

**OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW
YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY**

**Oversight - Access to Technology and Digital Literacy Programs in New York City.
Int 0665-2022: Establishing a digital literacy program for older adults.**

JANUARY 12, 2023

Good morning, Chair Gutiérrez and members of the City Council Committee on Technology. My name is Brett Sikoff, and I am the Executive Director of Franchise Administration for the Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI). Here with me today is Ryan Birchmeier, Deputy Commissioner for Public Information at OTI. I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss OTI's partnerships related to digital literacy programs across the City.

It has been a little over a year since OTI consolidated the City's technology offices, making enormous strides to bring broadband access to historically underserved populations Citywide. It is an honor to lead the team making this important progress. However, we know that *access* to affordable and reliable internet is only one part of the equation. Many of us take for granted just how much we rely on technology to communicate with friends and family, to do homework, to seek employment and fulfill the duties of our jobs, to perform everyday necessary tasks like paying bills and online shopping, to name a few. We know that it is not enough to simply provide the means of gaining access through a broadband connection, but it is also necessary to empower individuals with the skills to navigate how to use digital tools – both physical and virtual – to fully participate in society.

On the whole, there is a wide-ranging ecosystem for digital literacy programming, services and supports that have varying touchpoints and support from the City. Participating entities range from public institutions (City agencies, library branches) to nonprofit and afterschool providers, informal learning collectives, and higher education partners that serve tens to hundreds of thousands of residents annually. Of note, the Department for Youth and Community Development (DYCD) administers the Council's own Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative grants program, which enables each Council member to allocate discretionary funds to advancing digital literacy resources at the most local level.

For our part, OTI (currently and under legacy offices) has invested in digital literacy through its Connected Communities initiative for over a decade. This initiative funds trusted anchor institutions and agency partners to provide free and reliable internet access, connected devices, high-quality digital literacy instruction, and technical assistance to help equip New Yorkers with digital skills. Overall, Connected Communities underwrites over 100 public sites to enable the

critical delivery of devices, software, mobile hotspots, and over 24,000 hours annually of high-quality digital literacy programs that help New Yorkers gain essential skills.

OTI does not directly administer the programs funded through Connected Communities. Rather, Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks), the Department for the Aging (NYC Aging), New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), and the City’s three library systems provide an array of digital literacy programs for a wide range of populations citywide, ranging from basic access to comprehensive and advanced digital skills trainings and software certifications for residents in high-need communities. A few notable examples include:

- Brooklyn Public Library provides a laptop loan program across 18 branches that recently distributed 1,500 devices.
- New York Public Library offers over 100 classes designed for fundamental digital citizenship, exposure, and mastery of technical concepts on public computers with professional-grade software.
- Queens Public Library uses funding from both Connected Communities and the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to train dedicated personnel who can deliver workshops, including a course to provide contextualized English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for new immigrants, and workforce training in childcare, healthcare, and technology for residents.
- NYC Parks operates media education labs in its recreation centers, providing spaces and equipment for members to creatively express themselves.
- NYCHA’s Digital Vans Program brings mobile hotspots, laptops, Wi-Fi, and a printer to public housing communities.
- NYC Aging subcontracts to Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) to reach over 80,000 older adults every year with digital literacy programming.
- OTI supports a portion of the NYC Digital Safety project, which helps librarians throughout the City gain skills to support New Yorkers with digital hygiene, through critical partners such as the Metro Library Council.

In addition to the Connected Communities pot, OTI also supports digital literacy through other program areas. For example, the Open Data Team, in partnership with civic technology non-profit BetaNYC, developed a curriculum and trained a group of volunteer Open Data Ambassadors to teach other New Yorkers about what Open Data is and how it can be used. In 2022, we held 25 of these Open Data education classes and taught nearly 800 people about NYC Open Data. These classes were hosted by a variety of organizations – including community boards, Council Member offices, Borough President offices, and the Civic Engagement Commission. We thank the Council for their continued support of this vital program.

Additionally, the LinkNYC franchise includes a requirement for our franchisee, CityBridge, to provide high-speed internet to a facility in each borough that offers technology training or other vital community service to the public. Such facilities are called Gigabit Innovation Centers, and they are powered by the LinkNYC network. In the past year, CityBridge and OTI have celebrated the opening of three new Gigabit Centers: In Manhattan, we partnered with Silicon Harlem and the C-Better Foundation to open the Innovation Space for the People Gigabit Center. In the Bronx, the Gigabit Center is located at the Andrew Freedman home in partnership with the Knowledge House and the Bronx Community Foundation. In Queens, the Gigabit Center is located at the Allen Senior Center in partnership with NYC Aging, supporting workshops and courses on topics such as wealth and resource management, beginning and intermediate computer technology, driver safety, hearing deficiency and hearing aids, and memory improvement workshops. We expect to unveil two more Gigabit Centers this year in Brooklyn and Staten Island.

With respect to the older adult population, OTI recognizes that older adults need particular support to engage with the benefits of digital life. We believe that digital literacy programming, when paired with devices and access, combat social isolation and mobility barriers, provide basic skills for staying safe online, and helps maintain civic engagement.

As previously mentioned, through Connected Communities, OTI provides a role as facilitator, connector, convener, and advisor where collaboration will extend the impact of digital literacies. Recent examples of our work with NYC Aging to this end include facilitating connections with libraries and strategies for enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and a collaboration with the San Francisco Tech Council to discuss digital equity gaps and barriers for older adults and implications for access, affordability, and adoption.

I will now turn to the legislation being considered today. Introduction 665-2022, sponsored by Chair Gutiérrez, would require OTI, in consultation with NYC Aging and relevant stakeholders, to establish and implement an online digital literacy program to serve older adults. As I have hopefully laid out earlier in testimony, digital literacy – particularly for older adults – is something we support and aim to continue supporting in the future. We understand that the Council deeply cares about this kind of programming and hopes it will not only continue in its current form, but will also flourish and become more effective for seniors. We are completely aligned with that sentiment.

However, the bill as it is currently written prescribes a role for OTI to more directly administer digital literacy training for seniors in a singular program with broadly defined parameters. As mentioned, the City has a robust ecosystem of existing digital literacy providers, and OTI's best function is to leverage digital literacy practitioners and expertise, rather than either staff these programs with in-house personnel, or set limitations on the curriculum practiced by the City's

partners. We worry this bill could inadvertently compromise the incredible work already underway. We are looking forward to discussing with you how the City, the Council and the numerous organizations with whom we collaborate can best deliver digital literacy training in the future.

I will now turn to my colleagues in the Department for Citywide Administrative Services to provide their testimony.

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Technology Committee Hearing: Access to Technology and Digital Literacy Programs in New York City

Good morning Chair Gutiérrez and members of the Committee on Technology. I am Roman Gofman, Acting Deputy Commissioner for the Office of Citywide Procurement at the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). Thank you for your interest in our agency as we strive to make City government work for all New Yorkers.

I am pleased to have this moment to testify on Introduction 664, which seeks to require DCAS "to donate surplus city-owned computers, computer software, and computer equipment".

