experience that these people have with new hires. It
18 just don't work that way. You, ma'am, you said
19 you've been around for a long time. As you--

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Long
21 time.

22 GABRIEL DALMAL: you could probably
23 attest to what experience means, and what it matters.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Oh, I know. I know.
25 I appreciate it absolutely. Thank you.

3 GABRIEL DALMAL: Alright. Thank you for
4 your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Go ahead, sir.

6 TIM HEATON: my name is Tim Heaton. I
7 was a Lieutenant in the FDNY until I was terminated
8 on July 6th, 33 days shy of celebrating my 23rd year.
9 I'd been LWOP since November 1st, having filed a
10 religious exemption in October. I grew up in
11 Middletown, Pennsylvania which is near Hershey. I
12 started to volunteer at my local Fire Departments.
13 FDNY guys would come out and teach classes, and got
14 me interested in working here. I left the Washington,
15 D.C. Fire Department in 1999 to pursue my dream of
16 being a New York City fireman. Sadly, that dream is
17 taking a most serious turn in the past two years. In
18 March of 2022, I was still a fireman at Engine 69 in
19 Harlem. We were performing CPR on a daily basis,
20 often several times per day. I was promoted to
21 Lieutenant in May of 2020, and every fire house I
22 worked in in lower Manhattan had numerous members out
23 for COVID. It was obvious there was no way I had not
24 been exposed to COVID, and whatever I was doing was
25 working. To say that we've been failed by those in
leadership would be a huge understatement. From

1
2 those that once banged pots and cheered at 7:00 p.m.,
3 to unions that ignored sizable factions of their
4 membership who did not want nor need the vaccine, to
5 the leaders of the follow-up itself, staff chiefs who
6 went along with the coercion, the previous
7 Commissioner's abhorrent remarks, essentially calling
8 us all scumbags, to the current one who continues to
9 all members to be terminated for not getting a
10 vaccine that obviously does not do what they said it
11 would. We have seen what failed leadership is. it
12 continue on an almost daily basis from Mayor Marie
13 Antoinette's office as he exempts athletes and
14 entertainers, but decrees to the people who actually
15 live and work in this City-- let them eat cake. We
16 are here asking for your help. We don't need heroes.
17 There are thousands of heroes in the FDNY who do
18 heroic things on a daily basis. What we need is
19 someone in leadership to stand up for us, to champion
20 us and our righteous cause and to simply allow all of
21 us to do what we have been doing long before the last
22 two years inexplicably altered our lives and our
23 careers. Let us work. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
25 Go ahead.

1
2 KATHERINE DIAB: Good afternoon. My name
3 is Katherine Diab [sp?]. I'm a New York City tenured
4 teacher. I worked during 2020-21 in-person and in
5 addition to painting with my students, I also did
6 health screenings. I, luckily for myself, received
7 health exemption. However, we lost two teachers in
8 my school because of these mandates. I have numerous
9 friends that are unemployed or underemployed because
10 of these mandates that are on the brink of
11 homelessness who I am helping right now financially
12 since I still am working. I have also many
13 colleagues and friend and family members who sadly
14 were coerced into receiving these experimental,
15 illegal, injections because they're EUA's, and it's
16 not legal to force people to receive them as a
17 condition for employment. People have to sign a
18 consent form to be part of a clinical trial, and the
19 people I know did not want this. They felt that they
20 had to have it to maintain their employment. I-- I'm
21 very well-versed, and I do my research, but I don't
22 have to because I know people, friends, neighbors,
23 family members who've had side effects ranging from
24 vertigo to headaches that kept them in bed for a
25 week. I've seen people staggering down the street,

1 because it's that kind of neighborhood. I've asked
2 them what's wrong, and they said, "I just got my
3 second dose of Pfizer and I have vertigo." I've seen
4 two people in that condition. So, I've seen, you
5 know, many side effects, and the common denominator
6 is that they've received these shots. And-- okay, I'm
7 going to stop in one minute. I cannot be silent
8 anymore. Thank you.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
11 And now we'd like to hear from last panel, if you
12 don't mind, the people right behind you. Thank you
13 so much.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible] add one thing?
15 I also applied for a religious exemption, and I work
16 with a partner at DSNY. He's working right now and
17 I'm not.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Go ahead
19 with whomever would like to begin.

