

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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December 20, 2022
Start: 10:26 a.m.
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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Speaker Adrienne Adams,
Chairperson
Deputy Speaker Diana I. Ayala,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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Joann Ariola
Alexa Aviles
Charles Barron
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COUNCIL MEMBERS: (CONTINUED)

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Sandra Ung
Marjorie Velazquez
Inna Vernikov
Nantasha M. Williams
Julie Won
Kalman Yeger

A P P E A R A N C E S

Donavan Swanson, Brooklyn Borough President
Office

Christine Quinn, Women In Need

Funmi Akinawonu, Advocacy and Policy Manager at
Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative

Cindy Cabrera, Hispanic Foundation

Lauren Galloway, Advocacy Coordinator for
Coalition for Homeless Youth

Harold Solis, Deputy Legal Director at Make the
Road New York

David Miranda, Senior Staff Attorney at Covenant
House NY

Alana Tornello, Director of Resilience at the
Human Services Council

Lena Cohen, Senior Policy Analysts at United
Neighborhood Houses

Deborah Lee, Attorney-in-Charge of the
Immigration Law Unit at the Legal Aid Society

Ellen Pachnanda, Director of Brooklyn Defender
Services Immigration Practice

Jody Ziesemer, Director of Immigrant Protection
Unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group

Sarah Stefanski, Assistant Director at the New
York City Independent Budget Office

Anne Pilsbury, Executive Director at Central
American Legal Assistance

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Deborah Berkman, Supervising Attorney of the Shelter Advocacy Initiative and the Public Assistance and SNAP Practice in the Public Benefits Unit at New York Legal Assistance Group

Terry Lawson, Executive Director of UnLocal

Eric Lee, Director of Policy and Planning for Homeless Services United

Rosanna Cruz, Senior Program Director of Community Benefits Assistance Programs at Good Shepherd Services

Diana Moreno, Deputy Director at New Immigrants Community Empowerment

Hadeel Mishal, Senior Civic Engagement Coordinator at the Asian American Federation

Orlando Ivey, President and CEO of Children's Rescue Fund

Elizabeth Angeles, Vice President of Advocacy at the United Way of New York City

Diana Aragundi, Senior Staff Attorney on the Immigrant Students Rights Project at Advocates for Children of New York

Priscilla Zarate, President of New York State Association for Bilingual Education

Alice Bufkin, Associate Executive Director of Policy and Advocacy at Citizens Community for Children

Marie Mongeon, Senior Director of Policy with the Community Healthcare Association of New York State

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Charlene Obernauer, Executive Director of the New
York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee of the Whole located in
4 Chambers, recorded on December 20, 2022, by Nazli
5 Pituvy (phonetic).

6 Good morning and welcome to today's New
7 York City Council hearing for the Committee of the
8 Whole.

9 If you wish to submit testimony, you may
10 at testimony@council.nyc.gov.

11 At this time, please silence all
12 electronic devices.

13 Thank you for your cooperation. Deputy
14 Speaker Ayala, Speaker Adams, we are ready to begin.

15 SPEAKER ADAMS: [GAVEL] Good morning. I'm
16 Adrienne Adams, Speaker of the New York City Council.
17 Thank you to all of you who have joined us today and
18 an extra special thanks if you've also tuned in
19 yesterday to hear testimony from the administration.

20 Before we begin, I want to take a moment
21 to acknowledge the life of a 26-year-old asylum
22 seeker who died by suicide at a shelter in Queens
23 last Wednesday. My heart goes out to his family,
24 including his partner and three children he leaves
25 behind as well as the communities grieving this

2 profound loss. This is the second suicide in just
3 three months by a person seeking asylum within our
4 city's shelter system. The City has a responsibility
5 to improve conditions across the shelter system to
6 help prevent tragedies like this from occurring,
7 providing the necessary support to keep people who
8 have braved the harrowing and traumatic journeys
9 safe. We need continued investments from our federal,
10 state, and city partners in order to provide
11 culturally competent mental health care, improved
12 shelter conditions, and comprehensive services for
13 people seeking asylum. Additionally, as we await the
14 status of Title 42, I want to reaffirm that as a
15 sanctuary city, New York City will continue to do its
16 part to secure safe transitions to the United States.

17 In today's hearing, we will hear from
18 members of the public to round out the second part of
19 our Committee of the Whole oversight hearing on the
20 City's response and delivery of services to migrants.
21 Yesterday, we heard from the various city agencies in
22 order to seek clarity on how they're delivering
23 services to the meet the immediate needs of people
24 seeking asylum and how they are planning to address
25 long-term needs. I look forward to working close with

2 the administration on implementation and addressing
3 the need for continued investments into these
4 essential services.

5 We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to
6 our community partners who have worked endlessly to
7 meet the body of needs and have not only identified
8 but also filled crucial gaps in services. We know
9 from our own communications with them at our previous
10 hearings on this topic that non-profit and community-
11 based organizations have led the way to welcome and
12 provide our recent arrivals with essentials such as
13 transportation, clothing, culturally appropriate
14 food, translators, and legal services, and while the
15 City Council has also done its best to strengthen
16 these efforts, more can be done to support the work
17 of our hardworking community partners. Though this is
18 neither the first nor the last conversation we will
19 have on this issue, we hope that by convening this
20 hearing with all Council Members we can walk away
21 with concrete solutions to address both the immediate
22 and the long-term needs of our newest New Yorkers.

23 Again, I extend my thanks to the Council
24 staff who have put this hearing together and have
25 worked countless hours to make sure that we in the

2 People's House are together. Now, I will turn it over
3 to Deputy Speaker and Chair of the General Welfare
4 Committee Diana Ayala.

5 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you, Madam
6 Speaker, and I want to echo that we have the best
7 staff in town so really, really proud of them.

8 Good morning, everyone. My name is Diana
9 Ayala, and I am the Deputy Speaker of the New York
10 City Council and the Chair of the General Welfare
11 Committee.

12 I'd like to begin by thanking our
13 Speaker, Adrienne Adams, and everyone who is joining
14 us here today for day two of the hearings of the New
15 York City Council's Committee of the Whole on
16 oversight examining the City's response and delivery
17 of services to migrants.

18 Let me begin by echoing Speaker Adams and
19 thanking everyone who participated and watched
20 yesterday's hearing. We appreciate the administration
21 sharing their insights with us yesterday and giving
22 us the opportunity to ask questions about how they
23 are meeting the needs of the thousands of asylum
24 seekers who have come to New York City since the
25 spring. We are in the midst of an unprecedented

2 humanitarian crisis, and, as I stated yesterday,
3 while we warmly welcome these newcomers we know that
4 their unanticipated arrivals in such large numbers
5 have profoundly impacted many of our city services.

6 Today, we look forward to hearing from
7 members of the public and the advocates and community
8 service providers, many of whom have been working
9 tirelessly day in and day out to ensure that our
10 newest New Yorkers are being connected with essential
11 services.

12 We also hope to have the opportunity to
13 hear from some of our new neighbors and learn
14 firsthand about their experiences since their
15 arrival. We're here to listen and to learn and to see
16 what can be done to make things better for those
17 providing services and those who receive them.

18 We will be calling upon those who have
19 registered to testify in panels, and, if you have not
20 already done so, please see the Sergeant-at-Arms to
21 fill out a witness slip so that we know that you are
22 here and ready to testify.

23 Please note that in order to accommodate
24 everyone who wants to testify, members of the public
25 will be given two minutes to speak. However, we

2 encourage everyone to submit written testimony, which
3 can be as detailed and as extensive as you wish.
4 Please know that all written testimony will be
5 reviewed in full by the Council staff. We invite
6 Council Members to ask followup questions for up to
7 two minutes following each panel.

8 Before we begin, I want to thank the
9 Council's leadership team as well as all of the
10 dedicated Council staffers who work so hard to make
11 this important hearing possible. Now, I'll turn it
12 over to General Welfare Committee Counsel Aminta
13 Kilawan to call on the first panel to give their
14 testimony.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Good morning,
16 everyone. My name is Aminta Kilawan, Senior Counsel
17 to the Committee on General Welfare at the New York
18 City Council. I will be moderating today's hearing
19 and calling panelists to testify.

20 I'd like to remind everyone that I'm
21 going to be calling up individuals in panels. If you
22 are joining us virtually via Zoom, our staff with
23 unmute us and you will begin your testimony once the
24 Sergeant-at-Arms sets the clock and gives you the
25 cue.

2 All testimony today will be limited to
3 two minutes. For those joining us virtually, remember
4 that if there are a few seconds delay, that is
5 normal. You will be unmuted and then we will hear
6 you. Please again wait for the Sergeant-at-Arms to
7 announce that you may begin before starting your
8 testimony if virtual.

9 Our first panel will be comprised of
10 Donavan Swanson from the Brooklyn Borough President's
11 Office, and Donavan is joining us virtually. Over now
12 to Donavan.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time will begin.

14 DONAVAN SWANSON: Thank you. Donavan
15 Swanson, Brooklyn Borough President's Office. Thank
16 you, Speaker Adams and Members of the Council, for
17 holding this hearing today. I also would like to
18 thank the multiple city agencies that have testified
19 on this critical issue.

20 Our city has welcomed more than 30,000
21 asylum seekers from South America in recent months
22 and, with the prospective federal order to end
23 December 21st, we can expect to be welcoming more
24 families. Coordination on this effort is key and,
25 while I applaud the administration's effort, there is

2 more work to be done, particularly in Brooklyn
3 schools. After conducting an internal analysis of DOE
4 SAM funding for Project Open Arms and DOE's 2021-2022
5 Bilingual Programs List, my office discovered that an
6 estimated 51 Brooklyn schools that have received
7 funding for Project Open Arms have no sight of dual-
8 language and/or transitional bilingual education
9 programs. As of the most recent SAM allocation, these
10 51 schools that have received an estimated 592 new
11 students who live in temporary housing, this accounts
12 for more than half the new students assigned to
13 Brooklyn schools through Project Open Arms and more
14 than half of the 95 schools that have received
15 funding to support these students. Essentially, more
16 than half of Brooklyn schools that migrant students
17 are attending are likely being triaged for their
18 basic needs with limited staff who are either not
19 dual language certified and/or may not even speak
20 their native language. Studies show dual language
21 immersion supports long-term academic outcomes as
22 well as cross-cultural appreciation and
23 understanding, building on students' strengths, and
24 leveraging family's native languages as a resource in
25 the schools. It is imperative that our new students

2 receive the right educational support and resources
3 to thrive and succeed in their new environments. When
4 we fail ELL students and students in temporary
5 housing, it can have staggering effects such as lower
6 four-year graduation rates and higher drop-out rates,
7 leading a lower career trajectory, negative impact to
8 students' self-efficacy and well-being, and their
9 eventual reliance on public and private aid.
10 Supporting students now is the best long-term use of
11 public funds. To address this, I recommend a stronger
12 coordination between DSS, DOE, and all of the
13 relevant agencies to locate families close to schools
14 that are best resources to support students' language
15 needs.

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is expired.

17 DONAVAN SWANSON: Thank you for this time.

18 I applaud the great work being done in schools
19 despite limited resources and commend this
20 administration. We simply ask that we continue this
21 great work and continue to expand dual language seats
22 across Brooklyn and the City. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you,
24 Donavan, for your testimony. We are now going to move
25 to our first public in-person panel, and the next

2 panel will be as follows, Christine Quinn, Cindy
3 Cabrera, Lauren Galloway, and Funmi Akinnawonu, and I
4 apologize if I've mispronounced your name.

5 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Before we begin, I
6 want to acknowledge that we've been joined by Council
7 Members Narcisse, Paladino, Marte, Dinowitz, Abreu,
8 Lee, Ung, Hudson, Yeger, Holden, Kagan, Carr, Brewer,
9 Ariola, Stevens, Velazquez, Hanks, Borelli, and
10 Hanif.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: You may begin.

12 CHRISTINE QUINN: Thank you very much.
13 Thank you, Madam Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker, and
14 the other Council Members who are here this morning
15 and all the Council Members who were here yesterday.

16 WIN, Women In Need, we are the largest
17 provider of shelter and permanent supportive housing
18 to homeless families with children in New York City.
19 We house 14 percent of all of the homeless families
20 with children in the city. Right now, we have 274
21 asylum-seeking families in our shelters. In those
22 families, there is a total of 700 children. These
23 folks have arrived since August, and we anticipate
24 that more will come if things change and as things
25 change around Regulation 42. These individuals,

2 because they presently do not have legal status, will
3 end up becoming what we call long-term stayers
4 because right now in WIN those families who are long-
5 term stayers are those who are not documented. Why
6 can they not get out of shelter in the time that most
7 other families do, and the average stay is 11-1/2
8 months? Because they do not qualify for housing
9 subsidies in the city so yes, we need more money from
10 the federal government, but we also need the City of
11 New York to extend the rights, the ability to get
12 housing vouchers to undocumented New Yorkers whether
13 they've come in this wave or they have already been
14 in shelter. That will help people move out of shelter
15 and stabilize their lives. We also need to get, and
16 yes, the federal government should reimburse us for
17 it, we need more legal services because there are
18 asylum status, U visas, etc., that these families
19 could qualify for, but the process is very
20 cumbersome, it's legally challenging, and it's not
21 the kind of work that case managers or housing
22 coordinators are trained to do. You know, we've
23 heard, and thank you, Madam Speaker, for noting it
24 the terrible second suicide. We had a suicide attempt
25 of one of our asylum seekers at WIN, and they, thank

2 God, are fine. It was seen very quickly by their
3 partner, but this is the reality. People have
4 traveled here through incredible danger. We've heard
5 from a woman who all she ate for months was tortillas
6 and salt. We heard from a mother stories of women
7 having to sleep with the smugglers, the coyotes, to
8 make sure their children had food. We heard from a
9 mother who saw her baby floating in the river and
10 thought her baby would float away. Homelessness is a
11 trauma, make no mistake, but this type of
12 homelessness is a trauma on a different level and if
13 we can't provide hope of getting out to a permanent
14 place, if we can't provide hope of legal services,
15 and, lastly, because I know I've gone over, if we
16 don't have mental health services at a very high and
17 sophisticated level, these families will begin to
18 lose hope and what happens when people lose hope is
19 things like what we saw last Wednesday so we urge
20 everyone in the Council to push the federal and state
21 government to give us more resources, to make sure
22 that when resources come that groups like WIN are
23 reimbursed. We have already spent over a million
24 dollars more than we had in our budget to take care
25 of families, and it is not clear that the City is

2 going to reimburse us for that or be able to
3 reimburse us for that. The City needs to extend
4 vouchers to the undocumented. Lastly, and I know this
5 is a, we just talked about it yesterday, a very
6 important issue to this Council. The 90-day rule
7 which fills our shelters unnecessarily longer needs
8 to be taken away. That will move people out of
9 shelter more quickly so then we can move refugee
10 families out of welfare hotels and HERRCs into
11 shelters where there are some level of services.
12 Thank you for giving me a little extra time, and I'm
13 happy to take questions at the end of the panel.

14 FUNMI AKINNAWONU: Thank you for convening
15 this hearing. My name is Funmi Akinnawonu, and I'm
16 the Advocacy and Policy Manager at Immigrant ARC. We
17 are a member-based organization that our membership
18 includes over 80 immigrant legal service providers,
19 and I'm here today to urge City Council to provide 10
20 million dollars in rapid response immigrant legal
21 services funding, not only to address the immediate
22 rapid response needs but also develop the
23 infrastructure to address the rapid response
24 immigrant legal needs that New York is continuously
25 responding to because migration is a natural

2 phenomenon, and it essential that this infrastructure
3 be developed. Some of the legal services funding
4 streams like NYC Action and ICARE that have been
5 developed by New York City came in the wake of
6 crises, but these programs are at capacity and they
7 are not structurally in a position to service this
8 community with rapid response needs or the long-term
9 immigrant legal representation that will be necessary
10 to adjudicate people's immigrant cases to their
11 completion. We're also urging that New York City
12 partner with legal service providers who have the on-
13 the-ground expertise to develop a system to ensure
14 that the maximum number of people can receive these
15 services and are disappointed that after New York
16 City issued a 5 million dollar procurement for legal
17 services that failed to attract bids from these legal
18 service providers because of those structural issues
19 that the City essentially stopped engaging. It is
20 incredibly important to invest in immigrant legal
21 services rapid response services, and we also would
22 urge the City Council to support the Access to
23 Representation Act in the State Legislature to ensure
24 that the long-term legal services needs of this
25 population of immigrant New Yorkers as a whole can be

2 addressed so that we not only can support our newest
3 migrants but ensure that we do not abandon them after
4 our initial response. Thank you so much.

5 CINDY CABRERA: Thank you, Chair Adams and
6 all the Members of the Committee on the Whole for
7 allowing me to testify on behalf of the Hispanic
8 Federation, a non-profit organization seeking to
9 empower the Latino community. Each year, thousands of
10 folks arrive at our border seeking protection and,
11 with the absence of a national framework and
12 infrastructure to support resettlement for asylum
13 seekers, many states, local governments, and non-
14 profit organizations fulfill the gaps that are not
15 sustainable. Many families and individuals face
16 systemic barriers navigating our complex legal system
17 and multiple governmental systems. With a one-year
18 window working against families, to find assistance
19 to submit their asylum application is crucial, and if
20 it doesn't occur thousands of vulnerable people will
21 lose the opportunity for this humanitarian relief. In
22 response to the needs, HF launched a national effort
23 in 2021, Caminos de Esperanza, to provide direct
24 legal representation to serve the most vulnerable.
25 Collectively, we're able to represent 590

1 individuals. Yet, with 1.6 million pending cases in
2 our immigration courts, there is work to be done.
3 Because of our model, we were able to see trends at
4 the macro level and receive intel before this hit
5 headline news. We connected the dots and organized an
6 emergency relief fund which is a dime in the bucket
7 of what is needed so far. We are able to support non-
8 profits in New York State, in Washington, D.C., and
9 Chicago, and time and time again such as the COVID
10 pandemic has demonstrated non-profits are on the
11 frontlines and are asked to assist with no resources
12 to sustain their work. We are confident that the
13 state and federal funding will come through to
14 support New York City, and when that does occur non-
15 profits should be funded, and we encourage New York
16 City to partner with a diverse set of non-profit
17 agencies. At the Federation, our model has allowed us
18 to work with our member and partner organizations to
19 provide culturally and linguistically competent
20 information and services. As one of many stories, a
21 mother and father with two young girls who fled their
22 countries because a family member was murdered. They
23 were the next target. Yet, they're on a four-month
24 waiting list to access legal counsel and are at risk
25

2 of returning to that situation. New York is and will
3 always be a sanctuary for migrants, and we thank the
4 City Council for your continued effort to support the
5 immigrant community, and we look forward to
6 collaborating with you to elevate the quality of life
7 for everyone here. Thank you.