We continue to review this legislation, but are in support of the spirit of the bill and its intent to facilitate access to technology. Introduction 664 does raise questions regarding how a permanent donation program might operate and how outside parties might engage this program.

We look forward to working with the Council and our partners in government to ensure a donation program that is user-friendly, straightforward and allows interested parties with equal access to surplus city-owned property.

Thank you for your time today. I am happy to answer any questions.



**Testimony Before
The New York City Council
Committee on Technology
Access to Technology and Digital Literacy Programs in New York City
January 12, 2023**

Introduction

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Access to Technology and Digital Literacy Programs in New York City. Inequitable access to internet technology, technological devices, and digital learning has adversely impacted low-income students and their families as well as New York City’s older-adult population (“seniors”) for far too long. We appreciate the Technology Committee’s willingness to entertain commentary from the public and its interest in taking steps to work toward improving the digital divide. Low-income students and seniors would benefit from number of the components of the proposed Local Laws, Int. 664 and Int. 665, under consideration today.

Legal Services NYC is the largest provider of free civil legal services in the country. We are dedicated to fighting poverty and seeking racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers. Over the course of fifty years, Legal Services NYC has challenged systemic injustice and helped clients meet their basic needs for housing, access to high-quality education, health care, family stability, and income and economic security. Through litigation, advocacy, education, and outreach, we work to protect the rights of the elderly, immigrants, veterans, the LGBTIQ+ community, people with disabilities, and

other vulnerable constituents. Our neighborhood-based offices and outreach sites across all five boroughs assist more than 100,000 New Yorkers annually.

The Education Rights practice at LSNYC assists hundreds of New York City schoolchildren and their families each year to ensure access to education. We support English Language Learners (ELLs), limited English proficient (LEP) students and their parents, students with learning, developmental, and other disabilities, students in temporary housing, and other vulnerable student populations and their families with a host of education issues including school enrollment, language access, special education, disciplinary proceedings, transportation, disability accommodations, and academic intervention services. Over 80% of our student clients are children of color and/or immigrants ranging in age from 3 to 21. Our goal is to assist vulnerable student populations and their families, to improve educational outcomes and to target and fight systemic inequities. We also have a Disability Advocacy Project and Government Benefits Projects that assist low-income New Yorkers who are applying for or have been denied federal or state government benefits. In the current digital age, many of those applications must be completed online, making computer access necessary to obtaining life-saving benefits to which they may be entitled.

Disparate Negative Impacts of the Digital Divide on Low-Income People of Color in New York City.

Although disparities in access to high-speed internet, technological devices, and digital learning and information have always existed, the COVID-19 pandemic and our expanded reliance on technology in every aspect of society from school, to work, to healthcare, to finance, to public benefits and resource management, has laid bare many racial

and socio-economic inequities that exist in our society, including New York City’s education system and institutions tasked with supporting older adults. Inadequate infrastructure and limited access to technology for low-income, students, seniors and other vulnerable populations contribute to these inequities.

When schools and businesses closed down during the pandemic, many students that we work with found themselves without access to remote learning devices or reliable internet and families with low technological expertise were especially adversely affected. As result, these vulnerable families lost out on important supports and services for their children at high rates, due, in large part, to the systemic technological divide and language access and communication failures.

As early as December 2020, reports emerged suggesting that lack of technological devices, inconsistent internet access, and the absence of live instruction from teachers had set students back academically during COVID-19 an average of five to nine months.¹ Students in vulnerable populations who did not have access to remote learning devices or reliable internet and families with low technological expertise were especially adversely affected.²

For many children, inadequate and inequitable access to technology effectively denied them access to their constitutionally protected right to a “sound and basic”

¹ Emma Dorn et al. COVID-19 and learning loss-disparities grow and students need help McKinsey & Company, Dec. 8, 2020, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-learning-loss-disparities-grow-and-students-need-help>

² Digital and Economic Divides Put U.S. Children at Greater Educational Risk During the COVID-19 Pandemic, <https://www.prb.org/resources/economic-and-digital-divide/> (last visited January 11, 2023).

education.³ Vulnerable older adults who lacked computers or digital literacy similarly found themselves shut off from the means to access essential health, job, and benefit resources. For example, when the Social Security Administration (“SSA”) closed its field offices in March of 2020 and ceased in-person services, existing backlogs on determining eligibility for retirement, survivor, and disability benefits were exacerbated, and processing time for initial disability claims increased on average by more than 40 percent, even though actual application numbers actually fell.⁴ Had students, older adults, and other vulnerable and low-income families had better access to technological devices, broadband, and digital education and support, they would not have suffered as many adverse consequences.

LSNYC’s staff of attorneys, social workers, legal assistants, and support staff fought to combat emergencies related to food insecurity, job stability, housing and benefit retention and other system-wide problems. On the education front, our staff pursued individual and group advocacy and litigation to combat learning loss, compensate for missed services and other lost educational opportunities, access learning devices and internet, and to otherwise address ongoing digital and technological inequities during and after systemwide school shut downs brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. We also offered digital literacy trainings to parent community groups who sought assistance navigating government websites, including the DOE’s.

³ N.Y. Const. art. XI, § 1.

⁴ See, Romig, Kathleen, SSA Needs Large Funding Boosts Following Pandemic, Years of Underinvestment, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, February 3, 2022; <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/ssa-needs-large-funding-boosts-following-pandemic-years-of-underinvestment>; referencing Office of the Inspector General Oversight Report, *Comparing the Social Security Administration’s Disability Determination Services’ Workload Statistics During the COVID-19 Pandemic to Prior Years*, December 2021; <https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/SSA/01-21-51038.pdf> (last visited January 11, 2023),

Client Stories

The below stories illustrate a couple of ways that the deficits in technology and internet access have impacted our low-income clients and how we were able to assist them to obtain educational access.

J.S., is currently a third-grade student with special needs. After struggling with remote learning without a working computer during the 2019-20 school year, the then six-year-old and his LEP parent, A.L, had hoped that the 2020-2021 school year would be better. J.S. was placed in a NYS approved non-public school for students with learning and behavioral issues and told that he could attend the school five days per week in person. Due to staffing shortages and an inability to comply with the student's IEP mandates, the school refused to allow J.S. to attend in person. Consequently, he was forced to attend school remotely from September 2020 through most of January 2021. Although J.S.'s mom made many requests for a remote learning device, she waited for months to receive one, and when it finally arrived, it did not function properly. J.S.'s mom also had to purchase internet services, which posed a financial hardship for her. Even with internet, her child's learning device regularly malfunctioned and J.S. lost out on learning and mandated special education services. LSNYC filed an impartial hearing demand and helped the family to receive compensatory educational services including tutoring, make up services for missed speech and language, and occupational services, and various independent educational evaluations to better assess J.S.'s needs going forward.