20 SOPHY MEDINA: Good afternoon. My name
21 is Sophy Medina. I was born and raised here and have
22 lived here my entire life except for my time in the
23 Marines. This is my family. Tommy and I are fire
24 fighters on forced leave without pay because we
25 didn't take a shot that proved to be useless at best

1
2 and harmful at worst. Five fire fighters are
3 suddenly dead after the vaccine mandates, and many
4 others are quietly suffering with adverse reactions,
5 and they're afraid to speak out publicly. We both
6 worked throughout the worst of the pandemic. We
7 worked without proper protective equipment and we
8 both acquired natural immunity. We went from
9 essential to expendable, and no one seems to care,
10 which is ironic if you remember the banging of the
11 pots and pans at 7:00 p.m. every night. My faith was
12 used many times by the FDNY to recruit and promote
13 diversity by the FDNY. I was here in these chambers.
14 I remember your face when I was testifying about the
15 terrible treatment of certain women on this job, but
16 since these mandates-- and the FDNY problems to
17 recruit and retain women like myself. Since the
18 mandates we have been shunned from our place of work
19 and from society in New York City, but there were no
20 vaccine mandates to ride the trains and buses where
21 vaccinated and unvaccinated were side by side this
22 whole time. Divisive messaging from the top down has
23 relegated my family and I and many others like me to
24 become second-class citizens in our own city. We've
25 worked in public service our whole lives, Tommy in

1
2 Sanitation before this, myself as a lifeguard as a
3 teenager, a marine before, and a fire fighter now.
4 Being a fire fighter is not just a job for any of us.
5 It's a vocation, truly a calling that takes a certain
6 type of person who's both tough and compassionate.
7 It's a dedication to serve when bad things happen and
8 to help people on their worst days at their most
9 vulnerable moments. We've responded to victims of
10 assault. I've translated between patients and
11 advance medical providers, and we've operated at
12 fires with little regard for our own safety and
13 lives.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: She can take my two
15 minutes over.

16 SOPHY MEDINA: Tommy has been twice
17 decorated by the FDNY for going above and beyond at
18 fires, one of them during the pandemic, no less.
19 We've never asked anyone's vaccination status when
20 providing help when called. These mandates have
21 taken away our ability to provide for our family. It
22 is still impossible to find work in this city even
23 after the shift from the CDC. The constant strain of
24 pressure during this time has been really hard for my
25 family and I. Years of hard work and saved money for

1
2 our future have gone down the drain and will affect
3 us on a generational level, as it's taking away from
4 our children and our future, and it's taking away
5 from our parents who we've been preparing to care for
6 in their golden years. Our kids were forced out of
7 their swimming classes and out of public school since
8 we won't subject them to participate in a system
9 where their parents aren't allowed. Instead of
10 recognizing that our stance was indeed right, we're
11 still being punished by the City of New York. Our
12 religious exemptions were denied, and our medical
13 exemptions are being sat on by the very people who
14 are supposed to be preserving and fighting for our
15 rights. There's no state of emergency, and the City
16 is bleeding out money trying to recruit while many of
17 us are out in the cold wanting to work, and the City
18 is losing valuable years of expertise. City jobs
19 used to be coveted for providing job stability, and
20 now no one wants these jobs because they have
21 witnessed the disrespect to all the city workers who
22 chose to stand up for themselves. Never forget that
23 first responders were told the air was safe to
24 breathe after 9/11, and never forget that we were

1
2 told that this crap was safe and effective, and here
3 we are now. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much,
5 and thank you to the family for being here. Thank
6 you for-- I don't know who goes next. You, sir?

7 BOBBY BANOME: Yeah, I can go next. My
8 name is Bobby Banome. I'm an eight-year FDNY fire
9 fighter veteran. I'm the President of a Charity
10 called Humble Heroes of FDNY. It's comprised all of
11 volunteers. We dress up as superheroes and we visit
12 pediatric burn centers and cancer centers around the
13 country to lift the spirits of sick kids. I'm the
14 most-- I'm the most recent winner of the Patrick J.
15 Murphy Award, an award that goes to the top fire
16 fighters or police officer that's done the most for
17 the community on and off the clock. I'm currently on
18 leave without pay for eight months. I have fallen
19 uncomfortably into debt, despite receiving financial
20 aid from friends and family. I'm engaged, but we've
21 cancelled all wedding plans until we can get back on
22 our feet financially. And given the new CDC
23 guidelines, I just want to get back to work. I just
24 ask that we get put back to work. Thank you for your
25 time and consideration with this matter.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