8 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Good morning. My name is
9 Lauren Galloway, and I use she/they pronouns, and I'm
10 the Advocacy Coordinator the Coalition for Homeless
11 Youth.

12 CHY advocates for the needs of runaway
13 and homeless youth, known as RHY, for almost 45 years
14 and has a statewide membership including 29 members
15 right here in New York City. Thank you, Speaker Adams
16 and Deputy Speaker Ayala and the rest of City
17 Council, for holding today's hearing and the City's
18 response to delivering services for migrants. I will
19 be submitting longer written testimony regarding the
20 needs of migrant youth and young adults.

21 Like many non-profits in other sectors,
22 RHY service providers, the majority of whom are
23 funded by DYCD, are seeing an influx of migrant
24 youth arriving daily without stable housing and in
25 need of services and support. CHY and its members are

2 confused and concerned by the lack of system
3 coordination the City has implemented to support the
4 needs of migrant youth as well as the RHY providers
5 that are serving them. Providers already are seeing
6 hundreds of migrant youth accessing services in the
7 RHY system and despite working tirelessly to meet
8 those needs of the growing population of young
9 people, without additional funding for city support,
10 some RHY providers have already faced having to turn
11 away some of those folks that they're trying to
12 serve. Although the level of capacity is at strain,
13 it currently is isolated in certain numbers and
14 certain programs. The entire sector is concerned that
15 the number of migrant youth presenting at the
16 programs continues to grow, and they will always be
17 faced with having to turn away youth, both migrant
18 and not, due to the lack of system capacity. In order
19 for us to more adequately meet the needs of migrant
20 youth and young adults, CHY recommends the City
21 implement these immediate and long-term
22 recommendations.

23 First, translation. DYCD needs to ensure
24 that all contracted programs have no-cost access to
25 automated translation services through Language Lines

2 and the needs to funding immediate available to
3 providers to cover the cost of on-site translation
4 services.

5 Transportation is needed. DHS needs to
6 create a simple process for DYCD programs to utilize
7 Project Renewal to support youth that want to reunify
8 with family members outside of the city, and Health
9 and Hospitals needs to create a simple process for
10 DYCD programs to utilize that.

11 Might I finish my final thoughts? Thank
12 you.

13 Legal supports. DYCD and the Mayor's
14 Office of Immigrant Affairs needs to share available
15 legal resources with RHY providers, and DYCD needs to
16 coordinate with legal assistance agencies that
17 specialize in doing immigration law with youth. DYCD
18 needs to make an immediately funding available to
19 expand the support of on-site legal services for RHY
20 programs.

21 System coordination is needed for Health
22 and Hospitals must work with DYCD to ensure that
23 HERRC has specific supports in place for undocumented
24 migrant youth, and DYCD is charged with working with
25

2 RHY providers to coordinate that placement of youth
3 in the RHY system.

4 Emergency shelter. DHS needs to allow
5 youth the option to be referred to placement in non-
6 youth-specific DHS shelters through DYCD to DHS
7 referral process.

8 Lastly, housing access. DSS needs to
9 eliminate the 90-day eligibility criteria for
10 CityFHEPS vouchers and expand the eligibility for
11 CityFHEPS for undocumented migrants that otherwise
12 are eligible. The administration and DYCD needs to
13 identify landlords that have vacant units to match
14 youth with EHV vouchers to free up beds within the
15 RHY shelters.

16 Thank you and I look forward to our
17 continued partnership.

18 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I want to
19 acknowledge that we've also been joined by Council
20 Members Farias, Riley, Williams, Salamanca. Madam
21 Speaker.

22 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you, Madam Deputy
23 Speaker. I'm going to let my Colleagues really,
24 really jump in. We've heard so much about barriers
25 and financial barriers, funding barriers to services

2 for asylum seekers and others. I know, Madam
3 President, we've spoken extensively, but I just want
4 your testimony to be very, very clear about
5 reimbursement or lack thereof, and you mentioned
6 already being a million dollars out when it comes to
7 funding from the City. Can you just let us know some
8 of the specifics of what WIN has been paying for that
9 has brought that number of over-expenditure to 1
10 million dollars.

11 CHRISTINE QUINN: Absolutely. WIN, in all
12 of our shelters, we have food pantries, but they're
13 basically more like a dry good food pantry to hold
14 you and your family over a couple of days until you
15 get your food stamps, your EBT set up, but now since
16 these families don't have a status and we don't have
17 enough legal services to move that in a rapid way
18 along, basically the shelters are having to provide
19 families for all of their three meals and all snacks
20 that they might need. For example, I've been at WIN
21 seven years. A month or so ago, I bought five
22 refrigerators. In seven years, I never bought a
23 refrigerator before. We may have to buy, as things
24 move along, large freezers because on an Amazon wish
25 list we recently had, we had chicken, not a toy, not

2 clothing, not diapers, chicken because we need to
3 provide a full level of protein so that's one
4 example.

5 Two, we've worked and been very
6 successful in getting clothes donated, but you have
7 to make sure everybody has everything and when we've
8 run short in that area we have had to purchase
9 things. We've gotten great support particularly from
10 Trinity Church as it relates. They've done drives for
11 diapers and baby wipes, but, again, if you don't have
12 you can't wait until the next drive comes along.

13 Lastly, we've had to pay staff overtime
14 because almost all of the folks who have come in
15 don't speak English so we need translation, and we
16 are working and our staff has set up, and I'd be
17 happy to share with the Council so you could
18 distribute it, a very good guide to training
19 volunteer translators, but still, and especially in
20 the beginning, we had, for example, our maintenance
21 staff who have a higher level of being bilingual
22 staying late, they first volunteered to do it without
23 pay, which is really a statement. We're paying them
24 overtime to stay and do the translation so those are
25 some of the areas where we're seeing already a

2 million dollars plus, and I don't see that going
3 down. We've been working with the Food Bank and
4 others, but part of the challenge is structural
5 because we don't have refrigerators and freezers.

6 SPEAKER ADAMS: It's just amazing to hear
7 the infrastructures that were put in place now that
8 really, really are just pushed beyond capacity.

9 CHRISTINE QUINN: And everything I just
10 said comes before at some point maybe having to make
11 a decision of bringing in mental health professionals
12 that we're not budgeted for or bringing in lawyers
13 that we're not budgeted for. We may have to make
14 those decisions, particularly given what I said about
15 the attempted suicide very recently at WIN. At WIN,
16 we're in a place, I hope this doesn't sound arrogant,
17 where we can raise private money. Not every group can
18 do that and what's going to happen there come June
19 and the end of the Fiscal Year.

20 If I may, I just want to, as a point of
21 personal privilege, share a story. Some folks have
22 asked me well, is it tense now in the shelters
23 between the folks who were there and the asylum
24 seekers. We had a mom go in her closet in the
25 shelter, how much clothes could she have had, and

2 find things that she didn't need and then she went
3 door-to-door to her neighbors and they found things
4 they didn't need and then they sent a box and they
5 put a box in the lobby of clothes for the refugees so
6 if homeless mothers with children can find resources
7 for refugees who have fled sexual violence,
8 trafficking, torture, the federal government can
9 certainly find dollars that can be sent here and the
10 City of New York can get that down to the providers
11 who have been serving these families.

12 SPEAKER ADAMS: Hear, hear. Thank you.

13 CHRISTINE QUINN: Thank you.

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you. I have a
15 question with regard to legal services. You spoke a
16 little bit about the City and contracts. Yesterday,
17 we heard testimony from the administration speaking
18 about an RFP for legal services. Have you actually
19 seen the RFP put out by the administration seeking
20 support for legal services?

21 FUNMI AKINNAWONA: Yes, the administration
22 did put out an RFP, but when they failed to receive
23 bids on that RFP from the legal service providers who
24 would be expected to actually do the work because
25 they fundamentally had issues with how it was

2 structured and in an effort to maximize the impact
3 and actually be able to staff the legal services
4 needs of this migrant population tried to engage with
5 the administration and essentially were rebuffed, and
6 so as the group of people who would actually be
7 required to provide these services, a partnership
8 between the administration and these legal service
9 providers who are very dedicated professionals who
10 care deeply about providing immigration legal
11 services, who are contracting in often cases with the
12 City in other programs, and who are urging the City
13 to engage with them so that a program can be
14 developed that is up to the task of urgent rapid
15 response legal representation is something that is
16 really essential.

17 SPEAKER ADAMS: It sounds like one of the
18 most critical pieces that's needed here to support
19 asylum seekers and others, a mechanism that we heard
20 about yesterday, is essentially set up to fail before
21 it ever begins the process.

22 FUNMI AKINNAWONA: Exactly.

23 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you very much for
24 your testimony. I'm going to leave it there. Deputy
25 Speaker.

2 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I think we touched
3 on this a little bit yesterday on the contract issue
4 and the payout rates and the disparities between what
5 DHS has as opposed to what the non-profit groups are
6 expected to provide, and that's why we asked for a
7 breakdown of the number of facilities that are under
8 the umbrella of DHS because they're running I believe
9 it's more than 50 percent of the newly opened
10 facilities, but they have additional resources that
11 they can tap into that the non-profits don't have
12 access to and so we were seeing, for instance, and I
13 know that our Speaker was heavily involved in this
14 issue with the baby formulas and diapers and non-
15 profit groups really struggling, robbing Peter to pay
16 Paul because they just couldn't make ends meet, and
17 that was reflective in the type of foods that they
18 were able to offer and necessities, things that we
19 need, toothpaste and toothbrushes, and so we have a
20 huge concern about the payout rates and the
21 timeliness of the payout of these contracts because
22 in the same way that we rely on the federal
23 government to help us out, we have to ensure that
24 we're paying our non-profit groups as quickly as

2 possible so that we're not impacting the level of
3 services.

4 CHRISTINE QUINN: Madam Deputy Speaker, if
5 I could raise two points that go with that, one just
6 to make things more complicated. Many of the not-for-
7 profit providers, both in homelessness and other
8 areas, we are finally seeing our contracts begin to
9 be updated for COLA and the prevailing wage for
10 security guards. That is a great thing. What does
11 that mean though? It means we have to pay out that
12 money. In the case of WIN for security guards, it's
13 about 2 million dollars and then wait to be
14 reimbursed. At the very same time, and I'm not saying
15 slow down the prevailing wage, don't get me wrong,
16 but at the very same time that I've had to pay a
17 million dollars that I don't have. What's that going
18 to do to cash flow and really what's that going to do
19 to small groups?

20 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: That's right.

21 CHRISTINE QUINN: Now, also I just want to
22 raise as so many of us have raised the issue of
23 vouchers to those who are not documented and there
24 the City will raise issues of legality on that, and I
25 think it's legal but I'm not a lawyer, and we'll let

2 the lawyers talk about that, but as the lawyers fight
3 that out and ultimately those of us who think it is
4 legal will win. That said, there are apparently two
5 pots of money in this Fiscal Year and the prior
6 Fiscal Year that the State had allocated for usage
7 for vouchers for non-documented folks. Apparently in
8 the second year they said that that money could also
9 be used for something else. Okay, whatever. I think
10 it's 100 million dollars a year. Those are funds. It
11 won't help every one of the individuals we're talking
12 about, but it will help some and, as I understand it,
13 the State designated it specifically and that means
14 those funds could be used immediately while the Corp
15 Counsel and the Speaker's Office debate the overall
16 legality.

17 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I have a question
18 and thank you all so much for your work because I
19 know that this has been a trying time and our shelter
20 systems quite frankly were already broken, and this
21 just adds a different layer to this, but in regards
22 to the mental health services, because many providers
23 don't have access to mental health professionals on-
24 site and we know that communities of color have a
25 disproportionate number of resources as well. I know

2 if I try to make an appointment today, I probably
3 wouldn't get one for months. How challenging is that
4 and how are you dealing with that. Like in the case
5 that you referenced, were you able to deal with that
6 internally or were you relying on outside community
7 resources?

8 CHRISTINE QUINN: It's very challenging to
9 get people seen by mental health providers. We
10 recently had a client who, as an example, we called
11 to try to get him an intake appointment at a very
12 good mental health provider that works very closely
13 with us. It was 3-1/2 months until he could get an
14 intake appointment. That's simply not acceptable at
15 all. We do have the Thrive Social Workers in the
16 shelter, but there more of an assessment team. They
17 are not allowed really to do that kind of one-on-one
18 therapy we talk about, A, and B, at WIN and every
19 provider there are tremendous vacancies in the Thrive
20 Social Workers because the salary that is allotted is
21 so much lower than if you were to work as a social
22 worker say in a hospital or a setting of that nature.
23 Also, when folks have to get taken to the psychiatric
24 hospital, very rarely at WIN, and we can get you
25 specific data, very rarely do they end up staying

2 there and, if they do end up staying there, it's
3 usually for no more than 10 days. That's a long-term
4 stay right now. For that individual, they were taken
5 to the hospital, they got some interventions at the
6 hospital, and now we are working with them, and I
7 think we're doing a good job, but I want to be clear.
8 We're having case managers and others, not
9 necessarily psychologists, and social workers working
10 with this individual, and, as this Council called for
11 the 90-day rule to be repealed prior to this crisis,
12 you, Madam Deputy Speaker, held the hearing here on
13 Council Member Bottcher's bill calling for the
14 establishment of a funding stream for mental health
15 services in family shelters. This Council was really
16 visionary in knowing what a system needed because
17 these types of systems do have crises that come upon
18 them.

19 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Unfortunately,
20 yesterday we learned that a lot of the City Council
21 initiatives that have been passed by this Body are
22 being touted by the administration but unfortunately
23 they're not being used in the way that they were
24 intended, and I want to go back to the 90-day rule
25 issue because I agree that the 90-day rule should not

2 exist. However, the problem is that we've increased
3 the rate of vouchers, we've increased the number of
4 vouchers that we have, but if there's no oversight
5 over wage discrimination, if that unit is not up and
6 running, then we're not going to make any headway,
7 and there are just so many ways that we could be
8 doing this correctly, but it takes a partnership, and
9 it requires that we listen to those of you that have
10 that level of expertise that some of us lack so thank
11 you for being here today, and I want to call on
12 Council Member Brewer who has questions followed by
13 Council Member Stevens and Hanif, and I want to
14 recognize that we've also been joined by Council
15 Members De La Rosa, Krishnan, and Powers.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
17 much, Christine Quinn, for being so knowledgeable and
18 running such a great program.

19 Yesterday, I believe that there were four
20 busses that came, and two of them were double
21 deckers, and I believe, again secondhand, that
22 families were sent either to Bellevue, individuals,
23 or to the PATH so my question to us because at the
24 point that I learned that, the DSS Commissioner
25 already left so I couldn't ask, but are we at

2 capacity? In other words, where are they actually
3 going to go because it's one thing to say Row NY is
4 not available, etc., but where are they going to go,
5 and maybe it's New Jersey, Westchester, Rockland
6 County at this point. I don't know so I'm just
7 wondering if you have any sense talking to your
8 colleagues?

9 CHRISTINE QUINN: As I said, WIN is the
10 largest provider of shelter to families with
11 children. We have a 1 percent vacancy rate right now
12 so we will take anyone that the City sends us from
13 PATH, which is the family intake unit, but we only
14 have, of our 1,600 units, only 1 percent is vacant,
15 and I have no doubt that that is the same, the
16 Coalition may know more broadly, but that that is the
17 same for most of our colleagues out there so then
18 what happens? Whether you're somebody who is fleeing
19 domestic violence in the Bronx or you're someone
20 who's coming here fleeing violence from Honduras, you
21 get sent to a hotel, and the hotel does not have
22 social services, it does not have 24-hour security,
23 and it does not have a Department of Education
24 liaison who is going to help your child get enrolled
25 in school, and people who go to the hotels languish

2 there much longer than those in shelter, and the City
3 of New York pays much more money for a night in a
4 hotel, and I think that's what's going to happen. You
5 almost mentioned PATH. That's another area, and this
6 may have come up yesterday, that needs to be looked
7 at because the questions you get asked there are
8 intrusive if you're not an asylum seeker, but if
9 you're an asylum seeker you can't say the last four
10 places you and your child slept because it may have
11 been on the banks of the river, and we've had
12 challenges at PATH, some intake folks are better,
13 some intake folks not so good, they had promised to
14 change the questions, but that does not seem to have
15 uniformly happened.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and the
17 other question I have is obviously with the school
18 and the asylum. You have wonderful people who make
19 that transition. Is it happening in the schools where
20 you have children from these amazing families?

21 CHRISTINE QUINN: I want to say the
22 Department of Education has done, in my opinion, an
23 outstanding job. They are the city agency that really
24 has shined the most during this crisis. I expected
25 day one of school to be a nightmare, and we had said

2 to the families we'll go with you, we'll walk you
3 there, and they were like no, we don't really want
4 that, we don't want to stand out. It really went
5 well. All the children were placed. They were getting
6 English-language learning resources really terrific.
7 About a week ago, we had a followup meeting, WIN with
8 Chancellor Banks, because we've seen some things that
9 you can only see because stuff is going on like
10 children getting placed in the grade that is their
11 age and then having to be moved back, that's another
12 trauma. Let's try to avoid that and place them
13 upfront, and he was incredibly open, and we've had
14 two or three followup meetings since then so I do
15 really want to give the Department and the Chancellor
16 and his staff a lot of credit.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The other final
18 question. Yesterday, I did lose it a little bit
19 because I've met with so many CEOs of mental health
20 programs with 40 percent, before even any of this, 40
21 percent vacancy and can't hire. You know the story.
22 Yesterday, I said for God's sake, you absolutely have
23 to pay the mental health community non-profit more
24 money, period. I didn't get anywhere, but I'm
25 wondering if that's also your experience because you

2 did say what happens is you can be assigned somewhere
3 but the followup is not going to exist for the triage
4 that you've done so well unless there's somebody at
5 the other end. I'm just wondering, you did touch on
6 that, if you could expand a little bit. We are really
7 in dire straits with social emotional.