Another client, A.T., had been living in a shelter due to serious housing code violations in the apartment building where she and her family lived. A.T came to us to obtain assistance this school year in securing necessary transportation services from her

shelter (temporary housing) to her school of origin. Outreach to our organization came after the mother tried countless times to secure safe and reasonable transportation services with limitations on the child's pick up, drop off and overall travel time, given her child's medical needs and the shelter situation. LSNYC ultimately resolved the students' transportation problem by asserting the child's rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, given her medical condition, and asserting her rights under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act. In working with this client, we saw how inadequate cell service, inadequate internet access, and the overall poor infrastructure in the assigned shelter impacted the student and her family. Indeed, the parent had to go to great lengths to even contact our office whenever she needed to reach her attorney, as digital and onsite cellular and internet connectivity was nearly impossible inside the shelter in question. This is insensitive and unfair to homeless families, survivors of domestic violence, and others who need to avail themselves of the shelter system in emergency situations. Shelter liaisons have been made aware of these types of issues in the shelter in question and elsewhere and it is hoped that universal connectivity in the shelter system will be prioritized to better serve residents.

The Need to Move toward Digital and Technological Equity Persists

A report published in September 2022 by the Community Service Society, analyzing public information and surveys, reveals ongoing stark disparities in home internet access and access to digital devices amongst low-income families, especially people of color.⁵

⁵ P. Joseph, I. Lew, *Disconnected: The Digital Divide & Disrupted Schooling in NYC*, Community Service Society, September 1, 2022. [https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/disconnected-the-digital-divide-disrupted-schooling-in-nyc#:~:text=According%20to%20the%202021%20Unheard,incomes%20\(See%20Figure%201\)](https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/disconnected-the-digital-divide-disrupted-schooling-in-nyc#:~:text=According%20to%20the%202021%20Unheard,incomes%20(See%20Figure%201).). (Last visited January 10, 2023).

According to the report, Black and Latinx New Yorkers disproportionately identify a lack of home internet access, difficulty affording the cost of internet services, and too few digital devices at home.⁶ Moreover, almost two thirds of parents surveyed felt there would likely be “long-lasting setbacks for their children’s education.”⁷

Components of Int. 664 and Int. 665 Represent a Step towards Digital Equity.

Int. 664 would require “the department of citywide administrative services to donate surplus city-owned computers, computer software and computer equipment to public and private institutions for secular educational use and to for not-for-profit institutions for use by individuals with disabilities, senior citizens, or low-income individuals.” This would assist these organizations in making some equipment available to individuals. However, the need for **home devices for individuals with accompanying broadband** is also necessary for those with limited resources. Even in times when mandatory quarantines are not in effect, students need devices to learn, do homework, perform research and communicate with their teachers and providers. Similarly, seniors and other individuals need computers to process online applications for job training, social security, and other public benefits. Without undermining the need for devices and reliable internet for individuals in their homes with accompanying broadband service and given that New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings and New York City shelters often have poor internet and cell service, this Committee may want to consider listing NYCHA and various shelters as potential recipients of surplus city-owned computers, software and equipment.

⁶ *See Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

Int. 665 provides for “establishing a digital literacy program for older adults.”

While such a program would be a crucial step to build skills and help seniors with limited digital education cope with the expansion of digital platforms in all aspects of day-to-day work and functioning, seniors also need more than just public library or organizational access to digital tools. Moreover, the Technology Committee should consider making digital literacy programs available to LEP populations of all ages, since such individuals have also traditionally been identified as having lower overall rates of digital literacy and access to technology.

As noted by the previous Mayor and his Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity in announcing plans for an Accelerated Internet Master Plan, “COVID-19 has further exposed the inequalities in internet access while changing the way New Yorkers work, learn, and live. Accelerating universal broadband access will make our city healthier, safer and more equal.”⁸ And, as Mayor De Blasio stated the following year, “Broadband isn’t a luxury, it’s a necessity”⁹

There are provisions in these Int. 664 and Int. 665 which could benefit thousands of low-income New Yorkers. To further benefit these members of our community, the Committee on Technology should consider teaming up with the Education Committee and other City Council committees to work toward full digital equity and an end the digital divide for all New Yorkers.

⁸ <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/499-20/mayor-de-blasio-taskforce-racial-inclusion-equity-accelerated-internet-mastera>

⁹ <https://ed.nyc/press-release/new-york-city-close-digital-divide-16-million-residents>. (Last visited January 11, 2023).

Specifically, our clients would benefit from programs designed to:

1. **Address and eliminate the digital divide for New York City public school students**, so that all low-income students, including low-income English Language Learners (ELLs) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, have access to free computers and free high-speed internet to ensure equitable access to learning.
2. **Pilot municipal broadband in in targeted low-income neighborhoods with great need**: New York City should consider piloting municipal broadband projects in targeted neighborhoods like in the Bronx, where the digital divide is most pronounced. Starting with areas that experience the highest access needs would directly challenge the inequities we have found in internet access. While New York City has supposedly begun installing free internet kiosks in the Bronx, these kiosks are not a replacement for having high-speed internet in one's home or while on the go. The city should engage in a participatory process with Bronx residents or residents of other potential pilot districts to ensure that internet service provision is aligned with community needs.
3. **Provide NYCHA residents with free internet access**: Nearly half of respondents in public housing had difficulties accessing telehealth, job training, and online schooling. This lack of access to essential services and opportunities works toward perpetuating poverty rather than ending it. A free, high-speed internet program in NYCHA, at-large, would work towards narrowing the digital divide in New York City and by doing so, removing barriers to economic and education opportunities.
4. **Partner with the State Legislature to study the feasibility of municipal broadband throughout New York State**: Former Governor Cuomo rejected a bill that called for the study of municipal broadband and its feasibility within the State.¹⁰ The City Council might want to consult with the current State legislature to reconsider such a study, which could be quite valuable. State resources would be instrumental in improving internet accessibility in New York City and across the State.

¹⁰ Johnson, R., *N.Y. Gov. Cuomo vetoes municipal broadband bill, favoring state initiative*, January 3, 2020, STATESCOOP, <https://statescoop.com/new-york-municipal-broadband-gov-cuomo-vetoes-bill/> (Last visited January 11, 2023).

We would like to acknowledge that recommendations 2-4 were adopted from recommendations set forth in *Disconnected: The Digital Divide & Disrupted Schooling in NYC*, published by the Community Service Society. See fn. 5, *supra*.

Closing

We thank the Technology Committee for holding this important hearing and for providing a space for the public to testify about Access to Technology and Digital Literacy Programs in New York City.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tara Foster
Senior Attorney
Education Rights Project
Legal Services NYC
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She/her/hers

Good afternoon. Thank you to Chair [Gutiérrez](#) and the Committee on Technology for holding this important hearing today.

My name is Marco DiGirolomo, and I am the Director of In-Person Experiences with Older Adults Technology Services, or OATS, from AARP. OATS is an award-winning social impact organization that offers technology programs, community training, and strategic engagements to shape the future of aging.

OATS is also the creator of Senior Planet, a national program that helps older adults aged 60 and over thrive in the digital world and use technology to improve their lives in five areas of impact: social engagement, financial security, civic participation, health, and creativity. OATS' flagship Senior Planet center opened in Manhattan in 2013, and in the past decade has provided older New Yorkers with a welcoming space to learn and use technology. The center has a robust computer lab, an open-seating style working space, and cutting-edge technology readily available that older adults can touch and experience for themselves. **OATS has historically and currently received funding from the New York City Department for the Aging to operate the Senior Planet center in Chelsea. As the oversight City agency for older adult services, DFTA plays a crucial role - sitting at the intersection of older adults and city services.**

I am here today to speak in support of passing Intro 665, legislation to establish and implement an online digital literacy program to serve older adults.