3 BOBBY BANOME: It's greatly appreciated.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Go
5 ahead, sir.

6 TOM APOLA: Good afternoon. My name is
7 Tom Apola [sp?]. I've been a member of the Fire
8 Department for the past 38 years, achieving the rank
9 of Battalion Chief, but unfortunately my career came
10 to an abrupt end last year when the former Mayor
11 arbitrarily decided to implement the mandate that all
12 New York City employees receive an experimental gene
13 therapy, as I was forced to retire. No need for me
14 to explain why I did not take this experimental shot.
15 Suffice it to say, I'm a believer in informed
16 consent. I'm here today to give my unequivocal
17 support to the brave men and women of the Fire
18 Department, the NYPD, the Sanitation workers,
19 teachers, and any other municipal employee who may
20 have lost their jobs because of this unjust mandate,
21 or who still remain on leave without pay. I've also
22 recognized the potential harm that this mandate may
23 have already caused each agency as a result of a
24 sudden departure of many of its members in both
25 leadership and the rank and file. As a leader, I

1 realized that one of my immediate responsibilities
2 was to identify and inspire the future leaders of the
3 organization. Now, in this past year I've watched
4 many new leaders come into their own, some of whom
5 you've already listened to today, alright, which
6 under normal conditions would have prompted me to
7 encourage these members to step into the breach and
8 fill the void left by the natural attrition process,
9 but sadly, these potential leaders have now either
10 been terminated or they still remain on leave without
11 pay. The void created by these terminations and the
12 forced early retirements of many others is
13 immeasurable, as these members took with them all
14 their experiences and their knowledge that it may be
15 years before these agencies return to what we used to
16 call normal. By continuing to keep these talented
17 workforce-- this talented workforce out of work
18 because they chose not to be coerced into receiving
19 this job does nothing to keep people safe, but it
20 does prevent them providing the services that they've
21 been trained to do, and that training all at a cost
22 to the tax payer. Every one of these people who has
23 been negatively impacted by this mandate showed up to
24 work throughout the pandemic and at great personal
25

1
2 risk not only to themselves, but to their families as
3 well. All they are asking for is simply to return to
4 work so they too can provide for their families, just
5 like the Mets, the Yankees, the Knicks, and the Nets.
6 I don't believe that's too much to ask. And I do
7 recognize that it may be a difficult political
8 decision for the Mayor to rescind this unnecessary
9 mandate at this time, but hey, he was a New York City
10 Police Captain, and I'm quite sure his honor has the
11 moral courage to put aside all politics for a moment
12 and simply do the right thing. Thank you very much
13 and God bless you all.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank-- thank you
15 very much. Quiet. Go ahead, sir.

16 PAUL SCHWEIT: My name is Paul Schweit.
17 I'm a fire fighter for seven years with the FDNY.
18 There's not much I can say that can sum up every
19 single testimony that was given here today, but I do
20 hope that it resonates with all the Council Members,
21 and I do hope that a lot of the Council Members come
22 back and look at the testimony and read them, because
23 our stories can never give you insight to what we
24 endured these past-- this past year. I pride myself
25 as a marine and a fire fighter to be strong at hard

1
2 times and stand up when standing's hard and even when
3 I stand alone. But this past year, I had a son, and
4 my son gave me the strength to do what was right in
5 my heart, and I hope that the Council Members can
6 find it in their heart to listen to these
7 testimonies, hear the struggles that we have gone
8 through. This is not just about loss of pay. This
9 is not about even vaccines. This is about enduring
10 pain and suffering, which as humans we can all attest
11 to. We need relief. And Council Members that have
12 helped us through this process, we-- they need your
13 help. We need the Mayor's help, and when we're up
14 here pleading for our lives, for our families, for
15 future generations, it's not to take a political
16 stance. It's to show you that suffering is real and
17 it's almost unbearable at times. But the men and
18 women in this chamber, the testimonies that you have
19 heard, are family, and this is what New York City is
20 about, right here. I don't know if you've ever heard
21 in this chamber the amount of comradery and support
22 ever before than in this testimony right now. So
23 please take that to heart. Understand that we need
24 you to sign onto the other Council Members' plea for
25 help to talk to the Mayor to please release these

1
2 mandates. Help us through this struggle to get back
3 to work, not only for ourselves either, but for
4 future generations and for this city to get back on
5 its feet.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I want to say thank
7 you for the last in-person person to speak. You did
8 a great summary, and we're glad that you were the
9 closer and thank you very much to everyone. We're
10 going to go now to the final persons on the Zoom.