8 CHRISTINE QUINN: God knows I never lost
9 it at a hearing, Gale, so I can't relate to that at
10 all, but...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You know I don't
12 usually, and I did yesterday.

13 CHRISTINE QUINN: I like it when people
14 lose it, but one of the things that happens is you
15 can't hire mental health professionals because the
16 hospitals are hiring them...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Correct.

18 CHRISTINE QUINN: Or you train them for a
19 year or a year and a half and then they go to the
20 hospitals for even more money and you can't blame
21 people, but it is absolutely, in part, a financial
22 question. Some folks don't want to work in a shelter
23 because it's a different type of a setting but if you
24 can't even have the financial baseline conversation,
25 you're not going to have any other conversation.

2 Two, we know there's also a shortage of
3 mental health personnel right now in this city,
4 state, and country. You'll remember, Gale, when we
5 were on the Council together, there was an equal
6 shortage of nurses, particularly bilingual nurses,
7 and we worked, the Council and the Health Committee
8 with Jennifer Raab who is the President of Hunter,
9 and created a program, an expedited program to people
10 to become nurses, and it helped fill that gap. There
11 is no reason why we couldn't again work with CUNY,
12 whichever the right CUNY is, probably Hunter one of
13 them, to expedite an MSW or PhD in Psychology program
14 to get more mental health providers out of there, but
15 you're 100 percent right. If we do that and we're
16 still 7, 8, 10,000 dollars less than a hospital,
17 we're never going to get social workers, and you
18 can't blame people. It's not like even 10,000 dollars
19 is that much.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The same problem
21 with schools, particularly the Spanish-speaking
22 social workers go there for five minutes and they go
23 to the hospital so schools are desperately in need.

24 CHRISTINE QUINN: Another thing that could
25 happen just on that point, but you could use it more

2 broadly, there's a lot of scholarships that get
3 offered to city workers. Some, but not all of them,
4 are offered to non-profits who have contracts with
5 the City, and that would be a way to help people,
6 give them an additional offering that I couldn't give
7 as WIN or the Coalition couldn't give or the
8 Federation couldn't give.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I believe on the
10 budget, Madam Speaker, we did add some money for
11 scholarships for this, but we still need to do even
12 more.

13 CHRISTINE QUINN: That's great though.
14 Thank you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The food issue.
16 Now you are able to deal with, then I'll shut up.
17 Food issue, so that is a huge issue.

18 CHRISTINE QUINN: It's a challenge.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You laid it out so
20 it's a money issue providing three meals a day, etc.?

21 CHRISTINE QUINN: It's a money issue to
22 buy the food, and it is a kind of operational issue
23 to get the refrigeration and the freezers that you
24 need to store the food. Now, each one of the families
25 in the unit that they have have a full-sized

2 refrigerator, but we still need to have the
3 refrigerators to store the food before they come and
4 pick it up.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so are you
6 able to have some contracts to be able to deal with
7 this so that you could have this kind of program or
8 that's not...

9 CHRISTINE QUINN: In our contract, it
10 covers our basic pantry, which like I said is like
11 dry goods to get you past a couple days until the
12 food stamps are turned on. The spending on the food
13 and the refrigerators is a part of the million
14 dollars more we have already spent and we hope we
15 will get reimbursed for.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. Thank
17 you.

18 CHRISTINE QUINN: Thank you.

19 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. We will
20 now turn it over to Council Member Stevens who is on
21 Zoom.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hi. Good morning,
24 everyone. Thank you all for testifying. We really
25 appreciate you being here.

2 My question is for the Coalition for the
3 Homeless. Yesterday, DYCD testified that there's only
4 56 young people that they've seen from the asylum
5 seekers showing up at the shelters, but from my
6 conversations with providers and you guys, that seems
7 like there's been a huge disconnect. Can you talk a
8 little bit about how and what the support looks like
9 from DYCD and how this communication is being
10 communicated because the disconnect between what's
11 going on in these homeless runaway youth shelters and
12 what DYCD is reporting doesn't seem to be matching?

13 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Thank you for that
14 question, Council Member Stevens, and I know our
15 member providers, Covenant House, are going to be
16 testifying after this and they can speak more about
17 their direct experience, but there were a lot of
18 things that were said yesterday, and I think the
19 biggest thing is DYCD hasn't come up with a plan. Not
20 only is there no plan, they're also not providing any
21 of the adequate needs, especially for the most
22 obvious needs which are translation services and
23 legal support, but a big thing that was mentioned
24 yesterday that I want to highlight is those numbers
25 that you spoke about, the 56. We're still wondering

2 where they're getting those numbers from because they
3 provided this survey, but we want to the providers
4 last night and that survey has only been given out
5 twice so those numbers aren't really reflecting to
6 what they spoke about yesterday, but I think in doing
7 so we know that, also that was mentioned yesterday,
8 10 to 15 more busses are coming tomorrow, so we know
9 that not only is this going to be a continued issue,
10 we need to continuously address it going forward for
11 the future so whether the number is 56 or not, it's
12 going to have an influx at some point, but I'm going
13 to let Covenant House speak more about their
14 experience, but I'd love to get more of those numbers
15 for you from the providers directly. Thank you for
16 that question.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes, please. I
18 think that is really important because I know a lot
19 of focus is often on the HERRCs and DSS, but we
20 forget that DYCD does run a number of homeless
21 runaway youth shelters throughout the city, and young
22 people are showing up there, and they need support as
23 well so I want to make sure that we are all on the
24 same page (INAUDIBLE) that we're highlighting and
25 uplifting those providers who also need support and

2 with the young people as well. Thank you so much, and
3 I'll try to ask my question when Covenant House comes
4 on as well.

5 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. Council
6 Member Hanif.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much.
8 I have several questions. I'm going to ask them at
9 once if you could jot them down because of time.

10 First to Christine Quinn, thank you so
11 much first of all. Could you walk us through what
12 services are directly available at WIN shelters and
13 then have you gotten reports of sex trafficking or
14 abuse and where do folks report any complaints or
15 issues and needs, is there a dedicated liaison for
16 the newcomers, and then are there families who have
17 asked to be transferred to a HERRC or are you
18 receiving families from HERRCs.

19 On legal services, can you walk us
20 through where the 10 million number derived from and
21 please share what the process is like from beginning
22 to end for an asylum application and the timeline,
23 and is the Navigation Center where folks are finding
24 access to legal services, where are folks finding out
25 about what legal services are available to them.

2 On homeless youth, what are the biggest
3 challenges you would say that youth are facing in
4 addition to housing. We heard from DOE that the 2,000
5 dollars that was rolled out to schools per student
6 with six or more students is sufficient, and the
7 Comptroller reported that the number should be around
8 7,000 so would love to know just what other
9 challenges you're hearing and then also we heard from
10 the Brooklyn Borough President's Office for the need
11 to expand dual language programs. Thank you.

12 CHRISTINE QUINN: I think I missed one of
13 your questions, but you'll tell me at the end. At WIN
14 Services, we have a wraparound holistic model called
15 the Way to WIN. It includes case managers who do
16 intake and also work with you on getting all of your
17 benefits turned on, everything that you are eligible
18 for. We also have housing coordinators who are kind
19 of like our real estate agents who work with the case
20 managers on qualify you for FHEPS or for Housing
21 Authority or for whatever housing options are out
22 there for you and then they work with you to actually
23 find apartments that fit in geographically your
24 priority areas and financially what would fit and go
25 out with you and look at those shelters. We also have

2 what we call an Income Building Program, which is a
3 job training, job placement program. We call it
4 Income Building because 32 percent of our mothers at
5 intake are working. When they leave, it's well over
6 50 percent so we want to think of it as building our
7 income. That does training programs, connects people
8 to training programs, does a GED, high school
9 equivalency, Associate degree work, and job
10 placement. Also under Income Building, we have a
11 college prep program. Last year, 34 WIN 18-year-old
12 or 17-year-olds went to college. The college prep
13 program includes things like taking people out to
14 visit Rutgers, meeting with the Rutgers President,
15 meeting with Jennifer Raab at Hunter, etc., etc. We
16 have what we call Camp WIN which is a STEM-based camp
17 that happens all summer but any day that school is
18 not in session, any vacation, obviously that's a
19 STEM-based program. We have recreation every day,
20 homework help every day. We have licensed childcare
21 in all of our shelters or in the processes now. We
22 have to do new licenses. We have the Thrive social
23 workers. We also did something different than most
24 providers. We dedicated four of those social workers
25 to be children-focused and work just with children.

2 We also have a very robust volunteer program. We have
3 2,500 volunteers who come into the shelter some and
4 do one-offs like a luau that I participated in once,
5 that was a lot of fun, or every week, Pepsi Cola used
6 to do a mentoring program, the Junior League used to
7 do a financial literacy program. I think I captured
8 everything, but I may not have, and not all of those
9 are paid for by the City. Much of that is paid for by
10 private money.

11 We've heard a lot of reports of sex
12 trafficking from the families who have come in. I'll
13 have to get you an answer on whether anyone has
14 reported anything, but not a lot is my guess, and the
15 conversation is not dissimilar to other WIN clients,
16 start off more like I heard there was, I may have
17 seen others be victims of that, and then eventually
18 you get to that happened to me. It's like peeling
19 back the layers of an onion. Yes, we've heard it a
20 lot. I don't think we have had a lot of reports, but
21 we will check on the number. Our liaison for these
22 matters is our Chief Program Officer, Diana Santos.
23 We've actually done orientations in each of the
24 shelters for those who are asylum seekers to orient
25 them to what the services are, what they can expect

2 at WIN as well as just other issues in the
3 communities that they're in, etc. We have not had
4 anyone to knowledge, I will doublecheck, say I want
5 to go to the HERRC, and I don't think that we've
6 gotten a lot of people from the HERRC either. It's
7 just if you end up getting sent to us because we had
8 vacancies. Oddly, we had had a leak in a facility,
9 and we had a bunch of rooms that had to be fixed,
10 which is why we had so many units offline at the
11 moment that they were needed too, and you had one
12 other question that I forgot.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: No, you covered
14 them all.

15 CHRISTINE QUINN: Oh, okay.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you.

17 FUNMI AKINNAWONU: When it comes to the
18 10-million-dollar funding figure, the 10 million
19 dollars comes from the need given that the
20 immigration legal services bar is completely at
21 capacity with all of its current funding streams to
22 not only hire additional attorneys to provide
23 training to pro bono attorneys and to really build
24 out programming because all of the legal services
25 that have been provided to this community thus far

2 have not been funded by the City. They are
3 essentially organizations who are tapping into their
4 own funding streams, pulling people off of other
5 projects because I cannot emphasize enough that they
6 are over capacity. There are supervisors who should
7 be training new attorneys, who should be training
8 DOJ-accredited reps, who should be supervising their
9 cases who have full caseloads as well which is not
10 sustainable and not conducive to being able to
11 support especially tens of thousands of migrants who
12 are going to need long-term immigration legal
13 services let along the rapid response that needs to
14 begin because the consequences for making a mistake
15 in immigration court are so serious. People who have
16 been paroled into the country because they would like
17 to apply for asylum have a one-year filing deadline
18 so they need those services to begin immediately. I'm
19 sorry. I'm shifting a little bit into the question
20 about the process, but there is a difference between
21 an affirmative and a defensive asylum case. With an
22 affirmative case, you have one year to apply with
23 limited exceptions, and you would essentially fill
24 out an application that would lay out your asylum
25 claim. It would then be reviewed and you would go and

2 sit and have a credible fear interview with an asylum
3 officer. This process is very arduous. It requires
4 you to be able to collect a lot of proof. It's the
5 kind of process that you're going to need support
6 either with direct legal services or substantive pro
7 se programs that set people up for success to be able
8 to advocate for themselves. Another issue is that
9 because there is this lack of funding and because,
10 quite frankly, we have a backlog in the immigration
11 courts of 180,000 in New York, people also need the
12 guidance to help them from ending up in a defensive
13 proceeding because they miss an ICE check-in and then
14 no longer have an affirmative case and then will be
15 in an immigration court. Rather than being
16 interviewed, they will have to defend themselves
17 against a DHS attorney. That doesn't mean that their
18 claim is any less viable. It could simply be that
19 they didn't have the legal assistance necessary to
20 navigate this process to avoid ending up in a
21 defensive proceeding, and, because we have such a
22 huge backlog and, quite frankly, the lines to get in
23 to Federal Plaza to go to the USCIS office or the
24 immigration court are so long there will be people
25 who have been waiting overnight, there are people who

2 potentially could miss their appointment or get
3 confused between those offices, miss their court
4 date, and then end up in deportation proceedings. It
5 is a process that really requires legal
6 representation, and the outcomes for people who are
7 represented versus unrepresented are staggeringly
8 different.

9 When it comes to the Navigation Center,
10 the organizations that have been going there as of
11 right now have been doing so essentially on a
12 voluntary basis. They are not being funded by the
13 City. The State has provided about a million dollars
14 per year in rapid response legal services funding
15 over the course of the next three years, but it is
16 not sufficient. In order to address the needs of this
17 population, especially not only because of this
18 backlog but immigration cases are notoriously very
19 long, and without being able to provide long-term
20 services these migrants could be set up in a
21 situation where they get someone to initially give
22 them a consultation but not someone to take on their
23 cases long-term and the very dedicated immigration
24 legal services bar wants to be able to provide the

2 long-term legal services to ensure the outcomes that
3 are fair and just in our immigration system.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you.

5 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Thank you, Council
6 Member Hanif, for the question in regards to runaway
7 and homeless youth challenges, and what we're hearing
8 from our providers is first when they're coming in,
9 translation. We do not have enough bilingual staff,
10 and we are not paying people for being able to
11 provide that, which they should be compensated, but
12 when folks go to use the Language Line, it's backed
13 up, it's not easily accessible, and when you have
14 somebody right there they need to be communicated
15 with right away. When it comes to the legal services,
16 folks are completely tapped out. There's no one to
17 provide it. People are backed up for years, and they
18 can't even get an appointment so how are we creating
19 a future for them here in New York if we're not
20 helping them with their status, and that includes
21 helping with working status and housing status. As
22 has been mentioned, the mental health support. We do
23 not have providers there, and then on top of lacking
24 mental health providers, we don't have anyone that
25 can speak the language to help support the needs of

2 it so the whole experience of whether you're entering
3 in or you're trying to exit, there are challenges
4 presented throughout, and what has been mentioned
5 here today is that there is no permanent housing
6 solution. They're not being included in the vouchers,
7 and, therefore, as was named by WIN, when it comes to
8 how the City really look at the financial issue of
9 vouchers, it is a lot more in the City's interest to
10 provide vouchers than keep people in the shelter
11 system because one, it's not permanent, but it costs
12 them more money so those are the main barriers and
13 challenges that providers are speaking of right now.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much.

15 CINDY CABRERA: I do just want to add that
16 at the Hispanic Federation as we were addressing the
17 language, we do have service providers. We work with
18 partners that have that cultural competency, but
19 because of their capacity to really apply for these
20 opportunities they can't tap into these funding
21 streams so there is a network out there. Here in New
22 York City, we have 174 partners that are in weave
23 with our communities and speak the language and
24 understand the trauma that's going on so I think it's

2 very important to also highlight those groups of
3 providers out there.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you all so
5 much.

6 CHRISTINE QUINN: Thank you all.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you to
8 this panel. We are now going to follow with the next
9 in-person panel which is going to be Harold Solis
10 followed by David Miranda followed by Alana Tornello
11 followed by Lena Cohen.

12 Just for those who are joining us on
13 Zoom, as a heads-up, the panel after this is going to
14 be the following individuals, Orlando Ivy, Deborah
15 Lee, Ellen Pachnanda, and Jody Zieseemer.

16 Over to our in-person panelists. You may
17 begin when ready. Can you make sure your mic is on.

18 HAROLD SOLIS: Good morning. My name is
19 Harold Solis. I am the Deputy Legal Director at Make
20 the Road New York, the city's largest immigrant-led
21 grassroots organization. On behalf of our 25,000
22 members and our staff, we thank the Council for the
23 opportunity to testify today about the needs of
24 asylum seekers who arrived in New York City, many of

2 whom we've worked so hard over the last few months to
3 support, and the City's response.

4 We firmly believe that New York must
5 continue to serve as a welcoming city for all
6 immigrants, and that includes ensuring that
7 individuals can access and participate in our society
8 regardless of their immigration status. In the
9 interest of time, my testimony will focus on
10 highlighting the need for the city to build off its
11 initial response and to shift towards long-term
12 solutions that will ensure the City is better
13 positioned to address the needs of not only this
14 population but all working-class New Yorkers.

15 The City correctly decided, if we're
16 talking about the immigration legal services that
17 you've heard about through the course of today and
18 yesterday's hearings, the City correctly decided to
19 incorporate triage services as part of the Navigation
20 Center. It opened earlier this fall. That made sense
21 as an initial intervention, but as we approach the
22 end of the year, we urge the City to develop a
23 community-informed long-term solution to ensure our
24 working-class communities including our newest
25 neighbors have the legal assistance they need now and

2 into the future. Immigrants are struggling to find
3 representation. You've heard our colleagues from
4 Hispanic Federation and IARC talk about this, and
5 this is something that predates this moment. You've
6 heard the numbers of almost 2 million cases in the
7 immigration court backlog at a national level, almost
8 200,000 here in New York City. These are all things
9 that have happened before Texas started sending
10 migrants to New York.