Despite our growing reliance on technology, 22 million older Americans remain on the wrong side of the digital divide. At OATS, we're on a mission to change that by working to empower older adults with the skills needed to harness the power of today's technology. Being online not only connects you to the world, it has the ability to connect older adults with answers to questions, solutions to needs, and even tools that can help you save money through price comparison and online banking.

A recent report our organization released with The Humana Foundation found strong evidence that technology interventions can play a significant role in driving behavioral social change for older adults: helping them combat social isolation, loneliness and depression, all while improving quality of life. In a world where interactions are increasingly taking place online, giving older adults the tools to use modern technology could greatly improve their lives, giving them access to not just important resources like public health information, but to the social communities they depend on as well.

New York City is known for the strength and resilience of its diverse communities. That includes our vibrant community of older adults, who deserve to thrive and benefit from today's innovative technologies.

Passing Intro 665 would significantly help combat the digital divide among New York's older adults. By providing seniors the skills and knowledge to actively participate in our digital economy—and to connect with the ones they love—this bill would pave an exciting and necessary way forward for New York's older adult community, and, in turn, the city as a whole.



**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIAN GONZÁLEZ-RIVERA
OF THE BROOKDALE CENTER FOR HEALTHY AGING, HUNTER COLLEGE
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY**

**HEARING
"ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK CITY"**

JANUARY 12, 2023

My name is christian gonzález-rivera and I'm the director of strategic policy initiatives at the Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging, a research and policy center based at Hunter College.

The Brookdale Center supports Intro. 665. Thank you, Councilmember Gutiérrez for introducing it.

In 2021 we published a study that detailed the demographics of older New Yorkers who lack access to the internet, summarized the academic research on internet adoption that shows how older adults learn and adopt technology differently from younger people, and recommended, among other things, that the city establish a digital literacy program.

I'd like to offer a few of our research findings on how to structure a digital literacy training program for older adults so that it can be effective for the people who are hardest to reach.

Meaningful access to technology for older adults has five components. The first two are access to appropriate devices and access to an adequate internet connection. Those are necessary for anyone to get online. But for older adults in particular, three more interventions are necessary: the education to know *why* the internet would be useful to them, the skills to learn *how* to use the internet, and ongoing tech support so they have somewhere to turn if they run into trouble.

Our review of the academic research literature on technology adoption clearly shows that for older adults in particular, how useful a technology is perceived to be is a stronger predictor of adoption than it is for younger people. This makes common sense: a logical question for an 85 year old to ask is, 'I've lived this long without the internet, why should I start now?' Indeed, it's at that question that any digital literacy program should start.

This means that an effective digital literacy program would not begin by telling a participant, 'this is how you turn this thing on.' Instead, it would begin by asking them, 'what are your needs?' and then showing them how they can get those needs met better or faster online.

Furthermore, our review of the literature shows that older people prefer to learn technology from their peers. So we recommend taking a peer-to-peer learning approach to digital literacy programs. This would mean structuring a program so that older people with more technology experience can be trained to teach those with less experience.

For older people, focusing on *why* they should go through the effort of learning how to get online is just as important as the *how*. While the usefulness of the internet may seem like common sense for a younger person, including people in their early 60s, for older people it is not. People who are younger and/or have higher levels of formal education are more likely to have used the internet for school or work and are therefore familiar with its uses. Immigrants with lower levels of formal education are especially unlikely to have access to the internet at home. After all, it was only in 2002 that half of Americans got online. Those who were retired by then, or were working in a job that did not yet have them using the internet, or living in a country that took longer to adopt internet technology, chances are that they did not have a natural opportunity to use the internet.

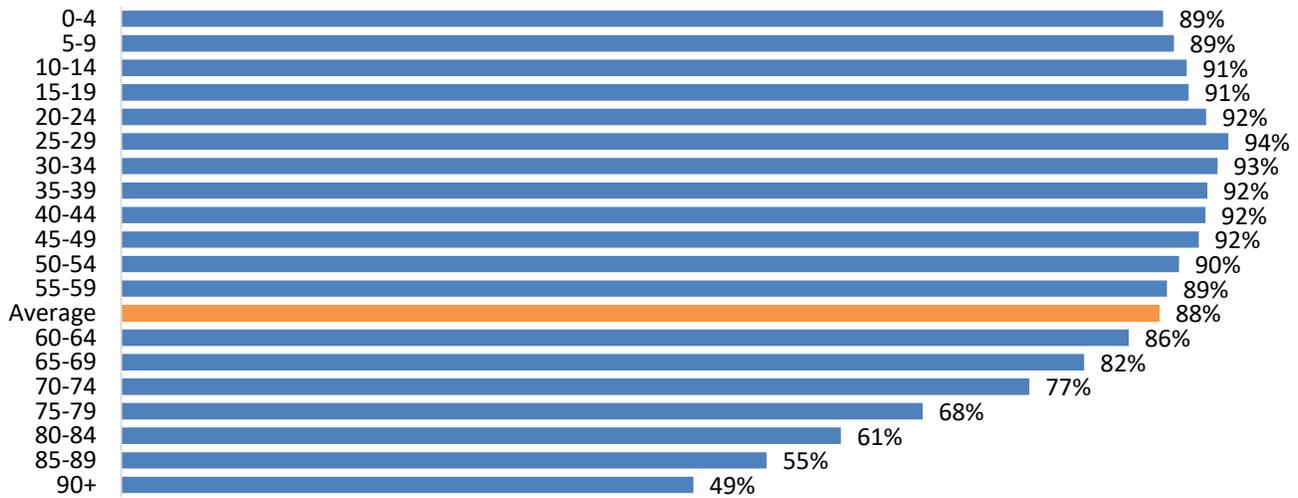
Finally, some of the hardest to reach will be older people with lower levels of formal education. Access to the internet at home is most correlated with three characteristics: age, level of formal education, and income. Majorities of New Yorkers in their 60s across all income and education levels have internet access at home, while people older than 85 are less likely to have access. Likewise, older people of all ages with a bachelor's degree or higher are more likely to have the internet at home than those with a high school degree or less. Reaching this population through peer-to-peer training, rather than formal classroom instruction will be most effective.

More details are in our report, [Meaningful Access: Investing in Technology for Aging Well in New York City](#), which is available on the Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging's website. There are also some charts with data from the report in the appendix attached to this testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify!