11 PAUL SCHWEIT: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much,
13 sir. Council Member Holden has a question. Go
14 ahead.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I just want to
16 say, before-- you know, this has been probably the
17 toughest hearing to sit through as a Council Member.
18 I've been on for almost five years now in the
19 Council, and I really feel, especially the first
20 responders who did their jobs. You guys are the salt
21 of the earth, and you should not have been treated
22 this way, and the City will make it up to you. I
23 guarantee that the Mayor will come, you know, come to
24 the conclusion that we can't keep these mandates. I
25 just feel that he's-- he's a good man. We've met

1
2 with him. I think if he saw this testimony like right
3 where I'm sitting he would tomorrow change that and
4 just do away with the mandates, but this is
5 heartbreaking this hearing. And I just hope everyone
6 out there listen-- you know, watches this, and we-- I
7 don't know how many press reporters are here, but
8 this word has to get out and this has to be done,
9 because it's not fair. It's not right. You all went
10 through the pandemic like us, but you were on the
11 front lines, and you guys are heroes, and we
12 shouldn't treat our heroes-- we shouldn't kick them
13 in the head and say goodbye like that, especially
14 with what you've been through. I admire you all.
15 You're patriots, and I stand with you, and I'll do
16 whatever I can to convince the Mayor, because he can
17 do this. He can lift it tomorrow, and we have to
18 convince him. But thank you all for your testimony.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Thank
21 you very much. We're now going to go-- because
22 there's still people on the Zoom. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'd now like to
24 welcome Tabitha Forte [sp?] to testify followed by

25

1
2 Maureen Hurley [sp?] and then Cely Batista. Tabitha
3 Forte, you may begin when ready.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Tabitha, if you can
6 hear us, you may begin. We'll move on now to Maura
7 Heely [sp?].

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Excuse me, Maureen
10 Hurley.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 MAUREEN HURLEY: Hi. I just have two
13 questions, and they're for the Mayor. What science
14 is the Mayor following and the Department of Health,
15 and why do they not recognize natural immunity?
16 Thank you. That was it.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Cely Batista?

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 CELY BATISTA: Hello. Hello everyone.
21 Thank you for having me, and thank you, Mr. Holden
22 for your-- those words that you said, very touching.
23 My [inaudible] Cely. I am a Sergeant of Police. I am
24 still employed with the New York City Police
25 Department. I also have a Master's Degree in Human

1
2 Resource Management and have studied employment law,
3 and this topic I know very well about, because I've
4 studied. I'm here as my first amendment right to be
5 here with you all as an individuals. So, let me just
6 fast forward. I was denied my religious exemption. I
7 later on was able to find a lawyer after several
8 attempts, and I found one during that gridlock,
9 finding an attorney. I found one three days before I
10 had to submit my appeal, and I submitted it. After
11 that, I got admitted-- like a week later, I was
12 admitted in the hospital with chest pains, was put
13 out from work two and a half weeks. Okay? I had to
14 deal with lost friendships, lost partnerships. So
15 you can just imagine the amount of stress for the
16 past 10 to 12 months, right? It's physically illegal
17 pain and suffering, okay? You seen all the
18 testimonies. It's all illegal pain and suffering.
19 So, July, I won and I was approved, but thousands
20 have been denied. So one would assume-- I'm a Roman
21 Catholic. One would assume that at a legal
22 standpoint at this point, at legal standpoint,
23 everyone else should be similarly situated. If I was
24 approved, everyone else should be similarly situated,
25 but that's not the case. So I'm going to say-- I'm

1
2 going to say something, you know? My lawyer did ask
3 me, she goes, "I have a question for you? Were you
4 working inside or were you out there working on the
5 streets?" I said no, I actually work in New York
6 City Transit, so it's a lot more hectic, more people
7 to deal with on a constant basis. Then she goes,
8 "Oh, because I have [inaudible]--

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time's
10 expired.

11 CELY BATISTA: a lot of my clients
12 getting disapproved." Okay.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Can you wrap up? I'm
14 sorry. Thank you.

15 CELY BATISTA: I just want to end with
16 this. Religious interrogation is not up to the
17 government, okay? Religious interrogation is not up
18 to the government. It's not for you guys to do--
19 you're not divine. You don't have the power that God
20 has to judge anyone. I just want to leave that with
21 that statement.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

23 CELY BATISTA: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

25 CELY BATISTA: Okay, thank you very much.

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

4 Next?

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll hear from
6 Emily Zapantis, then Laura Hoffman, then Illiana
7 Gordon, then Karen Rosado [sp?]. Emily Zapantis, you
8 may begin when ready.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

10 EMILY ZAPANTIS: Yes, hello? Can you
11 hear me?

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, we hear you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We can hear you.