11 If I could just finish my thoughts really
12 quickly.

13 I want to talk a little bit about the RFP
14 because it is really important that as the City
15 thinks about the future and how it's going to
16 actually address the situation, it must do better
17 than the RFP that proposed to only allocate only 5
18 million dollars for two years, which included the
19 option of a menu of service, both from intake to full
20 legal representation. As a legal service provider, we
21 can tell you that on a professional and an ethical
22 level, it's not possible to offer that kind of
23 assistance with that little bit of an investment.
24 Also, as the City thinks about the future, it needs
25 to think about the workplace issues that this

2 community will face, much like other immigrant New
3 Yorkers. We know as an immigrant-led organization
4 that this population is going to be particularly
5 vulnerable to exploitive conditions in the workplace.
6 New Yorkers are victims of wage theft annually,
7 cheated out of a cumulative 3.2 billion dollars and
8 benefits they are owed. This also cheats the City out
9 of significant tax revenue that is desperately needed
10 to keep New York running. Rather than fighting for
11 this piece of funding, the Low-Wage Workers
12 Initiative, the City should prioritize and baseline
13 the support.

14 On housing, we want to echo a lot of
15 things that WIN mentioned earlier. We agree that the
16 City must do everything it can to better facilitate
17 the movement of all shelter occupants from temporary
18 to permanent housing.

19 In closing, we want to urge the City to
20 take these steps to move towards more inclusive
21 thriving outcomes for all working-class New Yorkers,
22 including our newest neighbors. Thank you.

23 DAVID MIRANDA: Good morning. My name is
24 David Miranda, and I am the Senior Staff Attorney and
25

2 the only attorney providing direct services to the
3 young people at Covenant House New York.

4 At Covenant House New York, we serve
5 youth who are age 16 to 24 who are experiencing
6 homelessness. We are the nation's largest non-profit
7 agency specifically dedicated to serving homeless,
8 runaway, and trafficked youth.

9 Since the current immigration crisis
10 began, we have seen more than 70 migrant youth and
11 currently more than 30 are residing with us. These
12 include the youth that we actually had beds for. It
13 does not include youth that we have turned away. We
14 are proud to be on the frontline helping these
15 vulnerable young people by providing their basic
16 needs among a variety of other services. We testified
17 at a City Council hearing in September that while we
18 were grateful to be able to help, the situation is
19 stretching the available resources for all of us that
20 work with runaway and homeless youth. Our Spanish-
21 speaking staff at Covenant House are doing everything
22 they can to help at all hours of the day and night.
23 We have implemented Spanish-speaking mental health
24 groups and life skills workshops. We have started
25 classes to familiarize our young migrants with New

2 York City, including how to navigate the subway and
3 transportation system, and understand U.S. currency.
4 The hearts of the Covenant House and wider RHY
5 community have gone out to our young migrants.
6 However, more resources are urgently needed in order
7 to support targeted services that can be delivered by
8 Spanish-speaking staff.

9 After those immediate needs are met,
10 there is a need for immigrant legal services. As I
11 said, I am the only attorney providing direct
12 services to the young people. Time and time again,
13 I've had to meet young people when I first began a
14 year ago in December and try to figure out who was
15 going to provide legal services to this population.
16 The need has only grown, and it will continue to
17 grow.

18 If I may just finish a couple more
19 thoughts.

20 Another issue that we are having is the
21 need for long-term housing. Ultimately, young people
22 under the age of 25 will have unique developmental
23 needs that have been compounded by the trauma they
24 have experienced in their home countries and on their
25 treacherous journey to the U.S. Dedicated youth

2 immigrant beds and services, especially immigrant
3 legal services, long-term housing programs and
4 vouchers, and appropriate translation and mental
5 health services are urgently needed.

6 Covenant House is on the frontlines of
7 this crisis and here to partner with you, the City of
8 New York. Additional beds and resources are necessary
9 to meet the needs of this crisis and to model to the
10 world the right way to welcome abandoned youth and
11 asylum seekers.

12 I, again, thank you for the opportunity
13 to testify today.

14 ALANA TORNELLO: Good morning. My name is
15 Alana Tornello, and I am the Director of Resilience
16 at the Human Services Council, a membership
17 organization representing over 170 human services
18 providers in New York City.

19 We urge the City to transform its
20 approach to the 30,000+ people seeking asylum and
21 other refuge in New York City and to more equitably
22 prepare for new arrivals. This calls for a shift from
23 reactive initiatives towards meaningful investment in
24 an exhausted human services infrastructure.
25 Communities arrive after unfathomable struggles,

2 including racist forced migration within this
3 country, but their struggle is not over in New York
4 City. Navigating immediate needs for housing, legal
5 services, employment, healthcare, food security, and
6 more which will extend long-term for the many who
7 face years of legal determinations. Our testimony
8 draws from engagement with over 80 community-based
9 citywide and national human services organizations
10 who serve these communities. These organizations have
11 the expertise to address acute and long-term needs,
12 and they have shown up to do so despite very limited
13 resources. Among the providers consulted by HSC, 96
14 percent reported providing services to people seeking
15 asylum entirely or partially out-of-pocket, 40
16 percent reported that government asked them to
17 provide these services, but less than 13 percent were
18 offered complete funding for these services in
19 conjunction with that partnership, and a majority of
20 those offers were in reimbursements. Providers also
21 want to provide services who do not currently offer
22 them but lack additional resources. For the most
23 part, we are hearing that our providers are over-
24 capacity, especially in the concurrent COVID recovery
25 and still human services organizations help the City

2 to try to meet the reputation its leaders boast, a
3 sanctuary for oppressed people here and abroad. With
4 that in mind, we urge the City to take the following
5 actions:

6 Create a dedicated expedited funding
7 stream for comprehensive wraparound services designed
8 with and for human services organizations leveraging
9 emergency procurement pathways for community services
10 but with multiyear funds and more access for
11 community-based organizations and ensuring just pay
12 for workers.

13 Design and resource a public education
14 campaign for New Yorkers to better understand the
15 situation faced by our newest neighbors.

16 Significantly expand resources for care
17 coordination and sustained case management,
18 especially with community-based organizations
19 including expanded comprehensive service directories,
20 expanded navigation sites, and data management
21 infrastructure across programs that prioritize very
22 strong protections for clients.

23 Fight for more accessible and rapid
24 employment licensing pathways which demand the
25 federal government to expedite the employment and

2 authorization document processes and advocate for New
3 York State to expand (INAUDIBLE) regardless of
4 immigration status.

5 We also ask to remove barriers to short-
6 term transitional and long-term housing, making
7 CityFHEPS accessible to all New Yorkers regardless of
8 immigration status.

9 Work with legal service providers to
10 identify funding for emergency triage legal needs and
11 designate an additional multi-year fund for long-term
12 representation as has been mentioned.

13 Yesterday, Speaker Adams called for us to
14 offer pathways for dignified, safe, and abundant
15 lives for our newest neighbors. To achieve that,
16 human services organizations must be treated as equal
17 partners and funded as ones by the City because we
18 have the opportunity to show that the concept of a
19 sanctuary city is more than a tagline that fades when
20 the cameras leave.

21 Thank you for the opportunity to speak
22 today.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you for
24 your testimony. I just want to check to see if Lena
25 Cohen is still here.

2 All right, Lena, yes, you can deliver
3 your testimony.

4 LENA COHEN: Thank you for the opportunity
5 to testify. My name is Lena Cohen. I am the Senior
6 Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses, the
7 federation of settlement houses in New York State. We
8 represent 40 settlement houses based in the City. I'm
9 here today to testify on behalf of our network who
10 has been at the forefront of the community's response
11 to serving the over 30,000 new individuals and
12 families that have arrived from the southern border.
13 Settlement houses, for example, in the Bronx one of
14 our members, BronxWorks, opened a DHS-funded shelter
15 housing service for families to not only find
16 temporary shelter but also to connect with a benefits
17 and access referral system that BronxWorks has since,
18 as an agency that contracts with the City on services
19 for all ages of a family, they really want to make
20 sure that they're integrating their wraparound
21 services to all of their new immediate opportunities
22 to welcome these asylum seekers into their doors and
23 then keep them there as they continue their journey
24 to resettle here. Another example that I want to
25 point out is our member in Brooklyn, the Center for

2 Family Life in Sunset Park, has already helped over
3 130 families that have come to their food shelter for
4 emergency food access. As these individuals, all
5 these individuals being newly arrived asylum seekers,
6 are waiting in line for their food, Center for Family
7 Life staff then actually speak with these individuals
8 in Spanish and connect them, again, with an internal
9 system that then allows them to understand what
10 source of benefits they actually have access to and
11 then what needs they actually will need to continue
12 to talk with staff at community center like CFL to
13 figure out how are we going to fill in these gaps
14 because right now there are a ton of gaps in things
15 like early childhood education and legal services
16 which I speak to more in my testimony, but, given
17 limited time, I just want to call out a few
18 recommendations that we see as top priorities moving
19 forward.

20 First and foremost, and I know a lot of
21 my colleagues have referenced this, legal services.
22 That's just an immediate demand that settlement
23 houses have been stretched thin for and, as a
24 network, we want to be upfront that the field stands
25 to overextend itself unless an immediate fusion of

2 funds, ideally from the City because that would be
3 the most flexible, but we're also working at the
4 State and Federal level to advocate for new funding
5 for these legal services. We already have these
6 systems and staff in place. It's just a question of
7 making sure that our organizations, folks like
8 BronxWorks in South Bronx, Northern Manhattan
9 Improvement Corporation in Washington Heights, are
10 able to retain these staff for these very highly
11 sought-after positions that are more needed than
12 ever.

13 Looking forward, we are also very eager
14 to engage with the City's new adult literacy concept
15 paper. We saw a ton of incredible new policies and
16 proposals in DYCD's most recent concept paper for
17 adult literacy, and this came out at the beginning of
18 December and so we were thrilled that it looks like
19 DYCD is already considering ways to expand one of
20 these key services we know thousands of new adults
21 arriving here in the city will need which is access
22 to English and then also access to literacy and
23 things like financial, health, and educational fields
24 so we are eager to bolster the adult literacy
25 programs and, again, this is another area that

2 settlement houses are already set up, have programs
3 up and running through City-funded programs, and so
4 as we see settlement houses using their own general
5 operation funds to expand these sorts of legal, adult
6 literacy, and housing services, we are very much
7 looking to the City for an immediate fusion of funds
8 there to bolster the settlement house network and
9 really meet these new individuals where they're at
10 with services.

11 Thank you so much for the opportunity to
12 testify today.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you to
14 this entire panel for your testimony.

15 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Council Member
16 Brewer.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
18 much. My question is for the wonderful legal services
19 folks. Obviously, you're working on immigration
20 status. Are there other topics that you are dealing
21 with with the young people or in general in terms of
22 legal issues? There are so many of them, but I just
23 didn't know if there were some that stand out.

24 DAVID MIRANDA: I think for us that has
25 been on of the bigger challenges it that immigration

2 is a very specialized area of law. When I started at
3 Covenant House, I was in practice a criminal defense
4 attorney who basically now I'm getting a crash course
5 on immigration law. I had to stop doing any other
6 cases but the immigration cases so name changes,
7 issues around orders of protection, doing Know-Your-
8 Rights trainings for our young people on police
9 encounters and what to do if you have a police
10 encounter which is part of what I used to do, I had
11 to put a hold on and focus on immigration. The good
12 thing is that there are community partners such as
13 The Door that mentor me with my immigration cases so
14 they look at my motions, we conference cases, they
15 have been an incredible, incredible asset, but
16 they're waiting list is over 700 at this point so
17 they're not taking any new cases. They just can't,
18 and if I don't take the young people that I meet
19 cases, there's no attorneys in the city that are
20 going to be able to do so so that's been the
21 challenge.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, with all
23 this new money that the Daily News just announced,
24 legal services should be top, mental health, legal
25 services, top of the list in my opinion. Thank you.

2 DAVID MIRANDA: Thank you.

3 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you so much
4 for your work and your dedication. I just have one
5 question. Are any of your organizations, I guess with
6 the exception of DYCD shelters, with shelter
7 providers that are strapped for resources and
8 connecting them to the community resources that
9 already exist?

10 DAVID MIRANDA: It is the challenge.
11 Again, a lot of the young people that I have met have
12 since moved out of Covenant House, and what I'm
13 getting is emails from their new facility saying can
14 you please keep working with this young person
15 because there's no support out there at all.

16 SPEAKER ADAMS: In terms of language
17 access, one of the complaints that we were hearing
18 initially, this kind of died down, I'm not sure if
19 it's because it's gotten better or people just got
20 tired of bringing it up was the lack of
21 linguistically appropriate staffing at the different
22 sites. Is that something that you've seen has
23 improved?

24 DAVID MIRANDA: Just speaking for my site,
25 that is definitely an issue. We do need more Spanish-

2 speaking support. Luckily, I am a Spanish-speaker.
3 There aren't that many Spanish-speakers on-site so
4 the few Spanish-speakers that we have basically have
5 a very tight relationship with all of the young
6 people because they know us and they come to us for
7 everything so it turns out that I'm not only their
8 lawyer, I become, ad hoc, their case manager and
9 support. We do have one Spanish-speaking social
10 worker on staff, but it's one thing to say we need
11 more social workers, and we definitely do, but it
12 also has to be culturally appropriate social work
13 because there is a stigma around receiving social
14 work among the population so it has to be culturally
15 appropriate social work, and we're doing our best
16 with that as well.

17 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you for
18 raising that. I want to thank our non-profit groups
19 because they've just been doing tremendous work, and
20 I don't think that they get the credit that they
21 deserve. When we fall short in government, they
22 usually step in to fill in those gaps and are
23 oftentimes not compensated accordingly so really want
24 to shout them out today. Thank you all so much for
25 your testimony today.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you,
3 everyone. I am now going to call our next panel. Our
4 next panel is going to be a virtual panel, and,
5 again, I'd just like to remind everyone that I will
6 call you up in panels. Individually, once your name
7 is called, a member of our staff will unmute you and
8 you may begin your testimony once the Sergeant-at-
9 Arms sets the clock and says that you may begin.

10 Our next panel will be the following
11 individuals, Deborah Lee, Ellen Pachnanda, and Jody
12 Ziesemer. Over now to Deborah Lee.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

14 DEBORAH LEE: My name is Deborah Lee. I am
15 the Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law Unit at
16 the Legal Aid Society. I use she/her pronouns. Thank
17 you for this opportunity.

18 As more migrants come to our city, we
19 have an obligation to treat them with dignity, hope,
20 and access to justice as we would with any other New
21 Yorker. I'll provide a summary of our immediate
22 recommendations and requests.

23 Our Immigration Law Unit has a long
24 history of providing a multi-faceted approach to
25 immigration legal services, emphasizing the value of

2 full legal representation, a rapid response to
3 emergent community needs, policy advocacy, and impact
4 litigation. We strongly believe that full
5 representation is our core strength and ultimately
6 yields the most justice to our clients and immigrant
7 communities. We also know that the current community
8 need for our services is vastly larger than our
9 funding for full representation allows. The Legal Aid
10 Society seeks funding to allow us to create a
11 dedicated Community Response Team within our
12 Immigration Law Unit to be able to pivot to
13 emergencies and quickly provide legal education,
14 screenings, and assistance.

15 Regarding our policy advocacy and
16 litigation work, Legal Aid has been a local and
17 national leader in calling for reforms on behalf of
18 our immigrant clients including special immigrant
19 juveniles, those potentially subject to the public
20 charge ground of inadmissibility and those in
21 prolonged immigration detention. We are eager to
22 continue pushing the federal government to provide
23 more for immigrants in need but need additional
24 funding for this.

2 Turning to the issue of shelter, the
3 City's effort to house recent arrivals needs to be
4 more transparent. The City must provide migrants and
5 the public with a clear statement of who is eligible
6 for placement in a HERRC and what the rights of those
7 with disabilities are in HERRCs. We also ask that the
8 City make the housing vouchers available to people
9 with a wider range of immigration statuses,
10 prioritize permanent housing placements for people
11 who have been in shelter the longest, maintain a 5
12 percent vacancy rate in the census for each DHS
13 shelter subpopulation, continue to use hotels rather
14 than congregate sites or tents to house recent
15 arrivals, and publish a daily report on HERRC census,
16 intake, vouchers providers, and exits.

17 Given the time restraint, I'll end there,
18 and our written testimony will include additional
19 recommendations. Thank you very much.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you,
21 Deborah, for your testimony. Now over to Ellen
22 Pachnanda for testimony.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Ellen, I
25 believe you are still muted.

2 ELLEN PACHNANDA: Thank you. I'm Ellen
3 Pachnanda. I'm the Director of the Brooklyn Defender
4 Services Immigration Practice. I want to thank the
5 City Council for convening this important two-day
6 hearing to assess the City's response and delivery of
7 services to those seeking asylum from the U.S.
8 border.

9 Our Immigration Practice protects the
10 rights of immigrant New Yorkers by defending against
11 ICE detention and deportation, minimizing the
12 negative immigration consequences of criminal and
13 family charges for non-citizens, and representing
14 immigrants in applications for immigration benefits.
15 This City Council has long been a champion of the
16 rights of the immigrants, and one of the most
17 profound ways in which the City has demonstrated its
18 commitment has been through the groundbreaking New
19 York Immigrant Family Unity Project, or NYIFUP, which
20 represents people who are detained in jail and facing
21 deportation. What we've done in this partnership with
22 the Legal Aid Society and Bronx Defenders for almost
23 a decade now is ensure that thousands of people
24 obtain full representation for the complicated issues
25 they face in removal proceedings. As others have

2 already testified, there are many issues that face
3 the immigrant population in receiving legal services,
4 including the change in presidential administrations,
5 the long pending cases that appear before immigration
6 courts, and applications that also pend for years. We
7 want to continue to provide the robust and
8 comprehensive legal representation that people need
9 for removal proceedings, and we ask that the City
10 Council maintain its commitment to the NYIFUP program
11 and that any new initiatives contemplated complement
12 our current work.

13 With respect to those who have recently
14 immigrated to the United States and have now arrived
15 in New York City, we urge the Council to ensure that
16 there is sufficient funding for both brief advice and
17 full legal representation because of the needs of
18 individuals and capacities for people to navigate the
19 byzantine immigration system varies widely. Providing
20 funding for full representation means ensuring that
21 we can continue to provide multi-disciplinary
22 services for our immigrant clients and their
23 families.