Appendix

Home Internet Access in NYC Decreases with Age Cohort



Source: gonzález-rivera, c., & Ruth Finkelstein. (2021, January 22). Meaningful access: Investing in technology for aging well in New York City. Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging. <https://brookdale.org/meaningful-access-investing-in-technology-for-aging-well-in-new-york-city/>

Internet Use in NYC Drops by Cohort and Level of Formal Education

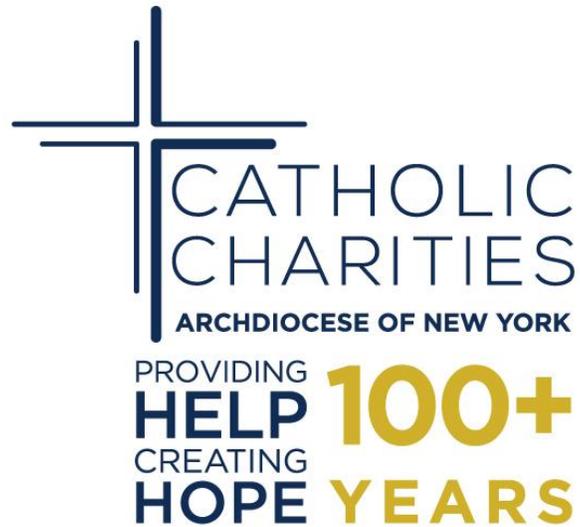
	Less than HS	HS or GED	Some college	Bachelors or Associates degree	Graduate degree	TOTAL
60-64	75%	82%	88%	92%	96%	86%
65-69	69%	77%	87%	90%	94%	82%
70-74	63%	71%	85%	87%	94%	77%
75-79	55%	64%	75%	80%	88%	68%
80-84	52%	57%	67%	71%	79%	61%
85-89	48%	50%	57%	62%	76%	55%
90+	46%	45%	55%	50%	61%	49%
Total	63%	71%	82%	86%	91%	76%

Source: gonzález-rivera, c., & Ruth Finkelstein. (2021, January 22). Meaningful access: Investing in technology for aging well in New York City. Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging. <https://brookdale.org/meaningful-access-investing-in-technology-for-aging-well-in-new-york-city/>

Internet Use in NYC Drops by Cohort and Household Income

	>\$29,999 per year	\$30,000-\$59,999	\$60,000-\$99,999	\$100,000+	TOTAL
60-64	80%	89%	94%	96%	86%
65-69	76%	87%	92%	96%	82%
70-74	70%	84%	92%	96%	77%
75-79	63%	74%	85%	92%	68%
80-84	57%	69%	75%	88%	61%
85-89	51%	62%	71%	80%	55%
90+	46%	54%	60%	70%	49%
Total	69%	83%	90%	94%	76%

Source: gonzález-rivera, c., & Ruth Finkelstein. (2021, January 22). Meaningful access: Investing in technology for aging well in New York City. Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging. <https://brookdale.org/meaningful-access-investing-in-technology-for-aging-well-in-new-york-city/>



Testimony

New York City Council

Committee on Technology

Access to Technology and Digital Literacy Programs in New York City

Thursday, January 12, 2023

Submitted by Elaine Roberts

Good afternoon Chair Gutierrez, Council Members, and staff, I'm Elaine Roberts, Director of ESOL Programs for Catholic Charities Community Services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and thank you for bringing attention to this especially critical issue. Digital literacy is a vital life skill for all New Yorkers, especially the adult literacy learners we serve, a group that includes many older adults.

Catholic Charities works in communities across New York City and is grounded in the belief in the dignity of each person and in a commitment to build a just and compassionate society – especially for the most vulnerable among us. Right now, with funding from the city, we are operating a Navigation Center in midtown to support asylum seekers arriving from the southern border and, as part of the city's Ukrainian Response team, are supporting families arriving from Ukraine. With thousands of new Americans seeking better work opportunities and integration, we are always present, building and perfecting our response. We are there to meet needs.

Our ESOL program, the International Center, works to address a strong and vital need for immigrant and refugee newcomers- to learn about and become active participants in their new culture. Our programming includes ESOL classes at multiple proficiency levels, citizenship preparation classes, digital skills classes, individual conversation practice, and specialized off-site programming for vulnerable communities in Manhattan and the Bronx. Our goal is to provide the language skills and confidence necessary for all English language learners to communicate effectively in their personal, professional, and academic lives in New York City.

OUR WORK AND NEEDS TODAY

For the past ten years, Catholic Charities has offered ESOL and digital literacy programming for adult learners. We also work closely with adult literacy programs throughout the city as a member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL). NYCCAL is a coalition of adult literacy teachers, managers, students, and allies from community -based organizations, CUNY campuses, and library programs that advocates for high quality, comprehensive and accessible educational services for adults. Our work is based on the belief that being able to read and write, learn English, obtain a GED, and enter training and post secondary education are the rights of every New Yorker, and the cornerstone to an equitable and just society.

Learners in Catholic Charities' programs are some of the 2.2 million adults in New York City who lack basic literacy, numeracy, English language proficiency, and/or a high school diploma. Many of these same adult learners also lack digital literacy skills. Digital literacy skills help learners use technology to search for, create, and share information and communicate with others- it requires technical skills and the ability to think about these processes. Adults with these skills can participate in their communities more easily; are better informed; can talk with and work with others, including family and friends more easily; and are more aware of how to keep their personal information safe.

Although digital literacy had been part of Adult Literacy programming before the pandemic, it has become much more important over the past three years. When all programming moved from in-person to emergency remote instruction, in March 2020, one of NYCCAL's member organizations, the Literacy Assistance Center, surveyed learners on their needs. Feedback from the survey¹ conducted with adult literacy providers across the city highlights the immediate need at that time and the still ongoing need for digital literacy skills. 79% of respondents ranked digital literacy, specifically 'digital skills development' and 'support with digital access' as important as 'access to hardware.'

¹ *The Impact of COVID-19 on NYC Adult Literacy Programs and Students: Survey Findings* from the Literacy Assistance Center, July 2020
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WugGKmbFh5OwJKciWCiMICM6Zth6uPbC/view>

As we continue to recover from COVID, adult literacy programs throughout the city have begun to work more intentionally on promoting *digital inclusion*, ensuring everyone has access to the resources and activities they need to use technology, and *digital equity*, creating the condition for all members of the community to fully participate and access services.

We applaud the support for digital literacy from the City Council. As part of the city's recovery plan, the Council has made critical investments in adult literacy education these past two years, which has directly supported digital literacy instruction. Through the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project, Catholic Charities and 18 other community-based adult literacy programs received \$2.5m in additional funding to provide increased support for students inside and outside the classroom across a range of important areas. 84% of the programs participating in the pilot used the additional funding to increase and improve their digital literacy instruction and integration of digital literacy skills into their work. Six of the programs developed new digital literacy curricula, supporting their skills outside the classroom as well by helping students access online banking or licensing programs.

In our own Digital Literacy Program Catholic Charities creates a safe space where students can improve their technology skills and feel more confident using them in class and in their daily lives- including connecting with family members in other countries. Topics included Zoom, email, Google Drive, and digital security and to further bridge the digital divide, we established a lending library of data-enabled tablets. Students in this program shared, 'Thanks for taking your time to teach us things so we can compete in today's world' and '[We like] the confidence we have now and have lost our fear of technology.' Another student who works as a home health attendant shared, 'now I can look up any information that I need either for my use and also for my patients in my work.'