14 EMILY ZAPANTIS: Yes, hi, good afternoon.
15 I'd like to thank all the Council Members that are so
16 valiantly sitting there listening to all of us today.
17 Thank you. I am a former New York City School
18 Administrator and Assistant Principal for 17 years
19 and an educator for 23 years in the City of New York
20 before I was terminated. I'm also part of the
21 Educators for Freedom, and I am also one of the ones
22 that worked during the 2020-2021 year when everybody
23 stayed home because of their body mass index and
24 their body fat content. I went into work every single
25 day so that I can advocate for my beautiful students
and my parents and the community in Jamaica, Queens

1
2 that I have been a part of for so many years. It's
3 egregious what they have done to us, and more
4 importantly to the economy of New York City that I
5 have been a member of for almost 56 years of my life
6 as I was born and bred in Queens, New York. You want
7 the best workers? You had the best workers,
8 educated, highly-educated people. Personally, three
9 diplomas and three certifications in education
10 myself. It's egregious that I had to sit there and
11 listen to the woman in the green dress, the circle-
12 back DCAS woman to lie in front of the Council people
13 there today. We were not on payroll as we waited and
14 waited to be accepted by the citywide panel and the
15 determination of whether our religious exemptions was
16 going to be accepted or not, and our accommodations
17 who was denied four times in a row. But it's okay.
18 The worst part of it all for me,--

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time's
20 expired.

21 EMILY ZAPANTIS: it's not the money
22 that's been lost, even though I was making more than
23 the principal as an Assistant Principal because I had
24 more seniority. The worst part of it for me was that
25 my religion was being in question. As a Sunday school

1
2 teacher, that was the worst part of it. And about 12
3 years ago I found--

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Can you
5 wrap up? I'm sorry, can you wrap up? Thank you.

6 EMILY ZAPANTIS: I'm sorry?

7 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Can you wrap up?
8 Because we got more speakers.

9 EMILY ZAPANTIS: Yeah. I found myself
10 sitting at the Queens Museum with about five to six
11 of my teachers, and we learned about the Flushing
12 Vermonstrans [sic] that day because we were doing
13 professional development, and the Flushing
14 Vermonstans, for all those people that don't know
15 really should look it up, was the precursor to the
16 U.S. Constitution--

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Ma'am,
18 you really do--

19 EMILY ZAPANTIS: And the Bill of Rights
20 for religious freedom.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] we do
22 need to wrap--

23 EMILY ZAPANTIS: [interposing] And it all
24 started in Flushing Queens.
25

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We need to wrap up.
4 We need to wrap up, okay?

5 EMILY ZAPANTIS: Yeah, it all started--

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] We
7 need-- ma'am, we need to wrap up because we more
8 speakers to go, alright? Thank you.

9 EMILY ZAPANTIS: Yes, but I just want to--
10 - thank you. I just want to let everybody know that
11 they should look up the Flushing Vermonstrans--

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank
13 you.

14 EMILY ZAPANTIS: which was the precur--

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank
16 you very much.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'd now like to
18 welcome Laura Hoffman to testify, and then Illiana
19 Gordon, and then Karen Rosado. Laura Hoffman, you
20 may begin.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

22 LAURA HOFFMAN: Hi. First of all, I want
23 to work. In January 2022 I was fired from my job of
24 10 years following an unpaid, involuntary leave of
25 absence due to the COVID vaccine mandates and my
firmly held religious beliefs. I was tossed aside

1
2 like human garbage after begin a dedicated worker of
3 10 years. The unfair treatment negated the decades
4 of volunteer community work that I have done
5 alongside my further employer and in the Greenpoint
6 community on multiple environmental waterfront parks
7 and housing issues. I've testified many, many times
8 before New York City Council regarding those issues.
9 Never would I have ever thought that I'd be
10 testifying about my right to work, my freedom of
11 religion, or having control over what to put in my
12 body, but here I am. My income and my ability to get
13 another job were taken away, and it was needless
14 since I've had natural antibodies since March 2020
15 following being sick with COVID. Given my community-
16 based knowledge about environmentally-linked diseases
17 and knowledge about my own autoimmune diseases, I
18 knew it was a strong possibility that these
19 antibodies would serve to protect me from COVID in
20 the future. And now the CDC is finally catching up,
21 acknowledging what many people already knew. What
22 hurts the most is that I truly loved my job, my co-
23 workers, my clients, and I'm still friends with many
24 of my co-workers and client who've sought me out on
25 social media. I worked as a housing counselor in a

1
2 respected not-for-profit community organization under
3 contract with HPD as a housing counselor-- housing
4 counseling agency. As an essential worker, I worked
5 both in the office and remotely serving clients
6 during the heart of the pandemic, made wellness calls
7 to seniors in an effort to prevent them from feeling
8 isolated. The same organization that did this work
9 is the same one--

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
11 is expired.