24 In terms of our interest in providing
25 additional services, we believe our expertise, again,

2 lies in the complex legal issues that arise in an
3 immigration case. This will be outlined more in our
4 written testimony, but our office would be able to
5 accept complex cases from the agencies that are
6 handling screening or Know-Your-Rights sessions. We
7 can also do trainings to the community based on the
8 needs of the City, but we urge the Council again to
9 prioritize incorporating future funding for these and
10 related programs into the City budget as opposed to
11 funding the programs through discretionary annual
12 funding. We require baseline funding in order to do
13 this. A deep commitment to funding our services over
14 a time would allow us to continue to be nimble and
15 provide flexibility for the City to meet the needs of
16 its residents and their families.

17 Thank you for taking the time to engage
18 with the providers around these important issues. We
19 look forward to continued conversations and
20 collaborations both on our existing programs as well
21 as new initiatives being developed to meet the legal
22 services needs of our city's immigrant community.

23 Thank you.

24

25

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you,
3 Ellen, for your testimony. Now going to move to Jody
4 Zieseemer for testimony. Over now to Jody.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

6 JODY ZIESEMER: Thank you. My name is Jody
7 Zieseemer. I am the Director of the Immigrant
8 Protection Unit at the New York Legal Assistance
9 Group. We appreciate the opportunity to testify to
10 the Committee on the Whole regarding recently arrived
11 migrants and appreciate your hearing this two-day
12 testimony regarding a range of services for this
13 population.

14 NYLAG along with other legal immigration
15 service providers have engaged with newly arrived
16 migrant families through our various community-based
17 sites, our central offices, and by sending staff on a
18 voluntary basis to the city's Asylum Resource
19 Navigation Center. We have been hamstrung by the
20 City's proposal for legal funding with untenable
21 deliverables which we felt would not allow us to
22 provide quality ethical services and to truly respond
23 to the needs of this population. NYLAG along with 10
24 other legal service providers drafted a letter of
25 recommendation to the City and to MOIA specifically

2 regarding the funding and programming, which I will
3 provide with my testimony. I want to emphasize how
4 urgent this issue is. NYLAG has already assisted more
5 than 20 families who have already been ordered
6 removed from the United States without the
7 opportunity to present an asylum claim because of the
8 chaos and confusion at the courts. Many of thousands
9 of additional families are being lost in the
10 bureaucracy, the intense enforcement of policies, and
11 the lack of stable housing and therefore fixed
12 addresses at which they can receive notice of their
13 hearings and other important notices and dates at
14 which they have to appear in order to assert their
15 rights. As has been mentioned by my colleagues, there
16 are rapidly approaching deadlines to apply for asylum
17 or people will lose the ability to seek this really
18 important relief. There is also a huge need for
19 employment authorization cards. A person must wait
20 six months after they file an application for asylum
21 in order to apply for a work authorization cards.
22 There are two issues here. First, the ability to
23 apply for asylum which is both..

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

2 JODY ZIESEMER: Resources to do that and
3 then also finding a forum in which to apply for
4 asylum, which is an issue with the way that the
5 federal government has set up this population and
6 then also subsequent filing for the work
7 authorization document.

8 Finally, I'll just end by urging the City
9 Council to pass a resolution calling for the federal
10 government and for the Department of Homeland
11 Security in particular to redesignate Venezuela for
12 temporary protected status. The vast majority of the
13 migrants that we are receiving in New York City are
14 from Venezuela, a country which has been recognized
15 as dangerous and untenable place to which migrants
16 should not be forced to return when it was initially
17 designated for TPS on March 9, 2021. A redesignation
18 of temporary protected status for Venezuela would
19 allow many of these recently arrived migrants to
20 apply for employment authorization more rapidly and
21 it would at pause, if not end, their removal
22 proceedings.

23 Thank you for this opportunity.

24 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Council Member
25 Brewer.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Along with other
5 Members of the City Council, we've been trying so
6 hard to get this TPS, workforce, etc., because it
7 would solve so many challenges as you know. I just
8 was wondering if you could explain, again, because
9 sometimes I'm not clear. Obviously, some people are
10 working illegally. Will that impact their status when
11 they have their hearing? Second, Congress is trying
12 to pass TPS. I know Congressman Nadler is trying hard
13 with that help specifically if it was to pass with
14 people getting their papers for working. Without
15 that, some folks have told me that they do get them,
16 but it can take a much longer time. If you could just
17 help to explain that for me? Thank you.

18 JODY ZIESEMER: First of all, it does not
19 impact people's ability to apply for or receive
20 asylum if they have worked without authorization in
21 the United States, but it does impact their ability
22 to obtain benefits and to obtain the stability needed
23 to get out of shelters so I think that's the really
24 critical thing is that employment authorization is
25 really the first step in a long process to obtain the

2 documentation necessary and the financial stability
3 necessary to really integrate into the city.
4 Furthermore, it is just an executive function. The
5 Department of Homeland Security is in charge of
6 designating countries for TPS so it doesn't need to
7 be an act of Congress, and my understanding is that
8 it actually, while Congress can encourage the
9 administration to do this, that they don't have the
10 authority to actually designate TPS, although there
11 certainly are legislative action that they could take
12 which would assist this population. As I was
13 attempting to explain, the process to apply for a
14 work authorization through the asylum process is very
15 protracted and takes a lot of preliminary steps and
16 applications and legal assistance in order to be
17 eligible, and TPS will shortcut that by allowing
18 people to apply for work authorization immediately,
19 receive some of the documentation, Social Security
20 Number, work authorization on a much shorter
21 timeframe and will give them a stability which they
22 can additionally pursue asylum but they won't have
23 the threat of being deported hanging over their head
24 and they won't have to engage in this very protracted
25 process in order to obtain work authorization.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
3 much.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you to
5 this panel. Just a note for Council Members, when you
6 do ask your question, if you have a question, if you
7 can please name the witness who you're directing your
8 question to or if it is the entire panel you can also
9 say this question is for the entire panel just so
10 that staff on the backend can know to unmute the
11 respective panelists.

12 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Council Member
13 Hanif.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you and this
15 question is for all the panelists. Thank you to all
16 of our legal service providers, and I know how tough
17 this time has been. I'd like to learn a little bit
18 more about how MOIA has helped or not helped in
19 providing legal services or what the partnership has
20 looked like. I know they had the RFP released but it
21 has since been deactivated. What would you like to
22 see happen in the coming week.

23 JODY ZIESEMER: I could take that one as
24 well. We do appreciate the partnership with MOIA, and
25 many legal service providers including NYLAG have

2 really longstanding partnership. I will say that the
3 response to this population has been markedly
4 different from MOIA's response to, for example, the
5 Ukrainian population, the influx of immigrants from
6 that country, in which we rapidly built up a program,
7 MOIA funded it, it was very flexible. They listened
8 to legal service providers on how to build a program,
9 what was most needed, what was the particular legal
10 needs of this particular population. That did not
11 happen with the recently arrived migrants. The
12 programming and the RFP was, again as I mentioned,
13 very rigid. It had a very high deliverables, and we
14 felt like it was not responsive either to the needs
15 of the population or to what legal service providers
16 were assessing the needs to be and what our response
17 had already been in terms of serving this population.
18 Again, I'll attach the letter of recommendations for
19 additional funding and programming that we've
20 provided to MOIA.

21 DEBORAH LEE: I just wanted to add in that
22 our existing contracts including our contract under
23 the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative, I think we
24 are very grateful for this funding and our ability to
25 provide legal services to individuals. I think it

2 also needs to be understood that for the past, I
3 would say, six years, especially during the last
4 administration, cases that we had already taken on
5 became incredibly complex and took longer to resolve
6 and just became much more difficult to handle.
7 Oftentimes, we were applying for multiple forms of
8 what we call immigration release so different
9 applications so we would need to prepare different
10 forms of evidence in order to best protect our
11 clients and their ability to remain in the United
12 States. What this ended up doing is just creating an
13 incredible burden on our staff with their existing
14 caseloads so when you have these more recent influxes
15 of individuals coming in, it just adds more and more
16 stress to our existing staff, and I think that's
17 somewhat of a unique context to keep in mind, that
18 this was, I think that Make the Road had made this
19 point before, that this had already been bubbling up
20 before because of just the incredible struggles that
21 we had to fight during the last administration.
22 Things have changed somewhat, but things have not
23 changed dramatically so things are still quite
24 difficult even still.

2 ELLEN PACHNANDA: I could just briefly add
3 on to what both Jody and Deborah pointed out, and I
4 do think that other panelists have highlighted this.
5 It's not only necessarily the backlog of cases, which
6 is certainly what exists, but what I think is
7 critical to highlight here is where MOIA has been
8 very supportive, as the City Council has for these
9 existing programs where we are funded, Deborah
10 referenced IOI earlier, testified about the NYIFUP
11 program, we've had the opportunity to really focus on
12 those individuals who have complex cases so these are
13 not necessarily straightforward asylum applications.
14 Our public defender service office along with legal
15 aid, and we do have individuals who have contact with
16 different criminal justice, family justice systems,
17 that we are best poised given our years of expertise
18 in removal defense to respond to those situations,
19 and what needs to be recognized here we believe is
20 the ability to fully represent individuals and that
21 is what we were hoping MOIA would contemplate in the
22 RFP that was offered, that's what we're hoping for,
23 and we'll again put that down into specifics in our
24 written testimony. We're asking that to best serve
25 the immigrant population, the current population New

2 York City has and influx that is coming is to give
3 these individuals the hope and the representation
4 that they need. It is full representation. It is the
5 ability to not only file an application for someone
6 but to carry that through, and that's the thing that,
7 as Deborah was pointing out, that our staff has
8 really been stretched to their limits because these
9 cases are taking very long, because there are
10 additional applications that we have to do so, again,
11 we're imploring the recognition this City Council had
12 that we hope that MOIA would extend as well is that
13 the best way to do this are the programs that you do
14 have existing, but we need additional funding for
15 those programs and, if we're to take on these
16 initiatives, we need funding that reflects the needs
17 of the immigrant community which is not to just file
18 an application and walk away. We want to represent
19 these individuals. Thank you.

20 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. Council
21 Member Narcisse.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Hi. Good
23 afternoon. I am so appreciative of your work. Anyone
24 on the panel can answer the question. Do we have any
25 funding for folks that have to renew their TPS

2 because it has been a problem in our community?
3 People are always wondering what they can do because
4 they're always coming to me for the funding. Second,
5 the folks when they leave either the shelter or
6 they're on the street, they go to their family, they
7 don't have financial support, and they're always
8 wondering who is going to help them through the
9 process, which best organization you think I should
10 for the legal part of it to send them to?

11 DEBORAH LEE: I won't tout Legal Aid just
12 only. We have many amazing legal service providers
13 who are providing services to immigrants throughout
14 the city including my panelists and their
15 organizations. I think a lot of the organizations
16 that MOIA and others have relationships with are
17 reputable organizations and I think that that's
18 important. I do think that building stronger
19 relationships between community-based organizations
20 and the legal services community I think is also very
21 important. At Legal Aid, we also get a lot of
22 inquiries from local legislators and local government
23 officials asking for assistance, and we are happy to
24 partner doing legal clinics and other things where we
25 provide services and are a resource for people to go

2 to, but I do think that there are ways in which we
3 can develop stronger relationships with community-
4 based organizations and the legal services
5 organizations. I think sometimes we do have these
6 relationships and we do build on them, but I think
7 that more and more it is important to develop those
8 relationships and invest in those.

9 JODY ZIESEMER: Just regarding funding
10 specifically for TPS applications, I don't think
11 anyone receives specific funding for that...

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired.

13 JODY ZIESEMER: But the flexibility in
14 some of our other programming like ActionNYC and the
15 IOI initiative have been really helpful to kind of
16 pivot when there is a designation of TPS or renewal
17 period is open, and I think we're all very proficient
18 at providing large-scale services to populations. I
19 know that we worked with your office, Council Member
20 Narcisse, to do Haitian TPS renewals and training the
21 Haitian Bar Association to help them do pro bono
22 services so I think that is a need that we are able
23 to meet when it arises. What we're struggling with
24 right now is that all of the recent arrivals, the
25 asylum seekers, are being placed in enforcement and

2 removal processes. They're being monitored intensely
3 by ICE, and they are being placed in front of the
4 immigration court, and those cases are much more
5 complex, much more difficult and require a higher
6 level of intervention for legal services and that is
7 frankly untenable, but in order to even protect
8 people's rights we need dedicated legal services in
9 order to do that.

10 ELLEN PACHNANDA: I'll just quickly say
11 thank you for the question because I think it's
12 really highlighting what Jody just said and Deborah
13 did as well is that the partnerships we do have with
14 the community, we have done clinics as well, we have
15 done trainings, we are open, like I had said earlier,
16 to continue to do that to help the community, but I
17 think what Jody just highlighted stresses the need to
18 rely upon and fund those legal services providers who
19 have been in these cases where, yes there are TPS
20 renewals that are coming, but, like Jody was saying,
21 individuals have been placed into removal
22 proceedings, they are facing ICE enforcement so there
23 are many different factors you have to consider and
24 there are organizations that do have this expertise
25 and the experience and the staff who can jump in and

2 respond, but, yes, we are open as well to doing what
3 the community needs, which it does sound like maybe
4 more trainings and clinics but, again, asking that
5 we're funded to do this additional work because our
6 staff, again, is being stretched even at the current
7 funding levels to the limits. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you to
9 this entire panel for your testimony. We are now
10 going to move back to in-person testimony, and we
11 will now call on the New York City Independent Budget
12 Office represented by Sarah Stefanski.

13 SARAH STEFANSKI: Members of the City
14 Council Committee on the Whole, I am Sarah Stefanski,
15 an Assistant Director at the New York City
16 Independent Budget Office. Thank you for the
17 opportunity to be a part of today's hearing.

18 My testimony will focus on some of the
19 budget implications of the recent influx of asylum
20 seekers to the city. This ties both to questions on
21 the City's ability to adequately fund and deliver
22 services but also to the City's fiscal condition as
23 expenses associated with asylum seekers at the
24 present scale were not anticipated when the City
25 adopted its budget this past June.

2 The total cost of City services provided
3 to newly arrived asylum seekers is difficult to
4 estimate as the number of people arriving and
5 remaining in the City continues to evolve. Because of
6 this, IBO has estimated the annual per household cost
7 of various services. This allows stakeholders to
8 update cost estimates as the situation unfolds. The
9 largest portion of this per-household cost is
10 shelter. IBO estimates that the annual shelter cost
11 per household to be around 50,000 dollars for an
12 individual, 69,000 dollars for a family with minor
13 children, and 63,000 dollars for a family of related
14 adults. IBO's shelter estimates encompass all types
15 of asylum seekers' shelter stays. This is whether it
16 is in a DHS-run facility or a HERRC as we expect the
17 cost of associated stays of the City's current hotel-
18 based HERRCs to look very similar to DHS shelter
19 costs. DHS, itself, has been using hotels for many of
20 its shelters. Our per-household shelter estimates do
21 not include, however, costs associated with the
22 construction, relocation, or demobilization of the
23 temporary structure at Orchard Beach and later
24 Randall's Island as many of these costs have been

2 part of larger contracts and have not been
3 specifically broken out.

4 The second part of our per-household cost
5 estimate is for public education. IBO estimates that
6 the annual per-pupil cost for students coming from
7 asylum-seeking families totals around 8,200 dollars.
8 This includes funding for the City's Fair Student
9 Funding Formula Allocation, which accounts for
10 additional funding formula for English-language
11 learners and also a special 2,000 dollar per-pupil
12 allocation DOE announced in October for schools that
13 enrolled six or more students who live in temporary
14 housing coming from what the City has identified as
15 asylum-seeking households.

16 Along with the shelter and education
17 costs, IBO also included per-person costs totaling
18 around 2,000 dollars for very basic healthcare and
19 legal assistance costs.

20 Separately, IBO has also estimated the
21 funding that will be needed to be added to the City's
22 budget in its November financial plan. The Adams'
23 administration included 1 billion dollars of
24 unspecified federal funding in this Fiscal Year 2023.
25 OMB had put this money in the budget without

2 identifying a source for this federal funding. Now,
3 just announced earlier this morning, so this is late-
4 changing news, 800 million dollars in federal aid is
5 included in a federal spending bill that is working
6 its way through Congress now. This is a national
7 amount, and it will be for competitive grants run
8 through FEMA. One thing to keep in mind border states
9 and other localities have made similar requests for
10 federal aid, and so this is, again, competitive
11 grants and we don't know how much of this amount of
12 money, should it be in the final spending bill that
13 Congress is working on, would actually come to New
14 York City. Until this money is in hand, someone would
15 have to pay for it so without federal money, IBO
16 estimates that for Fiscal Year 2023 the City will
17 require an additional 374 million dollars in City
18 funds. Now, the November plan added no funding,
19 federal or city, for asylum seekers for the next
20 Fiscal Year, 2024. IBO estimates that another 628
21 million dollars will be needed for 2024, and this is
22 specifically for shelter costs. To be clear, these
23 amounts do not reflect the entire cost of providing
24 services but rather what IBO estimates is needed

2 outside of current agency budgets for these fiscal
3 years.

4 Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to
5 answer any questions.

6 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Council Member
7 Krishna.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thanks so much
9 for your testimony and I appreciate that summary as
10 well. You mentioned the November plan, and I just
11 wanted to ask, obviously you're not the
12 administration but in your independent assessment, we
13 have revenue going up, both undeclared city revenue
14 from our taxes, potentially federal revenue though
15 unclear how much we're going to get as a city, needs
16 are going up before the increase in asylum seekers
17 coming here, now obviously we know the need is even
18 greater and exacerbated. Yet, as you point out, in
19 the November plan, spending is going down. In fact,
20 there's proposed cuts to a lot of services that would
21 be essential for asylum seekers coming here in the
22 way of social services, public benefits, and
23 otherwise. You also testified to the added money that
24 would be needed to help asylum seekers here so in
25 your assessment with revenue going up, with need

2 going up, does it make sense for spending to be going
3 down at this moment?

4 SARAH STEFANSKI: IBO put out our Fiscal
5 Outlook Report just yesterday so it's hot off the
6 presses, and we have a larger revenue estimate than
7 OMB does so we estimate that the City will end this
8 year with 2.2 billion dollars in extra revenue
9 relative to even adjustments for what we think the
10 City will ultimately spend over the course of this
11 Fiscal Year.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Sorry. That's
13 how much again?