RECOMMENDATIONS:

City Responses and Support

As we continue to use digital skills for more aspects of our daily lives and work, the city must ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the digital skills they need to be active, engaged, and productive members of their communities. We must commit to the idea of digital inclusion and create intentional programming that welcomes all and works to correct the "historical, institutional, and structural barriers to access and use technology."²

² National Digital Inclusion Alliance, <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/>

This work is being done across the country- the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Digital Equity Act, passed in 2021 explicitly mention the importance of digital inclusion and digital equity.

We applaud the Council's ongoing support for digital literacy for all and the new proposal to provide digital literacy programming for older adults, Intro 665. We in the adult literacy community are well-positioned to be reliable and trusted partners in this work. Adult Literacy programs already serve communities throughout the city that are in great need of digital literacy skills, including low income individuals, people of color, people with a low level of literacy, and aging communities. Our programs are based throughout the five boroughs and are trusted community partners for residents in these neighborhoods. Investing in digital literacy, especially via adult literacy programs, results in social, economic, and health benefits for individuals and the city. New Yorkers with digital skills can better navigate healthcare, support their children and grandchildren's education, advocate for their rights, and participate more fully in democracy.



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January 12, 2023

Good afternoon,

My name is Elizabeth Gradinger, and I am the Associate General Counsel of the Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY). CIDNY's mission is to ensure full integration, independence, and equal opportunity for all people with disabilities by removing barriers to the social, economic, cultural, and civic life of the community.

CIDNY is providing this testimony in support of the proposed bill to require the department of citywide administrative services to donate computer equipment and computer software to public schools, libraries, other educational programs, and not-for-profit institutions such as CIDNY that service persons with disabilities, senior citizens, or low-income individuals. CIDNY is also providing this testimony to advocate in support of the proposed bill that would require the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications to establish and implement an online digital literacy program to serve older adults.

We are providing this testimony today in support of these two proposed bills since we believe that they will directly help address the needs of the disabled community living in New York City.

CIDNY advocates for the rights of all people with disabilities, many of whom are elderly. Medical conditions, cognitive issues, medications, grief, and isolation often are contributing factors to the decline in the physical and mental health of older adults. CIDNY is in support of these proposed bills because access to technology can help older adults stay connected and engaged and lessen many of the risk factors associated with the decline in mental health among elderly adults. Specifically, efforts to provide access to technology, and steps to ensure that older adults can understand and effectively use technology can lessen their experiences of social isolation. These connections can also serve as an important method to prevent elder abuse that can often arise when older adults are isolated without access to technology.

CIDNY is also in support of these proposed bills because access to computer equipment and technology is extremely important for the entire disabled community. Many of the consumers that CIDNY serves do not have access to the technology required to be able to access the systems they urgently need. In this digital age, access to computers and computer software are needed for inclusion in all aspects of daily life, including for education, employment, housing, healthcare, and social services. CIDNY believes that the proposed bills would help to increase access to these crucial technologies for the communities we serve. CIDNY also wants to ensure that the technology provided will be provided in a form that will be accessible for the Disabled community.



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CIDNY also supports these proposed bills because access to computers and computer software in schools is also crucial for students with disabilities. Many students with disabilities rely on assistive technology tools to help them communicate with teachers and classmates, complete their schoolwork, and to enable them to participate in school activities. Since the onset of COVID-19 remote learning has become a key part of education, and the lack of access to working devices and a secure internet connection to city students during the period of school closures resulted in learning loss, particularly for low-income students. This loss was even more pronounced for students with disabilities. CIDNY's position is that the current proposed bill to require technology to be provided to New York City schools will also help to address the need for additional services to help affected students with disabilities recover from this period of educational disruption.

CIDNY fully supports the bills being proposed since CIDNY knows these proposals will have a positive effect on the disabled community and will further CIDNY's goals to remove barriers to the social, economic, cultural, and civic life of the communities we serve.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Gradinger

Elizabeth Gradinger
Associate General Counsel

January 12, 2023

Testimony of Tiffany Rogers, Program Manager at Encore Community Services

New York City Council Committee on Technology Hearing

Good afternoon council members. My name is Tiffany Rogers, I am a program manager at Encore Community Services, a nonprofit organization serving older adults on Manhattan's West Side. Our flagship physical older adult centers are located in the Theater District, however I am specifically responsible for overseeing our remote, online programming.

Like many other nonprofits, during the pandemic we shifted our suite of classes and programming online. As we prepared to shift back to in-person operations, we found that a collection of older adults were not ready to come back. For some this was due to Covid risk, for others their health had reached a point that made it difficult to attend in person programs, and some just found it easier to fit an online program into their routine. Additionally, we found that with online programming, we were able to include homebound older adults who had previously been missing access to education, fitness and community connections. As our physical center was reopening and getting back into full swing, we understood that we still needed to meet the need of connecting virtually.

That's why in June 2022, we launched Encore Unlimited, our virtual senior center. We now offer a wide range of online meetings and classes each week, including Art Therapy, a class that utilizes simple art projects to work through feelings of depression, grief, loss and more. In addition, we offer classes like Yoga, Zumba, chair exercises, cooking workshops, and health lectures relevant to older adults. Over the past several months we have gained a steady number of regular members, and plan to continue this model indefinitely.

Our experience with online programming is why Encore Community Services is supportive of the council's effort to increase digital literacy for older adults. We see every day the power and potential of digital tools to prevent social isolation.

While of course there are some elements of in-person engagement that can't be replicated online, the reality is that many older adults cannot make it to in person events. They might be experiencing mobility or cognitive challenges that make leaving the house difficult and/or unsafe. For those fortunate enough to have family caregivers willing to accompany them to in person programs, are still plagued by being at the

mercy of their caregiver's schedules, and other responsibilities. Virtual senior centers and related programming can reduce barriers and fill the gaps for social engagement for many.

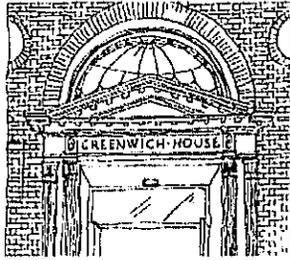
I hear every day from members who find so much value in their online experiences. One member, who was asked in class about her plan for the holidays, told the group that this was her plan for the holiday—it was her main interaction, the thing she had been looking forward to. And though there are so many stories like this, the benefits are not just anecdotal. Research, and the pandemic, clearly shows that social connections are imperative to sustaining physical and mental health as we age.

But there are barriers to making this model work. Older adults may not be immediately familiar with the tools many of us use in the workplace, like zoom. They are able to learn, but it might take longer or a few tries, and they may need someone to patiently walk them through it. Financially they may not have the devices they need at home or access to the internet.

We have also found that just offering online programming is not enough. I do significant outreach to find prospective Encore Unlimited members, and then we support those members with phone and mail communications. In addition to sending emails, our team makes phone calls to check in with members and see how they are doing. If any of our classes require supplies outside of the zoom application, we mail members what they need and follow up to ensure they have received them. It requires a robust effort to make this model work, but it is immensely worth it when you hear and see the impact it has on someone's quality of life.