12 LAURA HOFFMAN: that hired me for who I
13 am and I isolated me, a senior with medical issues.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank-- if you could
15 wrap up, thank you.

16 LAURA HOFFMAN: Basically, the mandates
17 have severely harmed me and harmed the way that I
18 interact with the community. I refuse to even eat
19 out in establishments that did not push back against
20 the mandate.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

22 LAURA HOFFMAN: And it's to the point
23 where I myself after fighting environmental issues in
24 this community for decades, I'm thinking about moving
25 out of New York myself.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
3 much. One of the--

4 LAURA HOFFMAN: because--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] One of
6 the Council Members has a question, if you could just
7 hold on a minute. Thank you. Go ahead.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you,
9 Chairwoman. I really just want to say thank you to
10 Chairwoman De La Rosa and to Chairwoman Gale Brewer,
11 because they're worth a good round of applause,
12 because before today, people who were on leave
13 without pay or people who did not get granted their
14 leave or get granted their appeals were just that,
15 words to many people. But today, now, because of
16 their ability to have you come and testify, we now
17 have faces to make-- to align with those needs. And
18 anyone, anyone who can look in your faces and tell
19 you that you are wrong, there's something wrong with
20 them. There shouldn't be just eight of us signing on
21 a letter. There shouldn't be just eight of us
22 standing with you out front on the steps of City
23 Hall. There should be 51 of us, because in this City
24 Council, we fight for equality, gender equality,
25 medical equality, equality for those whose civil

1
2 rights have been denied. And I've heard all of that
3 here today. So this needs to be a body of 51, not
4 just eight voices or 10 voices, a body of 51 to meet
5 with the Mayor again and say to him we know you're
6 open to this, but we're working together to make sure
7 that justice and racism and inequity is addressed,
8 because this is a room of diversity and of the people
9 who elected us to protect them, and that's not what's
10 happening here. So thank you for your courage, and
11 thank you for your indulgence. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
13 Let's go to the next--

14 [applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That was great, but
16 I want to hear the people on the Zoom. Go ahead.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from
18 Illiana Gordon, then Karen Rosado, then Dominick
19 Francois, and then Tabitha Forte. Illiana Gordon,
20 you may begin when ready.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

22 ILLIANA GORDON: Hi, I'm Illiana Gordon.
23 I'm a police dispatcher, police operator with 911,
24 and I'm here basically because of the horrible
25 conditions that we are made to work with on a

1
2 constant basis. To top it off, we're paid a very low
3 wage. That's a low salary. The starting salary is
4 39 and it tops off at I think, 56-57. And virtually
5 this whole summer, the New York City is running a
6 sweatshop. That's basically what it is, a sweatshop.
7 And if it was any other company, any other
8 organization in the City it would be shut down. But
9 the City is home. So I'm just letting you guys know
10 that you guys are running a sweatshop, right? Who
11 wants to-- you guys are there contemplating what else
12 can be done, why people aren't working in the city.
13 People aren't working, especially at my job, because
14 they're always hiring, because nobody wants to make
15 39 dollars-- 39,000 dollars annually for-- as a
16 dispatcher. I mean, we do a lot of work. We cover
17 77 precincts, nine transit bureaus, right, and what
18 seven PSA's, but don't quote me on that, and 39,000?
19 Fifty-- it tops off at 56. Come on, I think you guys
20 can do better than a two percent raise, annually,
21 right? But what I want you guys to do-- and I'm
22 imploring you guys, the city-- all the City Council.
23 Because in the past I've written to every-- almost
24 every member of the City Council's Public Safety
25 Committee. I've written to the former House Speaker

1
2 Corey Johnson. I've written to this present Speaker
3 of the House, and nothing has ever happened. Like
4 what is the sense of me writing to you guys if you
5 guys are even responding how I want you guys to
6 respond? Like, what is the whole purpose of this--
7 this whole democracy, right? I want you guys to come
8 and visit the center, right, on all tours, three
9 tours, on all tours possible, right? And you'll come
10 and you'll sit there and you tell me if--

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
12 is expired.

13 ILLIANA GORDON: that's what you think we
14 deserve. Because at this point, this isn't making
15 any sense and it's not fair.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Can you wrap up?

17 ILLIANA GORDON: It's 2022.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Can you wrap up?

19 Thank you.

20 ILLIANA GORDON: It's 2022 and we are the
21 lowest dispatchers in the tri-state area.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. Thank
23 you very much. Thank you.

24

25

3 ILLIANA GORDON: A lot of operators make
4 more money than us. For all we do for the New York
5 City Police Department--

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Thank-
7 - ma'am, thank you.