14 SARAH STEFANSKI: 2.2 billion dollars.
15 Currently, the City generally takes any extra money
16 left over and uses that to prepay the following
17 Fiscal Year so right now that is assumed to go to
18 help prepay next year, and IBO does estimate a small
19 gap next year for the budget. Now, there are risks,
20 and asylum seekers, we have no idea ultimately how
21 much this will cost, how many people will arrive in
22 New York, how long they will stay, and what level of
23 services they will need, but also what level of
24 services the City will choose to provide to them, and
25 that is a budget risk so while we do have some

2 cushion it looks like this year, again IBO estimates
3 revenues coming in stronger than OMB, and that's
4 largely because OMB did not update its revenue
5 forecast since it adopted the budget even though some
6 revenues are coming in stronger.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Given the
8 increasing needs in that sense, especially for asylum
9 seekers but also for everyday New Yorkers too who are
10 here, do you think that given the increased revenue
11 and the need for more programs and social supports
12 and safety nets for asylum seekers, for everyone
13 here, do you think that reducing spending at this
14 time is going to help meet that need?

15 SARAH STEFANSKI: What I can say is some
16 pieces of social services, particularly the right to
17 shelter, whoever needs shelter, the City will provide
18 shelter for, and so therefore those expenses are in
19 some ways not as discretionary. Other areas like
20 legal services are very much up to what the City and
21 this administration chooses to fund things at, and so
22 that's going to be part of future budget
23 negotiations.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you.

2 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. Council
3 Member Brewer.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
5 much. As we said earlier and you referenced, there's
6 800 million dollars apparently coming for this effort
7 from the federal, do you have some recommendations as
8 to where it should first be sent for the asylum
9 seekers?

10 SARAH STEFANSKI: At some point, the City
11 has been incurring costs. One, to be clear, the 800
12 million dollars is a national allocation is my
13 understanding, and, like I said, this was just being
14 announced as I was sitting in the gallery. We don't
15 know whether it's going to be retroactive so will it
16 apply to reimburse expenses the City has already
17 incurred or only expenses going forward, and at some
18 point any federal dollar that can supplant a city
19 dollar is savings for the City of New York.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right. Okay. Thank
21 you.

22 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Council Member
23 Hanif.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I just have a
25 followup to Council Member Krishnan's question. Do

2 you have the cost that OMB is estimating. I know you
3 mentioned that IBO is estimating 2.2-billion-dollar
4 increase in revenue. Do you have the number for OMB?

5 SARAH STEFANSKI: I do not have it right
6 in front of me. It is in our Fiscal Outlook Report,
7 and we can get that to you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Could you share if
9 it's much lower than what IBO is estimating or...

10 SARAH STEFANSKI: It is lower. They're
11 estimating smaller tax revenues in their November
12 plan.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay. Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you for
15 your testimony. Now going to call on our next panel.
16 Our next panel will be a virtual panel and will be in
17 the following of these individuals. Anne Pilsbury,
18 Deborah Berkman, and Terry Lawson. Over now to Anne
19 Pilsbury.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will start
21 now.

22 ANNE PILSBURY: Hi, City Council Members.
23 Thanks for holding this hearing. I really can't
24 possibly address the problem of legal services in
25 just the two minutes that I have. Okay, am I on now?

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: We can see and
3 hear you, Anne.

4 ANNE PILSBURY: Okay, great, thanks. Sorry
5 for the glitch. We can't possibly address the problem
6 of legal services in just two minutes, but let me
7 just say Central American Legal Assistance has been
8 representing this population for decades, and we can
9 crank out asylum applications probably as fast as
10 anybody, and there's no way even with double or
11 triple the number of lawyers that are already on the
12 ground in the New York that we can meet the need so
13 we have to realize that we're up against a real
14 mission impossible, and that runs over to their
15 eligibility for work authorization too. Under our
16 existing asylum rules, there is no easy fix for this,
17 but what we would urge the City to do is to really
18 sit down and think carefully through how to fund what
19 we can try to do. The RFP that none of us bid on was
20 simply not realistic, and that's why nobody bid on it
21 so we're all kind of open and available to sit down
22 and talk specifically about what we can realistically
23 do. We can't staff up overnight to meet the needs of
24 15 or 20,000 new asylum seekers. The other thing that
25 sadly people have to wrap their minds around is that

2 not everyone who has come into the City recently is
3 an asylum seekers. Some people are fleeing all kinds
4 of difficult situations, but not all of them make
5 them appropriate asylum seekers, and we have to
6 acknowledge that and focus on the ones that are and
7 that's a tough task. It takes at least two hours to
8 do an asylum application just at the get-go.

9 That aside, we have a very practical
10 request to make of the City Council.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is expired.

12 ANNE PILSBURY: Okay, just very quickly.
13 They need to do something about sanitary services for
14 the immigrants that are lining up overnight in front
15 of 26th Federal Plaza. Our staff went down there last
16 week to give out coffee and tea in the middle of the
17 night, and it's a heartbreaking situation and I think
18 the City has a public health need on their hands that
19 they need to raise with Immigration to do something
20 to provide those people with an alternative to
21 standing in line all night long at 26th Federal
22 Plaza. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you,
24 Anne, for your testimony. Over now to Deborah Berkman
25 for testimony.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

3 DEBORAH BERKMAN: Thank you. Speaker
4 Adams, Deputy Speaker Ayala, Council Members, and
5 staff, good afternoon and thank you for the
6 opportunity to speak to the New York City Council
7 today.

8 My name is Deborah Berkman. I'm the
9 Supervising Attorney of the Shelter Advocacy
10 Initiative and the Public Assistance and SNAP
11 Practice in the Public Benefits Unit at NYLAG.
12 Earlier today, you heard from Jody Ziesemer, who is
13 my colleague who runs our Immigration Protection
14 Unit, and I work on the shelter side of things. The
15 Shelter Advocacy Initiative provides legal services
16 and advocacy to people who are trying to access
17 public shelter in New York City. I also have worked
18 with numerous single adults and families who have
19 recently crossed the southern border to seek asylum
20 in the United States on their shelter issues.

21 Earlier this year when this sort of wave
22 started, the asylum-seeking migrants who crossed the
23 southern border and arrived in New York City were
24 housed in the DHS shelter system where they were
25 ostensibly offered all of the same supports and

2 protections as non-immigrant DHS residents. However,
3 in September of this year, the Mayor determined that
4 these new New Yorkers were not going to be absorbed
5 into the existing DHS shelter system and instead
6 created a new shelter system that did not comply with
7 the minimum shelter guidelines mandated in New York
8 City and didn't provide the residents with assistance
9 for transitioning to permanent housing. As you know,
10 these new shelters are called HERRCs and they don't
11 offer all the protections and services of DHS
12 shelters. The City is failing these New Yorkers by
13 diverting them there and not providing these people
14 with all of the other services they need. As you
15 know, the first HERRC was a tent complex on Randall's
16 Island, but, even after they were moved inside, they
17 still failed to meet the minimum standards for
18 shelter in New York City. My clients report that they
19 were not being provided with adequate food, that they
20 didn't have assistance enrolling their children in
21 school, and that they didn't have access to medical
22 care. While a lot of this has abated, clients are
23 still reporting not having case workers and not being
24 served hot food. Also, very troublingly..

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time's expired.

2 DEBORAH BERKMAN: Can I just continue very
3 briefly?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Yes.

5 DEBORAH BERKMAN: Thank you. Also
6 troublingly, the residents of the HERRCs are not
7 eligible for the housing subsidies that allow
8 families that experience homelessness to transition
9 to permanent housing, which they may be eligible for
10 if they resided in DHS shelter. That's a key
11 difference between the HERRCs and between DHS
12 shelter, and it's very important. I also want to note
13 that my clients who are living in DHS family shelter
14 are not being investigated for eligibility which
15 seems like it would be a good thing because they
16 don't have to undergo invasive eligibility
17 examinations. However, if they are not found eligible
18 for DHS shelter, then they will not be eligible for
19 the housing vouchers that will allow them to
20 transition to permanent housing, and, contrary to
21 what other people have been saying, many of these
22 clients actually will be eligible for CityFHEPS and I
23 can explain the nuts and bolts of it, but they would
24 be eligible for CityFHEPS and they would be able to
25 transition to permanent housing but they cannot do so

2 because they're not being found eligible for shelter.
3 I'm submitting written testimony in addition to this
4 and thank you for your time.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you,
6 Deborah, for your testimony. Over now to Terry
7 Lawson.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time will begin.

9 TERRY LAWSON: Good afternoon. My name is
10 Terry Lawson, and I'm the Executive Director of
11 UnLocal where we provide community education,
12 outreach, education, and legal representation to New
13 York City's undocumented immigrant communities. I'm
14 also the co-Founder and Steering Committee Member of
15 the Bronx Immigration Partnership. We thank Speaker
16 Adams, Deputy Speaker Ayala, and the Committee of the
17 Whole for convening this oversight hearing over these
18 two days and for the efforts of every Committee and
19 your coordinated efforts for the City's immigrants.

20 In collaboration with our partners at
21 Central American Legal Assistance, Catholic Migration
22 Services, MASA, (INAUDIBLE), NYLAG, and the Robin
23 Hood Foundation, UnLocal will be launching the Pro Se
24 Plus Project this January, and we call on the New
25 York City Council and this administration to support

2 our efforts to support the recent arrivals. The vast
3 majority of recent arrivals in New York require
4 critical information, logistical support, and legal
5 assistance to file for asylum and work authorization.
6 As you have heard today, there are simply not enough
7 funded immigration legal services lawyers in New York
8 City to represent every individual who must file
9 their application before their one-year filing
10 deadlines start rolling in in 2023. This is the
11 reality that we are all grappling with. This moment
12 calls for creativity, collaboration, and new
13 resources which is what the Pro Se Project, a pilot
14 program that we invite the City Council and the
15 administration to invest in, will prioritize. We
16 believe many of the migrants who are making New York
17 City their home will greatly benefit from detailed
18 and updated information on how to file their asylum
19 applications, what should be included in those
20 filings, what evidence should be submitted, and what
21 to expect at their ICE check-ins and court hearings.
22 The Pro Se Plus Project will equip recent arrivals
23 with critical resources to maximize their success in
24 representing themselves. We will conduct legal
25 screenings, consultations, deliver educational

2 presentations, give advice and counsel, and provide
3 pro se assistance to help recent arrivals meet
4 requirements in a complicated and ever-changing
5 immigration legal landscape. We will also train
6 community partners and volunteers on the detailed
7 requirements of filing for asylum and employment
8 authorization...

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

10 TERRY LAWSON: So that they will be well-
11 prepared and resourced when asylum seekers come
12 through their doors seeking pro se assistance. In
13 designing this project, we have consulted with New
14 York City's experienced immigration, legal, and
15 social services providers, community and have shared
16 our proposal with City Council staff because we
17 believe that open-minded collaboration is the only
18 way to create meaningful solutions in times of great
19 need. At the same time, we recognize that we must be
20 intentional about what we can realistically
21 accomplish with a finite number of lawyers,
22 paralegals, advocates, educators, and community
23 partners.

24 We also want to clarify that the Pro Se
25 Plus Project is meant to complement full

2 representation in removal proceedings and does not
3 and cannot replace the need for the City and the
4 State to adequately full representation by
5 immigration legal services providers, which simply
6 cannot be met by the pro bono bar. We agree with all
7 those who have testified today and yesterday that
8 substantially more resources must be made available
9 to compensate those seeking to provide meaningful
10 assistance to immigrant New Yorkers whether they
11 arrived last week or in the last decade. We look
12 forward to an opportunity to meet further with the
13 Council on how to realize our ideals as a city that
14 welcomes immigrants humanely and competently. Thank
15 you.

16 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. Council
17 Member Krishnan.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you for
19 your testimony. I just wanted to say it's good to see
20 you, Anne Pilsbury, Terry Lawson, thank you to all
21 the panelists for the panel. I just wanted to put on
22 the record thank you all so much for the work that
23 you all do every single day in your organizations to
24 represent immigrant New Yorkers. We know, and I'm
25 sure you will all agree, that legal services has been

2 underfunded for years and now more than ever, and we
3 also know that legal services is crucial for
4 immigrants coming here, especially asylum seekers,
5 undocumented immigrants. It's a vital service that
6 needs to be funded at a much greater level so just
7 wanted to state for the record how important it is
8 both for our city to be supporting immigration legal
9 services at this time and how grateful we are to you
10 all as the organizations on the ground doing this
11 work every single day for years and especially in
12 this moment too. Thank you all.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you to
14 this entire panel for your testimony. We are now
15 going to move to the next virtual panel. The next
16 virtual panel will be the following individuals in
17 the following order, Eric Lee followed by Rosanna
18 Cruz followed Nilbia Coyote followed by Hadeel
19 Mishal. Over now to Eric Lee.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time starts now.

21 ERIC LEE: Good afternoon. My name is Eric
22 Lee. I'm Director of Policy and Planning for Homeless
23 Services United. Thank you, Speaker Adams and Deputy
24 Speaker Ayala, for allowing me to testify today. I
25 will submit more detailed written testimony, but I

2 want to highlight four major points to help address
3 the migrant homelessness crisis in the city. The City
4 should fast-track hiring a front-run staff to fill
5 vacancies at HRA and DHS to eliminate delays for cash
6 assistance, SNAP, one-shot deals, and rental
7 assistance. Providers are reporting significant
8 delays at public benefits centers, and, as a result,
9 applicants are seeing their public assistance
10 applications denied or cases closed, one-shot deals
11 denied, their ongoing CityFHEPS fail to renew, and
12 households at risk of eviction or currently in
13 shelter unable to qualify for rental assistance
14 vouchers like CityFHEPS and FHEPS.

15 Our second recommendation is to bolster
16 eviction prevention and legal services to meet the
17 overwhelming demand in the community. Homebases are
18 struggling with high vacancies and extremely high
19 turnover with staff burning out in record numbers.
20 They have extremely high caseloads, and they're
21 trying to balance the most urgent cases with less
22 urgent cases to unfortunately have appointments
23 stretching out weeks. To address this, the City could
24 revise the Homebase RFP to expand staffing and right-
25 size wages, they could open new Homebase locations in

2 areas with the greatest need, or they could develop a
3 dedicated unit within Homebase programs that focus
4 solely on housing search and rental assistance
5 applications.

6 Our third recommendation is to establish
7 a reliable DHS shelter pipeline for (INAUDIBLE) at
8 shelter and normalizing the fiscal operations of DHS-
9 contracted programs. Non-profits need to be in a
10 fiscally healthy position to be able to absorb the
11 risk of standing up new programs. This means reducing
12 delays in contract registrations and amendments,
13 fully reimbursing non-profits for the cost of
14 services provided, and comprehensive wage reform for
15 the non-profit...

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

17 ERIC LEE: Do you mind if I just wrap up?

18 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Yes, you may.

19 ERIC LEE: Okay, thank you. Our final
20 recommendation is to expedite placement from shelter
21 into permanent housing to shorten the time spent
22 homeless. This can be accomplished by bolstering
23 headcount at DHS and HRA units responsible for
24 processing rental assistance applications and public
25 benefits as well as improving the CityFHEPS rule by

2 removing the utility reduction and rent
3 reasonableness test and expanding eligibility by
4 removing the 90-day rule, the work requirement as
5 well as expanding CityFHEPS explicitly to households
6 regardless of their legal status and increasing the
7 initial income limit from 200 percent federal poverty
8 limit to 50 percent area median income.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you,
11 Eric, for your testimony. Over now to Rosanna Cruz.

12 ROSANNA CRUZ: Thank you for the
13 opportunity to submit this testimony today. My name
14 is Rosanna Cruz, and I'm the Senior Program Director
15 of Community Benefits Assistance Programs at Good
16 Shepherd Services. Our programs are located in Park
17 Slope and East New York and Brooklyn New York, but we
18 serve residents all throughout Brooklyn and Queens.
19 Good Shepherd Services is part of a network of
20 community organizations that created the Eastern
21 Brooklyn Emergency Response Collaborative, which has
22 been working together since the pandemic to address
23 pressing neighborhood needs. In collaboration with
24 the Collaborative, we hosted three resource events
25 for recently arrived immigrants and asylum seekers in

2 the community providing benefits and resources such
3 as food, clothing, personal care, baby items as well
4 as legal and benefit enrollment assistance. The
5 events were located and hosted within walking
6 distance from shelters all throughout Brooklyn, but
7 we did get residents from all over the shelters,
8 recently immigrants that are at houses and shelters
9 in the Bronx and also at East 116. The first event
10 was held on October 25th, and we had over 400 asylum
11 seekers looking for resources. At the next
12 consecutive events, we had over 550 and 300
13 individuals looking for legal services as well as
14 other essential items like clothing, mental health,
15 and health insurance benefits.

16 Today, my testimony will speak to what we
17 have learned from our efforts to support the asylum
18 seekers. I would like to emphasize that COVID-19
19 pandemic exacerbated the conditions and the need that
20 already existed, and with the influx of asylum
21 seekers the needs are now great. Community-based
22 organizations have and during COVID-19 pandemic been
23 responding to those needs with already limited
24 resources. We have been using our own resources to
25 provide essential needs to this community. The main

2 needs that we are seeing with these individuals are
3 clothing. At all the events that we hosted, they're
4 having a high volume of...

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

6 ROSANNA CRUZ: Asking for clothing. May I
7 have an additional minute to cover other issues?

8 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: You may.

9 ROSANNA CRUZ: Thank you. I want to put
10 emphasis on food. The rising food prices have
11 contributed to an increase in food insecurity. Many
12 of the recently arrived immigrants do not qualify for
13 NSAP benefits unless they have a USA citizen child or
14 have already established their asylum status. Many of
15 these individuals have visited our agency asking for
16 help with food. We have children that are hungry,
17 family complaining that they don't have enough food,
18 and (INAUDIBLE) have explained that there are
19 concerns with the shelters, the food and the services
20 that they are giving to the family. We cannot tell a
21 hungry child that they only have access to three
22 limited meals per day.