On behalf of Encore Community Services, I encourage the committee to move forward any and all efforts to improve digital literacy and reduce barriers to online connection for older adults.

Thank you council members for your time today.



Greenwich House

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Technology
January 12, 2022

Jessica Ramos Cuttone
Director of Workforce Services
Greenwich House
www.greenwichhouse.org

My name is Jessica Ramos Cuttone and I am the Director of Workforce Services at Greenwich House. Thank you to Chair Gutiérrez and fellow City Council members for this opportunity to testify.

Since Greenwich House was founded 120 years ago, we have been committed to addressing the needs of New Yorkers of all ages through arts and education programs, health services, and older adult services.

We applaud the Committee for seeking opportunities to address digital literacy and access to technology, especially for older adults. In October, with support from DFTA, as well as Amazon, Crown Castle, and private foundations, Greenwich House opened our Lifelong Skills and Opportunity Center in part to address these issues in our community.

Expanded support from the City would go a long way towards addressing the great need for digital literacy support among older adults. A Pew study showed that 41% of older adults do not use the internet, 23% do not use cell phones, and over 75% say they require help when learning how to use new technology.

In our programs, we see a full spectrum of digital literacy challenges among our participants. We hear stories about people whose safety could be compromised if they were to fall or need help because they live alone and do not have access to a cell phone. Or, their mental health is impacted due to isolation and lack of connectivity.

Others simply want to be able to support themselves and reenter the workforce. For example, Danielle is 71 and had a successful consulting career, but she lost many customers during the pandemic and her technology skills are outdated. She is eager to work but has found the world of online job listings and applications to be frustrating. Despite her years of experience, she is having a hard time landing interviews.

Finally, older adults often miss out on opportunities for digital connection at a time when technology has been all but ubiquitous for other age groups. Many lack the skills to use

social media to connect with family and friends or to even share photos. In our first Introduction to Computers course, we quickly filled up and had to turn people away. Some participants did not know how to turn on a PC.

Through our Lifelong Skills and Opportunity Center, we see a strong desire among older adults to learn these skills in a safe environment with peers. We offer classes on everything from Zoom 101 to launching an online business, and we are planning upcoming courses on topics like voice technology, contactless payments, and wearable technology.

We urge the City to consider expanding funding for resources to ensure our older residents have the access to technology resources they need and want. The support we've received from DFTA has been very impactful, but we also had to secure generous private funding from Amazon to open our computer lab, which is a critical tool for older adults. Right now we rely on volunteers to run the lab, but staffing for it would ensure that older adults can receive essential one-on-one support.

Greenwich House applauds the New York City Council for working to address digital literacy and access to technology for our older community members. I thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today.



Making New York a better place to age

**New York City Council
Committee on Technology
Chair, Council Member Gutiérrez
January 12, 2023**

Oversight - Access to Technology and Digital Literacy Programs in New York City

My name is Brianna Paden-Williams and I am the Communications and Policy Associate at LiveOn NY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 110 community-based nonprofits that provide core services which allow all New Yorkers to thrive in our communities as we age, such as older adult centers, home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing, NORCs, and home care. LiveOn NY is also home to the Reframing Aging NYC Initiative, part of the national Reframing Aging Initiative aimed to counteract ageism and improve the way policymakers, stakeholders, and the public think about aging and older people. With our members, we work to make New York a better place to age.

Background

For almost three years, LiveOn NY's member organizations and the entire aging services network have found new ways to provide critical services to older New Yorkers in the face of unprecedented demand and a public health crisis. Technology has been core to making this work possible, as overnight Older Adult Center classes went virtual and phone calls became a main mode of communication with clients. This work is critical, as isolation is now understood to be a significant health risk and predictor of morbidity. To put it simply, the ability to remain connected virtually has undoubtedly saved lives.

Unfortunately, the FCC estimates that 21 million Americans do not have access to high-speed internet, while other studies believe that number is closer to 42 million people. Even in New York, there are areas where connectivity remains a challenge. Additionally, financial barriers hinder access to technology among older adults, particularly given that the majority of older adults rely on limited fixed incomes. Today, many older adults can't afford to purchase technology such as tablets or computers, and even if the devices are given to them, it is difficult or impossible to afford monthly internet access. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide, brought increased awareness to its existence, and highlighted the disastrous effects of not combatting its prevalence.

LiveOn NY and our members have seen the ways that the digital divide and lack of access to technology limits the ability for older adults to remain engaged and connected in our communities. For example, lack of technology access limits one's ability to connect to virtual programming and the classes offered by New York's community-based organizations. Further, inability to *afford* internet access means missing out on real time information, such as best practices in regards to COVID, how to



Making New York a better place to age

access food during this time, and job opportunities.

It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has both exacerbated the digital divide and brought increased awareness to its existence. Moreover, the pandemic has highlighted the disastrous effects of not combatting its prevalence. LiveOn NY is proud to offer the following recommendations:

Recommendations

Firstly, we invite the City to utilize our aging policy agenda, *Aging is Everyone's Business*, released by LiveOn NY in partnership with Hunter College Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging, which is a bold policy agenda that provides actionable policy solutions, including technology, to make New York a better, more equitable place to age.

Second, in order to address these challenges and created long-term solutions to improve access to technology for older adults, LiveOn NY recommends the following:

The City should look to broaden and fund collaboration with Older Adult Centers, and organizations such as Senior Planet, which offers a hotline and courses to broaden tech access among older adults. It's important to keep in mind that of the older adults who have internet access, nearly half require assistance to use the internet or to set up their new device, and many are reliant on family for this support.¹ This is why it is important to not only support tech expansion, but to support organizations that promote technology literacy among older adults:

Increase investments in the technology infrastructure at Older Adult Centers and community-based organizations. Older Adult Centers have utilized technology to keep tens of thousands of older adults safe, connected, and healthy during the pandemic. It is critical that Centers have a strong technology infrastructure to further enable Centers and other DFTA programs to connect with older adults through virtual programming, during the pandemic and beyond.

Allocated funding to expand DFTA virtual programming accessibility, through an online database, devices, and connectivity. This technology investment would also create a new program to promote tech literacy among older adults by funding community-based organizations to offer this support.

Deputize and fund local older adult centers and other local organizations to act as information hubs in the event of a disaster, as well as to support older residents the basic technology skills they need to remain connected during emergencies.

Make free public tech support available to any New Yorker through 311, using contracts held by nonprofits across the city that specialize in providing support to different populations.

¹ <https://techcrunch.com/2019/05/05/we-are-leaving-older-adults-out-of-the-digital-world/>



Making New York a better place to age

Proposed Legislation

LiveOn applauds Technology Chair Gutiérrez for introducing legislation aimed at promoting access to technology and literacy programs to support us all as we age in our communities in New York City, and thanks Council Member Gutiérrez and cosponsors.

LiveOn NY offers the following feedback on the proposed legislation:

Intro 664

LiveOn NY supports Intro. 664, which would require the department of citywide administrative services to donate unneeded and unused computer equipment and computer software to public schools, libraries, other secular educational programs, and not-for-profit institutions service persons with disabilities, senior citizens, or low income individuals.