8 ILLIANA GORDON: the largest Police
9 Department in the world.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

11 ILLIANA GORDON: We got to do better.

12 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
13 Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'd now like to call
15 on Carin Rosado and then Dominick Francois, and then
16 Tabitha Forte. Carin Rosado?

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

18 CARIN ROSADO: Good evening. Can you
19 hear me?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

21 CARIN ROSADO: Good evening. My name is
22 Carin Rosado. I'm a paramedic who was terminated
23 from FDNY. I've come here today hoping that you
24 understand the effect mandates have caused myself and
25 many others like me. You see, I grew up in the
foster care system and had a job since I was the

1 fifth grade. I was a kid, but I knew that I wanted
2 more out of life, and I wanted to be in a position to
3 help others in any capacity. And when the
4 opportunity opened for me to become a paramedic for
5 the FDNY, I seized it. I enjoyed helping people
6 every day, and twice in my career I've met young
7 people in the foster care system who thought they
8 wouldn't amount to anything or have a career like
9 mine in FDNY until I shared my story with them, and I
10 immediately saw hope in their eyes, that they now
11 have someone to relate to. And it's proof that if
12 they push hard enough they can too make it. I now
13 feel like that kid in foster care-- excuse me-- who
14 feels like they have everything stacked against them.
15 I cannot get a job within New York City with the
16 skills that I have. I now don't know where my next
17 paycheck will come from. I worked there at the
18 pandemic, and while it may seem like a broken record,
19 to say we were praised one day and forgotten the
20 next, it is heart-breakingly true. Throughout the
21 pandemic we were seeing an experiencing some of the
22 worst days in our career, working more hours than
23 normal, with the call volumes at an all-time high.
24 It was mentally, emotionally, and physically
25

1 draining, but we showed up every day. To invade our
2 private medical history and choices and terminate us
3 over the vaccine that has carve-outs for athletes or
4 entertainers because they boost the economy, it has
5 nothing to do with science. You see I now can get a
6 job playing as a paramedic on TV, but I can't use my
7 actual skills that I was trained for, and I have 10
8 years' experience on the community that actually need
9 it. Where's the logic in that? The CDC finally
10 acknowledges unvaccinated with previous exposure hold
11 the same immunity as the vaccinated. So why isn't the
12 City following that science? Why can't we
13 acknowledge natural immunity?
14

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

16 CARIN ROSADO: I'm not threat to anyone--
17 30 more seconds.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

19 CARIN ROSADO: I'm not a threat to
20 anyone, and I hope you will stand with us and drop
21 these carve-outs and allow us to stand with our
22 brothers and sisters again keeping New York safe.
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
25 Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'd now like to call
4 on Dominick Francois followed by Tabitha Forte.
5 Dominick Francois, you may begin when ready.

6 DOMINICK FRANCOIS: Hello, can you hear
7 me?

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yeah, your time will
9 begin.

10 DOMINICK FRANCOIS: Thank you very much.
11 My name is Dominick Francois. I am still a New York
12 City Police Department Officer until next Friday when
13 my tenure is expected to end due to the COVID-19
14 vaccine mandate, and I was forced to submit my
15 paperwork for vested retirement, which was not my
16 intention, and I'm hoping that this turns around so
17 that I can continue my career and retire from the
18 City of New York. I think we're at an impasse right
19 now where we have heard and allowed individuals who
20 just wanted to be heard and given the opportunity to
21 say this is not for me, I appreciate the offer, but
22 I'm not going to do this. The vaccine was something
23 that was forced on people in the City who have to
24 work here or have to work in the City, and I think
25 it's-- now we're at an impasse where we're starting
to hear those voices that were not heard, especially

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2 during those reasonable accommodation request
3 periods. Now we're hearing those voices say something
4 and say well, this is not right. This is why it's not
5 right. This is why I feel I should be given the
6 reasonable accommodation. We're at an impasse to
7 right the wrongs that we've experienced for the last
8 two and a half years, going on three years. This is
9 an opportunity for the City to say, okay, we've got
10 to start to rebuild. We've got to start making next
11 steps to get past whatever COVID is and whatever it's
12 going to be for the City in the future, but it has to
13 start at some point. It really does have to start at
14 some point. So, people like Cely Batista, people
15 like Peter Kandinov, Michael Cain [sp?], thank you
16 for being the face of this movement, for being the
17 drive that inspires so many people to just keep
18 pushing and doing what they feel is best for their
19 families, for themselves, so they can just do what
20 they've always done which is provide. Thank you for
21 this opportunity. Be safe everyone. Be well. I
22 hope to see you on the other side of this. Thank you
23 for the opportunity to speak.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'd now like to
3 welcome Tabitha Forte to testify, and to anyone else
4 who's on the Zoom who hasn't had the chance to speak,
5 if we haven't called on you, please use the Zoom
6 raise hand function now. Tabitha Forte?

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

8 TABITHA FORTE: Sure. Can you hear me?

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, we hear.

10 TABITHA FORTE: On October 2021st [sic], I
11 was placed on unpaid leave from Praxis [sic] Housing
12 Initiative due to the vaccine mandate, and I was
13 officially fired as of Valentine's Day of this year.
14 Since then I have been not able to work in-person in
15 New York due to this unconstitutional mandate. I
16 worked throughout the entire pandemic and even
17 contracted COVID from my direct supervisor. From
18 hero shortly to zero. I have dedicated myself working
19 to become a mental health counselor. I completed
20 eight years' Master's Program and obtained my
21 licensure last year to be told I'm unable to work in-
22 person. For over 10 years I've worked as a
23 counselor, exposed to all sorts of communicable
24 diseases and I have never have I judged or thought
25 that I would be judged in America for health

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2 decisions I choose for myself. Not only do I have an
3 exempted medical-- medical-related history to-- with
4 my nervous system, I also filed for a religious
5 exemption with a letter from my pastor and was
6 denied. CDC guidelines have changed. CDC has omitted
7 these restrictions for begin absolute nonsense. We
8 the people should never allow these tyrants such as
9 these "circle back" employees to control us, and they
10 need to get together about dropping this mandate. I
11 find it incredibly funny that these employers who are
12 in charge of making those decisions haven't come
13 together to discuss these new guidelines, which were
14 completely ridiculous to begin. They come here with
15 no COVID data and will sit in our faces, paid, and
16 state that they will get back to us, letting us know
17 how many people were fired or put on leave because
18 their exemptions were denied. There should be--
19 never have been a mandate in the first place. This
20 is a free country. Vote for Lee Zeldin to save
21 America. Let's go Brandon!

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I think
23 we've heard from all the Zoom registrants who are on
24 the Zoom. I'm going to read through the remaining
25 registrants to make sure we haven't missed anyone.

1
2 So if you hear your name called and you're here and
3 you haven't testified please come up, or if you on
4 the Zoom, please use the Zoom raise hand function.
5 Tom Lapolla [sp?], Jason Fried [sp?], Mary Moss
6 [sp?], Audrey Dennis [sp?], Bridget Boyle [sp?], Ruth
7 Vashiltsky [sp?], Danielle McGuire [sp?], Danny,
8 Christa O'Day [sp?], S. Juliow [sp?], Patricea
9 Liviola [sp?], Stacey Christopolous [sp?], William
10 Lee, Carrie McGovern Duffy [sp?], Gabriel Del
11 Mow[sp?], Jeremiah Sedeno [sp?], anonymous attendee,
12 Arthur Roldan [sp?], Diana Haynes [sp?], Grace Lee,
13 Michael Rogers, Jessica Tambor [sp?], Kira Kredichen
14 [sp?], Edgar Alfonseca [sp?], Christine Schneider,
15 D.N. Morgan, Ricardo Hinkle [sp?], Novem Ayung [sp?],
16 and Michael Cain [sp?].

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So, I want to thank
18 particularly Council Member Ayala, Council Member
19 Holden, Council Member Ariola, and of course, the
20 amazing Carmen De La Rosa for staying here the whole
21 time. And I also want to thank the amazing
22 individuals who testified in-person, of course on the
23 Zoom. I have to say we will be constantly following
24 up, not only on the mandate issue, but also on the
25 issue of how is it that the City, in my opinion, is

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2 not doing more virtual. What are we doing about the
3 pay scales? There's a long list that you heard us
4 discuss earlier. We're very, very serious about
5 making sure New York City has the best workforce in
6 the world, and we look forward to working with you. I
7 want to turn it over my fabulous Co-chair Carmen De
8 La Rosa.

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Well, just
10 echoing the sentiments of Chair Brewer, thanking all
11 of the colleagues, as well as all the people who came
12 out today. As the Civil Service and Labor Chair, I
13 know that our city is only as strong as our
14 workforce, and so we will be following up and making
15 sure that the issues that were brought to this table
16 today are followed up with. Thank you for coming to
17 testify. We know it can be nerve-wrecking. You've
18 been incredibly patient, and we appreciate your
19 testimony today. Have a good weekend.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much.
21 This hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

22 [gavel]

23 [applause]

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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
WITH COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR

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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
WITH COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date September 22, 2022