23 When it comes to legal services, the lack
24 of legal services is also a big concern for our
25 asylum seekers and individuals in the community. It

2 is our understanding that the USCIS is providing
3 (INAUDIBLE) free legal providers to these
4 individuals, but attempts by the individuals in our
5 own agency to access those services has been
6 unsuccessful. Our agency has been calling this
7 organization and legal providers to secure less for
8 our community residents, but they have not been able
9 to get anyone on the phone to get an appointment. The
10 City should set up support to help asylum seekers
11 easily access identification and legal documentation.
12 They need to work with law students. They need to set
13 up open clinics to help the asylum seekers apply for
14 the asylum process. We understand that legal services
15 is limited, but there are also resources that can be
16 utilized to help the asylum seekers at least set up
17 the immigration process.

18 Lastly, when it comes to shelters, we are
19 aware that individuals cannot stay in the shelter
20 during the day. They have to leave the shelter early
21 in the morning, and many of those individuals are
22 young adults that have to stay on the street until
23 they are allowed to go back into the shelters. The
24 shelter needs to put in place day programming for
25 these individuals. We cannot have individuals walking

2 in the community without anything for them to do for
3 five, six, seven hours. There needs to be more
4 vocational programming in place, more educational
5 programming in place for these individuals to spend
6 their time during the day when they are not allowed
7 to go back into the shelter.

8 Lastly, we also want the shelters to
9 increase their referrals to community-based agencies.
10 We understand that they don't have resources to
11 connect these individuals to all the essential
12 services, but they are resources in the community,
13 and they are failing to connect those individuals to
14 us, the community agencies that are frontline helping
15 these individuals when there is a crisis.

16 When it comes to mental health, there's a
17 big stigma, there's a big taboo. Individuals that
18 have been here visiting our agency, many of those
19 individuals have come from countries where mental
20 health is not considered an essential service, often
21 don't ask for the services, so we're asking DHS and
22 (INAUDIBLE) to implement other strategies to connect
23 these individuals to mental health services. They
24 will not openly come to you and say I'm depressed or
25 I'm suicidal. There needs to be a better effort to

2 connect them to services. Let's implement workshops
3 in the shelter system. Let's have more workshops in
4 the local school so that we can increase the
5 awareness (INAUDIBLE) have services and connect them
6 to local community-based organizations.

7 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I'm sorry. Can we
8 start to wrap up?

9 ROSANNA CRUZ: Yes. My last statement. The
10 City opened the doors for newly arrived immigrants.
11 Let's make sure that we keep those doors open and
12 let's make sure that we work together to repair any
13 broken doors so that we can help these individuals
14 reach their stability.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
16 today.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you,
18 Rosanna, for your testimony. Now going to move to
19 Nilbia for testimony.

20 DIANA MORENO: Good afternoon. My name is
21 Diana Moreno. I'm the Deputy Director at New
22 Immigrant Community Empowerment, or NICE. Our
23 Executive Director, Nilbia Coyote, is currently out
24 on bereavement leave. We are delivering this
25 testimony on behalf of the thousands of new migrants

2 that are now members of NICE and are working hard to
3 find a safe and dignified future in this country for
4 them and their families.

5 We are calling on the Mayor's Office and
6 City Council to continue investing in organizations
7 like NICE that are responding directly to this crisis
8 and creating a long-term pathway to success for these
9 families, many of whom have risked their lives to be
10 here.

11 If you ask new immigrants what they need
12 most after their basic needs for food, clothing, and
13 shelter have been met, they will more likely say
14 work. We need jobs. This is what we must invest in,
15 impactful programs that focus on the long-term
16 economic stability for this population. Supporting
17 new immigrants is at the core of NICE's work. It's in
18 our name. We're just a few blocks from La Parada, one
19 of the busiest day laborer corners in the country in
20 Jackson Heights Queens. We organize new immigrants
21 daily (INAUDIBLE) immigrant workers in New York City
22 to build their collective power, and we do so by
23 combining the strength of workforce development
24 training and education on worker rights, advocacy,
25 and programs that are tailored to this population.

2 However, in recent months, along with our non-profit
3 partners we have seen an exponential increase in
4 people seeking our services. This has swelled to
5 levels higher than even the worst moments in the
6 pandemic. Just a few examples, we held a once-a-month
7 new member orientation in which we had about 40 to 50
8 new members to integrate into our organization. This
9 past October we had 350 people show up to our new
10 member orientation, forcing us to increase that
11 program from once a month to now eight times a month.
12 We hold it twice a month now. The reason is because
13 that program is tied to our OSHA training, which is a
14 free 30-hour safety training for our immigrant
15 workers. We also have seen an exponential increase in
16 jobseekers coming to our Worker Center. We had an
17 average of 400 to 500 people visiting our center, and
18 now it's over 900 visitors looking for work. We've
19 also had increased reports of workers accepting any
20 job that comes to them, even at below minimum wage
21 levels. We have people going to work for 10 dollars
22 an hour. This is unacceptable.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

24 DIANA MORENO: Migrants are in dire need
25 of stability, of dignified housing, of food, of

2 clothing for the winter, but most importantly to plan
3 for their future they need safe jobs and a steady
4 income. Without legitimate working permits and
5 information on how to stay safe and protect
6 themselves, they are at grave risk of workplace
7 safety violations, injury, and even death. You may
8 have heard that just last week two construction
9 workers died at their job sites in Brooklyn and the
10 Bronx. Recently arrived immigrants are now joining
11 the ranks of the very vulnerable workforce of new
12 immigrants, day laborers, and undocumented workers
13 looking for work in the construction industry to feed
14 their families. The dangers migrants are exposed to
15 in the construction industry are well-documented and
16 a cause for concern with 80 percent of the deaths
17 belonging to immigrant workers from Latin America.
18 This is why thousands of asylum seekers are coming to
19 us every week. To put it simply, non-profits like
20 ours that work on the frontlines of this crisis are
21 running out of money, space, and staff. Further
22 investment from the Mayor and City Council is
23 critical and will allow us to continue expanding our
24 reach to meet the needs of the community. We also
25 call on the appropriate agencies to do their part to

2 further support migrants by clearing the significant
3 OSHA and SST card printing backlogs by making ID NYC
4 truly accessible and available and to create more
5 culturally competent information and resources which
6 are so often critical barriers for this vulnerable
7 population.

8 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Can we wrap up? I'm
9 sorry.

10 DIANA MORENO: This is a crisis, but how
11 we choose to respond to this crisis will determine
12 the future of our city. Will we adopt xenophobic
13 rhetoric and policies that link the presence of
14 immigrants to rising crime while we cut basic
15 services like libraries and schools or will we
16 actually invest in our New Yorkers and their children
17 and fund services to set them up for long-term
18 success. NICE is prepared to partner with you to
19 prepare immigrants for a dignified future in the
20 greatest city in the world. We are grateful for the
21 opportunity to speak with you today and thank you..

22 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you.

23 DIANA MORENO: For the Council for your
24 ongoing assisting and support.

25 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you.

2 DIANA MORENO: Thank you for your belief
3 and continued investment in our work.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you,
6 Diana. Now over to Hadeel Mishal for the final
7 testimony on this panel.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

9 HADEEL MISHAL: Hi. I want to thank the
10 New York City Council for holding this hearing and
11 giving the Asian American Federation the opportunity
12 to provide testimony today. My name is Hadeel Mishal,
13 and I am the Senior Civic Engagement Coordinator at
14 the Asian American Federation. AAF represents the
15 collective voice of more than 70 member non-profits
16 serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers. This migrant
17 crisis has highlighted needs and policy shortcomings
18 that must be urgently addressed, not just in this
19 crisis but to address the needs of all immigrant New
20 Yorkers. As an extension of the difficulties faced by
21 our immigrant communities over the past several
22 years, funding for accessible immigration legal
23 services has remained stagnant even while demand has
24 increased. The Asian American community is scrambling
25 to find culturally competent, language accessible

2 affordable immigration legal advocacy in the
3 aftermath. while we want to acknowledge the steps
4 that City Council has taken to aid our communities,
5 City Council should do its part and prioritize
6 funding immigration legal services and case
7 management provided by CBOs with a track record of
8 making legal services accessible. Without Asian CBOs'
9 ability to provide language and navigation support,
10 few people would be able to access these legal
11 services. As the migrant crisis continues to show,
12 accessibility should be the first concern of the
13 government, but as our immigrant community also bears
14 a disproportionate burden of the basic need
15 insecurity brought on by the pandemic, the City must
16 reenforce safety net programs such as community
17 health centers and clinics as well as food pantries.
18 The City should prioritize working with CBOs that
19 have the expertise needed to make the most of every
20 dollar in our communities by giving greater weight to
21 organizations with a demonstrated track record of
22 serving low-income, underserved immigrant communities
23 with linguistic and cultural competency. Our CBOs are
24 leading by example in the provision of direct
25 services from providing wraparound services that

2 include mental wellness checks to working with food
3 suppliers that provide culturally competent food.
4 CBOs were the first in the City's initial response to
5 the migrant crisis...

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time's expired.

7 HADEEL MISHAL: I just want to round out.
8 Give me 30 more seconds. And as we ask long-term
9 sustainability questions, it will be our CBOs that
10 will be instrumental in restoring trust between our
11 immigrants and the City.

12 The City must also take measures to
13 ensure that Local Law 30 is fully and consistently
14 implemented across city agencies. In our work and the
15 work of our member and partner organizations, we are
16 constantly reminded that much of the language
17 accessibility issues our community is grappling with
18 relate to the issues of capacity. Immigrants are
19 often the last to know about key information, and the
20 pandemic has demonstrated that there is still so much
21 work to be done in making sure our immigrants, many
22 of whom are our frontline workers, benefit from the
23 work of our city agencies.

24 We at the Asian American Federation thank
25 you for allowing us to testify, and we look forward

2 to working with you all to make sure our communities
3 get the support that they deserve.

4 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. Council
5 Member Krishnan.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: I just want to
7 thank all the panelists and the organizations for the
8 testimony. This question is for Diana Morena at NICE
9 and grateful for the work that you all do with our
10 immigrant workers, day laborers, both in Jackson
11 Heights, Woodside Elmhurst, and throughout New York
12 City. One question I had was just a bit more detail
13 in very human terms about what an asylum seeker or
14 new arrival might face coming here to secure even any
15 job to make any basic pay. One thing that struck me
16 is we had partnered together and done an asylum
17 resource fair in Jackson Heights. It was a rainy day,
18 raining very hard, and there was a line 300 people
19 long even before the school opened, and I remember
20 meeting someone that day who I then saw again coming
21 back from City Hall one day on the 7 train a few days
22 later after the asylum resource fair, he's an asylum
23 seeker, and telling me how he had had a very
24 difficult time securing work, trying to go from a job
25 site to a job site but for lack of even basic

2 identification documents, COVID paperwork, or even
3 his basic necessities like a cell phone, for example,
4 or anything like that, he was having a very difficult
5 time even finding work to even make it by while
6 staying I think at a church, but I just wanted to get
7 a sense from you a bit more about what the struggle
8 is like if you're coming here and trying to find a
9 job, what are the barriers you're facing as a new
10 asylum seeker?

11 DIANA MORENO: Thank you so much for the
12 question, Council Member Krishnan, and thank you so
13 much for your support for the work that NICE does
14 every day to empower immigrant workers.

15 New immigrants face a number of obstacles
16 in being able to obtain dignified, safe work. One of
17 them that we try to respond to directly here at NICE
18 is health and safety training. OSHA SST
19 certifications are passports to safe and dignified
20 work for our members, many of whom are trying to
21 enter the construction industry which is an industry
22 that employs a lot of undocumented workers. However,
23 our capacity, even though we've actually doubled that
24 capacity in the last few months, is limited, and we
25 continue to have months' long waiting lists for

2 immigrant workers to be able to get those lifesaving
3 trainings that will allow for them to work in a place
4 of construction, but even before they get to take the
5 OSHA training, as you mentioned, they need
6 identification. Everyone is looking for that ID NYC.
7 Unfortunately, the access to that card is very
8 limited, and it can be very confusing. Even
9 navigating the website can be confusing for our new
10 immigrants who may not have access to a cell phone or
11 they don't speak the language. Other than that, there
12 are other things that would facilitate the ability
13 for our new immigrants to be able to get dignified
14 work including ITA numbers. If the City would be able
15 to invest in facilitating partnerships with financial
16 institutions that would allow for these new workers
17 to apply for and obtain ITA numbers, that would
18 improve our new immigrant's ability to find dignified
19 work. Something else that I do want to mention, with
20 a team of four people, our Worker Rights Team has
21 recovered almost 300,000 dollars this year alone of
22 stolen wages, and that speaks to the kind of
23 exploitation that our members face every single day
24 because even when they do find work the employment
25 conditions that they see themselves in often puts

2 them at risk of wage theft and unsafe working
3 conditions that, as you saw just from last week, can
4 be fatal.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you
7 everyone on the panel for your testimony. We will now
8 move on to the next virtual panel, which will consist
9 of the following people in the following order,
10 Orlando Ivey, Elizabeth Angeles, Diana Aragundi,
11 Priscilla Zarate, Alice Bufkin. I will now call on
12 Orlando Ivey.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

14 ORLANDO IVEY: Thank you. My name is
15 Orlando Ivey. I am the President and CEO of the
16 Children's Rescue Fund, a Bronx-based non-profit that
17 provides transitional housing and services to
18 families and individuals. As an organization, we're
19 dedicated to assisting vulnerable populations and
20 collaborating with our clients to empower them to
21 self-sufficiency. Since 1992, CRF has provided
22 critical housing and supportive services to thousands
23 of families daily in facilities in the Bronx,
24 Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. We have placed over
25 6,000 families experiencing homelessness into

2 permanent housing, connecting over 300 jobseekers
3 with employment, and provided educational support to
4 over 800 children in our shelter-based childcare
5 programs. The demand for our services has never been
6 higher. At this time of great urgency due to the
7 housing crisis, increased demand for social services
8 post-COVID, and unprecedented number of new migrants,
9 CRF has pivoted to meet the need of our communities,
10 opening six new facilities in nine weeks. Our work is
11 not just to ensure the basic needs are met but that
12 individuals and families can achieve long-term
13 stability and are able to live and thrive in our
14 great city. As the City has experienced unprecedented
15 demand for its services, non-profits across the five
16 boroughs have served as an essential relief valve.
17 The success we have is testament to the ceaseless
18 collaboration between non-profits and the City.

19 We'd also like to take this time to thank
20 the City Council for all that you've done to welcome
21 and support the needs of migrant families and asylum
22 seekers. However, we believe that there is still more
23 work to be done to ensure that new arrivals have the
24 support they need to thrive. As a recent Committee

2 report for the Committee on Immigration noted,
3 individuals...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is expired.

5 ORLANDO IVEY: Can I have another moment,
6 please?

7 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Make it brief,
8 please.

9 ORLANDO IVEY: I will. Individuals who are
10 applying for asylum are often survivors of
11 unimaginable atrocities. Some may have been separated
12 from family and friends by conflict, violence, and
13 chaos. We have seen the impact at our facilities
14 firsthand.

15 CRF is committed to providing employment
16 support to those in our care. We strive to assess the
17 skills and abilities of those who are eligible to
18 work, to provide specialized job training, and
19 placement resources to assist them in their pursuit
20 of employment that aligns with their unique talents.
21 We would ask the Council to help fund these endeavors
22 to ensure that we are preparing our residents for
23 success. I'm going to cut it short there but, once
24 again, thank you for everything that you've done and
25 will continue to do.

2 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. I want
3 to acknowledge that we've also been joined by Council
4 Member Sanchez.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Moving on to
6 our next panelist, Elizabeth Angeles.

7 ELIZABETH ANGELES: Thank you for the
8 opportunity to testify today. My name is Elizabeth,
9 and I serve as the Vice President of Advocacy at the
10 United Way of New York City. We partner across the
11 business, government, non-profit, and philanthropic
12 sectors to fight for the health, education, and
13 financial stability of every person in New York City.

14 In September, we launched a fund to
15 assess the most urgent needs of community partners
16 supporting those arriving in our city seeking asylum
17 and to rapidly disperse funds to help our community
18 partners take care of our newest neighbors in a
19 dignified way. To date, we've awarded nearly 150,000
20 dollars to seven community-based organizations within
21 specific areas lacking adequate funding. One of these
22 areas as we've heard about today is dignified access
23 to nutritious culturally appropriate food. Our
24 partners have needed funds to purchase hot meals, on-
25 the-go meals, and nonperishables that can be

2 transported or stored in shelters. It's critical that
3 City leaders advocate to the State for sustained food
4 assistance programs for asylum seekers and migrants
5 to ensure that clients have kitchen access and/or
6 receive cooked meals if they are in housing without
7 space to prepare food. Over the course of a year,
8 United Way of New York City will direct more than
9 500,000 dollars in unallocated funding of the Hunger
10 Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program to food
11 organizations in communities most impacted. Our Food
12 and Benefits Access Program regularly supports over
13 500 food pantries and soup kitchens with healthy
14 nutritious food, operational capacity building
15 supports, and funds for capital equipment. Over the
16 past months, we've learned that our food providers
17 are expanding their services to meet greater needs.
18 For example, one of our pantry partners in the Bronx
19 affiliated with a hospital shared that they typically
20 limit pantry clients to visit only once a month.
21 However, folks have needed and been allowed to visit
22 more often. The pantry is connecting them with
23 additional care and services given their increased
24 need. Pantries tell us they are no longer just a

2 pantry as they strive to meet these needs. Pantries
3 are providing clothing...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

5 ELIZABETH ANGELES: Thank you. I'll wrap
6 up by saying pantries have provided clothing when
7 they haven't in the past, and food access is only one
8 of many areas where immediate and long-term
9 additional support is needed. Funds that we've
10 dispersed to CBOs have been used to support phone
11 access, local and out-of-state transportation, and
12 more. We know that multi-year investments for an
13 exhausted human services infrastructure are needed.
14 This has to include a focus on care coordination,
15 sustained case management, and, as we've heard today,
16 an expansion of legal services. We'll expand on these
17 needs in our written testimony. Thank you so much.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you so
19 much, Elizabeth. Moving on to Diana Aragundi.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

21 DIANA ARAGUNDI: Thank you for the
22 opportunity to testify. My name is Diana Aragundi,
23 and I am a Senior Staff Attorney on the Immigrant
24 Students Rights Project at Advocates for Children of
25 New York. The recent influx of immigrant families has

2 highlighted the critical need for the DOE to better
3 meet the needs of all immigrant youth. Through our
4 Know-Your-Rights workshops at schools with high
5 numbers of immigrant students as well as our direct
6 one-to-one assistance to families on education-
7 related issues, we have seen schools that have
8 insufficient resources and are ill-equipped to
9 effectively serve immigrant students and their
10 families. I am here today to urge the City to focus
11 on four ways to better serve immigrant students and
12 families so that they have the tools that they need
13 to succeed in school.

14 First, the DOE should ensure immigrant
15 youth have access to bilingual staff and programs.
16 Specifically, the DOE needs to ensure bilingual
17 teachers and staff including bilingual social workers
18 and special education teachers are in schools that
19 have enrolled migrants this year. Additionally, the
20 DOE must educate immigrant parents about their rights
21 related to (INAUDIBLE) programs including the right
22 to transfer to a school that offers a bilingual
23 program if their current school does not offer one.

24 Second, immigrant families have sought
25 out our help because their children have disabilities

2 but are not receiving any special education services.
3 The DOE must train school staff to identify students
4 who are suspected of having a disability and promptly
5 refer them for special education services in
6 accordance with the law. School staff should not
7 delay in referring a student merely because they have
8 been in the United States for a short time or have
9 limited English-language proficiency.

10 Third, the DOE should better identify and
11 serve older immigrant youth. We have met older
12 immigrant youth who did not know that they have a
13 right to school. We commend the DOE for recently
14 opening seats for newly arrived older youth in six
15 transfer high schools in Queens, the Bronx, and
16 Brooklyn. For these programs and students to succeed,
17 the DOE should provide all school staff at these
18 schools with professional development, hire
19 additional ENL teachers and bilingual social workers,
20 offer culturally responsive wraparound supports and
21 services so that all educators are prepared to
22 support older immigrant youth.

23 Finally, it's imperative that the City
24 continue working on ways to engage new immigrant
25 families whose home language is not English...

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

3 DIANA ARAGUNDI: Including those who have
4 lower levels of literacy and access to digital media.
5 We urge the DOE to ensure that each school has a
6 language access coordinator and educate school staff
7 about their obligation to provide parents with
8 quality culturally appropriate translation and
9 interpretation services.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
11 today.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you so
13 much for your testimony, Diana. Moving on to
14 Priscilla Zarate.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time starts now.

16 PRISCILLA ZARATE: Good afternoon. Thank
17 you to the New York City Council and the Committee
18 for the opportunity to testify today. My name is
19 Priscilla Zarate, and I serve as the President of the
20 New York State Association for Bilingual Education,
21 also known as NYSABE. I am here on behalf of NYSABE,
22 an organization representing multiple language groups
23 and educational sectors throughout New York State
24 with a mission to promote services for multilingual
25 learners, also known as English-language learners,

2 through instruction in their home language and
3 English. NYSABE promotes high-quality bilingual
4 education programs to ensure the academic success and
5 social/emotional development of students as they
6 develop bilingualism and biliteracy, which provides a
7 pathway towards equitable participation in a global,
8 multilingual, and multicultural world. The
9 effectiveness of bilingual education programs for
10 multi-lingual learners is widely supported in
11 educational research. In part, this is because
12 children do not learn academic subject matter or are
13 able to stay on grade level if they cannot understand
14 the language of instruction. Multilingual learners
15 have two tasks at hand, to learn subject matter and,
16 at the same time, learn English. As a result,
17 multilingual learners require language supports in
18 order to succeed in school. Students who have the
19 opportunity to attend bilingual education programs
20 where the use of their home language is embedded in
21 the instruction and sustained over time typically
22 outperform their peers in monolingual English-only
23 programs. Bilingual programs teach the subject matter
24 in both English language and the home language to
25 accelerate English language acquisition and subject

2 matter mastery. NYSABE is here today for an urgent
3 and pressing issue, to advocate for newly arrived
4 migrant students to be placed in schools with
5 bilingual programs and to strength schools' capacity
6 to serve their academic, linguistic, and
7 social/emotional needs. Migrant students are being
8 placed in city schools that are not necessarily
9 prepared to serve them. The reality is that there was
10 a shortage of bilingual education programs and
11 bilingual educators..

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

13 PRISCILLA ZARATE: Can you allow me a
14 couple minutes, one more minute, please?

15 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Yes.

16 PRISCILLA ZARATE: Thank you. The reality
17 is that there was a shortage of bilingual education
18 programs in New York City that preceded the arrival
19 of the latest wave of migrant students.

20 Unfortunately, the proportion of multilingual
21 learners enrolled in bilingual education has
22 dramatically declined over the last few years, a
23 problem which has exacerbated the ongoing shortages
24 of bilingual teachers, administrators, and support
25 personnel. The migrant students arriving today will

2 be our doctors, social workers, teachers, community
3 leaders, thriving citizens that will be taking care
4 of all of us over the next 10, 20, or 30 years as we
5 grow older. It is a wise investment for our city and
6 state to provide the necessary funding required to
7 support these students now and afford them academic
8 success and the ability to become productive citizens
9 of their communities. We call for the City Council to
10 provide the budget necessary to ensure that every
11 migrant child entering the New York City schools has
12 the opportunity to enroll in a school that offers
13 bilingual education and give them the experience in
14 providing high-quality education ready to meet the
15 students' needs. The funding needs that we're asking
16 for is funding to increase access to bilingual
17 programs for migrant students to ensure they are
18 placed in schools that can serve them appropriately,
19 funding to provide bilingual educators that come from
20 similar language and cultural backgrounds that can
21 better support migrant students and their families in
22 the languages they speak, in other worse language
23 accessibility, funding to provide high-quality
24 bilingual programs such as dual-language programs,
25 funding to create new and increased bilingual teacher

2 development pipelines in different educational
3 positions where we are facing extreme shortages in
4 the educational system in New York State including
5 bilingual teachers, bilingual social workers,
6 bilingual guidance counselors to support our
7 immigrant students and their families and close the
8 current bilingual teacher shortages, and, finally,
9 funding to support coordinated wraparound services
10 for our immigrant students and their families as
11 stated by other panelists. Thank you once again for
12 the opportunity to testify.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you so
14 much, Priscilla. Last on this panel, Alice Bufkin.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

16 ALICE BUFKIN: Good afternoon, Members of
17 the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to
18 provide testimony today. My name is Alice Bufkin. I
19 am the Associate Executive Director of Policy and
20 Advocacy at Citizens Community for Children.

21 Migrant youth and families who are
22 arriving in New York deserve all the opportunity,
23 support, and access to available programs and
24 initiatives that New York can offer. In our written
25 testimony, we provide additional recommendations

2 including the need to expand SYEP to undocumented
3 students, the need to expand city nutrition and food
4 programs for immigrant New Yorkers who are ineligible
5 for federal programs, the need to expand mental
6 health supports, and the need to enhance supports for
7 English-language learners.

8 As we consider the immediate responses
9 that are necessary to support migrant New York, we
10 urge the City to partner with community-based
11 organizations to enhance its supports. This includes
12 funding and providing essential items such as
13 clothing, toiletries, cash assistance, food, and
14 transportation aid as well as school supplies. As
15 you've heard today, many partner organizations have
16 provided assistance to migrant families using a
17 combination of private and public donations, but we
18 must have more permanent wraparound funding streams
19 from the City to support CBOs as they support the
20 ongoing needs of migrant New Yorkers. We also need to
21 ensure that all the city's contracted programs have
22 access to translation and interpretation services,
23 both written and verbal, and need to make immediate
24 funding available for more lawyers and legal
25 professionals that specialize in immigration law. As

2 you've heard repeatedly today, we need to ensure that
3 proposed RFPs and contracts are developed in a way
4 that actually supports the provision of these
5 services.

6 As you've also heard repeatedly today,
7 housing access for migrant families is one of the
8 most fundamental and urgent needs. We first need to
9 expand CityFHEPS eligibility to undocumented
10 families. We must help these families move into
11 permanent housing as quickly as possible. The City
12 should also address the chronic issues within our
13 housing system that have unnecessarily filled our
14 shelters and prevented people from accessing
15 permanent housing. When we can get more New Yorkers
16 housed, we have more capacity to support migrant New
17 Yorkers as they arrive in the city. These solutions
18 include ending the 90-day rule of shelter stay, which
19 I know is a priority for this Council. We know how
20 much this further extends the unnecessary length of
21 stay for families. We need to eliminate chronicity
22 eligibility requirements such as requiring shelter
23 history or housing court eviction to receive
24 CityFHEPS. Again, this helps prevent housing insecure

2 families from staying in the homes and out of
3 shelter.

4 I'll just end by saying we have concerns
5 around potential PEG...

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

7 ALICE BUFKIN: One more moment. Reductions
8 to central agency staffing at a time when we think
9 investments in HRA and other social service agencies
10 are more important than ever. Thank you so much for
11 having this hearing.

12 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. We have
13 questions from Council Member Brewer.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. For the
15 Head of the Children's Rescue Fund. My question is
16 about the food. What Christine Quinn said is that at
17 WIN, which is well-resourced, they have to come up
18 with three meals a day, diapers, etc. You have six, I
19 think you said, locations where asylum-seeking
20 families are located. How are you handling some of
21 the issues that she mentioned with the food and the
22 diapers and the extras? That's for Orlando Ivey who
23 is head of the Children's Rescue Fund. Thank you.

24 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Orlando, are you
25 on? We can come back then.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you so
3 much to everyone on the panel. We're now going to
4 move on to our next panel which will consist of Marie
5 Mongeon and Charlene Obernauer. I will now call on
6 Marie.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

8 MARIE MONGEON: Thank you so much for
9 having me today. My name is Marie Mongeon, and I'm
10 the Senior Director of Policy with the Community
11 Healthcare Association of New York State. We
12 represent the State's federally qualified health
13 centers that provide care to 1.2 New Yorkers across
14 the city each year. Health centers provide high-
15 quality comprehensive primary preventive care and
16 connection to social services to everyone regardless
17 of ability to pay, insurance coverage, or immigration
18 status. When the news came that the asylum seekers
19 would be bussed to New York City from the Texas and
20 Mexico border, health centers were among the first
21 community partners to begin collaborating with city
22 government to ensure asylum seekers were connected to
23 the high-quality comprehensive primary care that they
24 deserve. Health centers' work with asylum seekers has
25 included conducting initial assessments to identify

2 needs, providing vaccinations to children for school,
3 connecting people to supportive services like
4 housing, and providing medical, oral, and behavioral
5 health services. This care has been taking place in
6 clinics, in school-based health centers, in hotels,
7 and in shelters across the city. The asylum seekers'
8 arrival to New York City comes on with an
9 unprecedented workforce shortage in health centers
10 and across the healthcare system. Although health
11 centers have been able to integrate care for asylum
12 seekers into their existing workflows, those
13 workflows have quickly become overwhelmed, and their
14 schedules are in many cases overfilled. Significant
15 investment in healthcare workforce is required to
16 ensure that health centers can keep up with the
17 demand for services, especially for behavioral health
18 since many asylum seekers have endured long and
19 traumatic journeys and may have undiagnosed
20 behavioral health needs.

21 More immediately, many health centers are
22 working with the Department of Health and Mental
23 Hygiene to bring DOHMH-hired staff into their clinics
24 to help with the urgent need to ensure that all
25 children enrolled in New York City's schools meet

2 vaccination requirements. Some of the immediate
3 needs, we've heard them again and again, Spanish-
4 speaking care coordinators who can help asylum
5 seekers navigate...

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

7 MARIE MONGEON: The confusing healthcare
8 system, translation and interpretation services,
9 legal services, and also improved transportation
10 support.

11 Thank you so much for the opportunity to
12 testify. I'm happy to take any questions.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you so
14 much for your testimony, Marie. Moving on to
15 Charlene.

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has begun.

17 CHARLENE OBERNAUER: Hi. This is Charlene
18 Obernauer. I'm the Executive Director of the New York
19 Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, and I
20 want to testify in a similar vein to Diana Moreno at
21 NICE about the services that are needed in terms of
22 job placement and OSHA and SST training for immigrant
23 workers, especially for folks who are coming in right
24 now and for the organizations that are providing this
25 training. We are all overwhelmed with the amount of

2 training that we have to provide. It's simply not
3 feasible for us to be able to meet the needs without
4 a dramatic increase in funding. For folks who may not
5 know, Local Law 196 requires 40 hours of construction
6 safety training before someone is eligible to work on
7 a job site in New York City. As a result of this law,
8 people who are coming into the city need this
9 training that right now Small Business Services has
10 partnered with five organizations to provide, NYCOSH
11 is the Manhattan provider, Worker Justice Project is
12 the Brooklyn provider, New Immigrant Community
13 Empowerment is Queens, Catholic Charities is the
14 Bronx, and La Colmena is Staten Island. Among these
15 five organizations, we are delivering training to
16 folks who are coming in, to folks who are already
17 here, and simply put there's just not enough people
18 who are eligible to train, there are not enough
19 people who are able to conduct the training so like
20 other people, I kind of feel bad giving this
21 testimony because it's like we need a dramatic influx
22 of resources in order to be able to meet the training
23 that people need so that we can stop draining social
24 services so that people can begin their jobs so that
25 we are no longer as reliant as we are now on social

2 services for folks because once they gain employment
3 they'll be able to pay for some basic necessities
4 that they have so, unlike other people, I'm going to
5 surrender my time. Thanks so much.

6 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I want to
7 acknowledge that we were also joined by Council
8 Member Feliz. Any questions? Okay.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Orlando Ivey,
10 if you are still on the Zoom, if you could please
11 unmute? We have a Queens from Council Member Brewer.
12 Orlando Ivey.

13 ORLANDO IVEY: I apologize. Yes, I am.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
15 much. My question is when we heard from Christine
16 Quinn, who runs, as you know, WIN, she said that it's
17 really hard to get the meals for those who are asylum
18 seekers because normally you can obviously have some
19 food but then you can get SNAP and so it's a
20 different situation, diapers, all the necessities of
21 just living in our city so I'm wondering how are you
22 handling the food situation and what are you doing to
23 be, obviously these families need more than the
24 families that you're usually used to serving so I

2 wanted to hear your take on what Christine Quinn
3 said.

4 ORLANDO IVEY: What we're doing is at some
5 of our facilities where migrants are, the Department
6 of Homeless Services is providing prepared meals that
7 are catered. At some of our other facilities where
8 there are cooking facilities, we're partnering with
9 other non-profits to get dry goods so that the
10 families are able to prepare wholesome meals for
11 themselves. We're getting donations of food. We're
12 working with everyone to make sure that these
13 migrants are getting the nutritious food that they
14 certainly need and deserve.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I appreciate
16 that. It's my understanding that they're not happy,
17 not at Children's Rescue but in general, with the
18 quality of the food. They need refrigerators.
19 Christine Quinn said she bought refrigerators so I
20 guess you make it sound like it's okay, but it sounds
21 to me like the City should be doing more on the food
22 front because everybody needs food, as we know, so
23 I'm just wondering have you made any other requests
24 to the City or you think the food situation is okay?

2 ORLANDO IVEY: We can always do more.

3 Certainly, in facilities where food is being
4 prepared, there are some concerns about the cultural
5 diversity of the food, and we're working with vendors
6 to really alleviate those issues. In cases where it's
7 a cooking facility, certainly, there is always going
8 to be a need for services because a number of the
9 migrants don't have open PA cases, they don't get
10 food stamps. We're really reliant on donations so
11 certainly if we can find new ways to fund food, it
12 would be appreciated.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I appreciate what
14 you're saying. I guess what I'm saying is having done
15 this work for a long time, those that are housing
16 asylum seekers who are used to housing people who can
17 get SNAP should be speaking up more because just us
18 who are talking about this, I know that it's been in
19 the press, but you need to say something to the City
20 that this is not accessible. People need to have
21 food, diapers, everything they need to raise a
22 family, and I just wish all of you would get together
23 and say something about what the challenges are
24 because you know better than we do. Thank you very
25 much.

2 ORLANDO IVEY: Understood. Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: Thank you so
4 much, Orlando, and thank you to everybody in the last
5 panel. We will now call our final panelists. If you
6 are present on Zoom, if you could please use the
7 raise hand feature, Mario Russell, Theodore Moore,
8 Mariangela Ginamichu (phonetic), Vijay Dandapani,
9 Marian Zacky (phonetic), Danielle Demeuse.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KILAWAN: If there's
12 anybody else that's present on Zoom or is here in the
13 building, if you would please like to testify please
14 let us know.

15 Thank you to all of our panelists. That
16 concludes our public testimony for today.

17 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. Once
18 again, I want to thank the staff for helping us put
19 this together. I think this is a really important
20 conversation to have. I'm really excited to be able
21 to do it as a Committee of the Whole which we haven't
22 done before, and I think was really essential in
23 terms of trying to get information regarding a crisis
24 that touches on so many different city agencies so I
25 think that it's been an informative two days. I want

2 to thank all of you who came to testify, who joined
3 us in person, via Zoom. Obviously, this is an ongoing
4 conversation. There is still a lot that is happening.
5 As has been noted, in the last 24 hours there have
6 been changes to the Title 42 rule, there's also been
7 somewhat of a commitment for 800 million dollars with
8 some of it coming to New York City so there's a lot
9 of moving pieces to this, but I think that it's very
10 clear that there still continues to be high need for
11 linguistically appropriate staff, for attorneys to
12 address the immigration concerns of asylum seekers,
13 for appropriate meals, and, as Council Member Brewer
14 just noted, I think it's really atrocious that we
15 have not come up with a way to include additional
16 funding for hot meals at these facilities. Whether
17 you're living in a shelter or you're living in a
18 hotel, I think that these families are in desperate
19 need of something that makes them remember what it
20 feels like to be a family and to share a warm meal so
21 we would like to see a little bit more, a lot quite
22 frankly, but thank you all. With that, this hearing
23 is adjourned. [GAVEL]

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date December 26, 2022