Intro 665

LiveOn NY supports the intent of Intro. 665, which would require the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DOITT), in consultation with the Department for the Aging (DFTA) and relevant stakeholders, to establish and implement an online digital literacy program to serve older adults. This bill is an opportunity to expand technology access and close the digital divide among older adults in New York City. While this bill is a step forward to address the technology access for older New Yorkers, LiveOn NY encourages the City to work in coordination with community-based organizations with existing technology support and digital literacy programming for older New Yorkers. Furthermore, the City must assess the necessary funding that would be needed to provide technology support and programming to an aging population.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony provided by Brianna Paden-Williams, Communications and Policy Associate at LiveOn NY For questions, please email bpaden-williams@liveon-ny.org

LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.

LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps

LiveOn NY

Making New York a better place to age

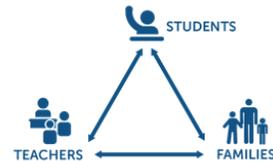
with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help them age well in their communities.



**PowerMyLearning
New York City Council
Committee on Technology
January 12, 2023**

Good morning, Chairperson Gutierrez and members of the Committee on Technology. My name is Christina Chiolo and I am the Executive Director of PowerMyLearning's New York City Region. Our organization was founded in 1999, right here in NYC. PowerMyLearning's mission is to advance educational equity by activating the power of collaboration between teachers, students and families. We do this by:

- Approaching family engagement as a triangle of learning relationships: Students, teachers, and families achieve educational success by working as a team.
- Using technology as a connecting force: Students, teachers, and families are pulled closer by technology that removes barriers while encouraging face-to-face interaction.
- Activating the emotional power of learning with someone who really knows you: Students, teachers, and families learn with each other through personal and real-life experiences.



As an organization that started and spent many years providing computer equipment to students and their families, we are in full support of Intro 0664 that would require DCAS to donate surplus city-owned computers, computer software, and computer equipment to public and private institutions for secular educational use and to not-for-profit institutions for use by individuals with disabilities, senior citizens, or low-income individuals. This legislation would help bridge the digital divide that still exists, using valuable resources.

Today, PowerMyLearning partners with elementary and middle schools in under-resourced communities across NYC to provide professional development for teachers, family engagement services, and our digital learning tool, Family Playlists. Family Playlists are hands-on, weekly extension math activities that are assigned by teachers and completed by students with their families. These leverage technology and were designed with equity in mind, so they are delivered via text message in over 100 languages. They include videos in English and Spanish, use materials commonly found at home, and are aligned with the district's math curriculum. Our programs improve student learning outcomes while also strengthening social-emotional learning skills. We commend Chairperson Gutierrez and the entire Committee for bringing forward legislation that addresses the digital divide across diverse communities in NYC and look forward to continuing to work with the Council and Department of Education schools throughout the city.

I appreciate your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina Chiolo".

Christina Chiolo
Executive Director, PowerMyLearning NYC

Michael Cohen

It is important for students to be provided with the technology resources they need to be successful in school and for a digital literacy program to be established to benefit older adults. Students need technology resources to complete their assignments and to have access to software tools that help them with their classes. Having technology in schools increases the number of different subjects that students can learn and enables different ways of learning to be well accommodated. Technology classes for older adults provide an opportunity for them to learn how to use computers and helps them to acquire more in demand job skills. If the technology classes have more computers for the students to use, then they can have an easier time learning how to use a computer as they will have a more personal hands on learning experience. If schools, colleges and technology learning programs have more computers for students to learn on then students can get better grades and be more prepared for career success.

Schools, colleges and technology learning programs have a deficit in the amount of technology resources they have relative to the number of enrolled students that need them. According to USA Today, 5 million laptops have gone missing from New York City public schools. I once had to wait six weeks to be assigned a word processor in school and eight weeks for a laptop when the word processor was not a good solution for me to take notes in class when the word processor did not sufficiently fill my note taking needs. College students need access to computers that have the correct software installed on them in order to complete their homework assignments and group projects for their courses. They also require access to portable devices, such as GPS receivers, that they can use to collect data for their science classes which are in good working order. Technology learning programs need computers that can connect to the internet and are powerful enough to support applications of many types, such as office productivity and media editing, so that students can learn different types of computer related



skills. If students had more technology resources available for them to use, then they would have an easier time following along in their classes.

Having more technology resources in schools, colleges and technology learning programs also increases the amount of learning that students can do using online resources after their classes to help them to better understand the material they were taught in class. High school and college students need access to websites that provide access to activities specified in their workbooks to be performed on a computer, such as flash cards and quizzes that are relevant to the topics they have recently learned about in class. They can also benefit from watching video or audio programs that are relevant to the classes they are taking in order to increase their interest in learning the material. Students in technology learning programs can use computers to practice using software on their own to complete sample assignments. There are also websites that allow users to learn how to use computer software and other aspects of technology at their own pace. Using a greater amount of technology resources, students will have the chance to enhance their own learning of the material and to obtain better grades in their classes.

Surplus technology resources from New York City government agencies can provide students with inexpensive technology resources to aid in their learning. Computers and other electronic devices that agencies are not using in their day to day operations could be put to good use to enrich the lives of others in order to help them to become more educated and knowledgeable about an expanded number of subjects. Otherwise surplus New York City government technology resources will remain unused while they could be better used somewhere else and donating them will be an easy way for those resources to be redistributed to other places throughout the city. Surplus computers will also provide schools, colleges and technology training programs with a greater supply of electronics to choose from when supplying students



with what they need. All of the surplus equipment will operate well enough to replace any non-working equipment that the students are currently using to learn on and will create more opportunities for remote learning to take place over the internet. Having a greater supply of inexpensive technology available for use by students will help schools, colleges and technology learning programs will help provide for more encouraging places to learn.

Surplus technology resources should only be redistributed for educational purposes and only to public or nonprofit organizations. Organizations that do not provide educational services do not provide a sufficient benefit to the public through the use of donated computers because they will not be used to support learning. If donated equipment is not used to support learning it will likely be used for other purposes or designated as a public computer to be used by everyone. The surplus computers and other electronics must have the software preinstalled that is required by the organizations that requested the equipment. All donated computers should be given to be used in the areas of the requesting organizations where there is the greatest need for them. The computers should also be given with information about how they are to be used in other organizations.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 664 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: January 12th, 2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Cohen
Address: _____ NY, NY 10003
I represent: 504 Democratic Club
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brianna Paden-Williams
Address: 49 W 45th Street, NY, NY
I represent: Live On NY
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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 in favor in opposition

Date: 1/12/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Roman Gofman
Address: 1 Centre
I represent: DCAS
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BRETT SIKOFF

Address: _____

I represent: NYC OTI

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RYAN BIRCHMISZ

Address: _____

I represent: OTI

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Ramos Cottone

Address: _____ Queens

I represent: Greenwich House

Address: 27 Barrow St NYC

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 665 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ RIVERA

Address: 2780 3RD AV, NYC 10035 (QUEENS)

I represent: BROOKDALE CTR. FOR HEALTHY AGING

Address: BKLYN 11206

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms