

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

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June 5, 2023
Start: 10:42 a.m.
Recess: 12:38 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Joann Ariola, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

David M. Carr
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Oswald Feliz
Robert F. Holden
Ari Kagan
Kevin C. Riley
Kalman Yeger

A P P E A R A N C E S

Haley Fumiko Sato, Fire Department of New York
Emergency Medical Technician

Michael Cavanaugh, Fire Department of New York
Emergency Medical Technician

Jordan Tymony, Fire Department of New York
Emergency Medical Technician

Barbara Dannenberg, Deputy Commissioner for
Human Capital at the New York City Fire
Department

Paul Miano, Assistant Chief of Emergency
Medical Services

Thomas Tanzosh, Battalion Chief of the Office
of Uniform Personnel

Joe Cavaretta, Battalion Chief of the Office of
Uniform Personnel

Page Miller, Fire Department of New York
Emergency Medical Technician

Dominick DeFranco, Fire Department of New York
Paramedic

Tabitha Schneff, Fire Department of New York
Emergency Medical Technician

Brandon Rodriguez, Fire Department of New York
Emergency Medical Technician

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

Michael Greco, Fire Department of New York
Paramedic

James Daly, Jr., retired three-star Assistance
Chief Operations Fire Department of New York

Regina Wilson, President of the Vulcan Society

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Fire and Emergency
4 Management, recorded on June 5, 2023, located in
5 Chambers, by Nazly Paytuvi.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
7 welcome to the Committee on Fire and Emergency
8 Management.

9 At this time, please place all phones on
10 vibrate or on silent mode.

11 If you want to submit testimony, send it
12 to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that's
13 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

14 At any time during this hearing, do not
15 approach the dais.

16 Thank you for your cooperation.

17 Chair, we are ready to begin.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [GAVEL] Again, thank
19 you for your patience.

20 Good morning. My name is Joann Ariola,
21 and I am the Chair of Fire and Emergency Management
22 Committee.

23 Today, we are holding an oversight
24 hearing on New York City's Bureau of Emergency
25

2 Medical Services' career paths and the Fire
3 Department's promotional opportunities.

4 I would first like to acknowledge Members
5 of the Fire and Emergency Management Committee who
6 are here today as well as being joined by Council
7 Members Carr, Kagan, Gutierrez, Riley, Yeger, and
8 Feliz.

9 I would also like to thank those from the
10 public as well as representatives from the
11 Administration who are here to provide testimony.

12 As we all know, our City's EMS personnel
13 is tasked with providing emergency medical care for
14 individuals in need. These men and women deal with
15 stressful work environments, long hours on shifts,
16 and relatively low pay when compared to other City
17 first responders. EMS employees often find themselves
18 needing to work a second job and maximizing overtime
19 pay to ensure they earn a living wage. Today, the
20 Committee will explore ways in which the Department
21 has provided career advancements for our EMS workers
22 as well as an update on when the Department plans to
23 administer the next promotional examination which
24 enables those who are currently age-eligible EMS
25 members as well as those who were eligible during the

2 COVID-19 shutdown to take a civil service test and be
3 appointed as firefighters.

4 As Chair of the Committee, I expect to
5 hear testimony from representatives of the FDNY and
6 EMS on promotional opportunities within the Bureau.
7 Further, I'd like to hear how the Department will
8 help ensure that the most qualified and experienced
9 EMTs and paramedics are retained within EMS so that
10 we as a City are able to deliver the highest quality
11 emergency medical services to our residents and our
12 visitors.

13 Again, I thank you all who are here today
14 and will now ask for representatives from the EMS to,
15 actually I'm going to just turn it over to Counsel
16 and note that Council Member De La Rosa has joined
17 us.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Good morning.
19 Today, we're going to start with members of the
20 public. The first panel will be Michael Cavanaugh,
21 Haley Sato, and Jordan Tymony. Please step up.

22 HALEY SATO: Good morning. First and
23 foremost, I would like to thank Council Woman Ariola
24 for hosting this hearing. I would also like to thank

2 my friends, family, and coworkers who came out to
3 show their unwavering support.

4 My name is Haley Fumiko (phonetic) Sato,
5 and I've been an Emergency Medical Technician for the
6 FDNY since 2020. After graduating college with a
7 degree in nutrition and exercise science, I found
8 myself unfulfilled and unsure of what to do next. I
9 wanted a career that would not only be physically
10 demanding but that would also allow me to selflessly
11 serve my community. While working in a local gym, I
12 met a very special individual who gave me career
13 advice that I am thankful for each day, join the
14 FDNY. I never grew up with firefighters as role
15 models as that isn't a typical career path in a
16 Japanese American household. The idea of learning new
17 skills, connecting with diverse individuals, and
18 having a career with a history like no other, all
19 while creating my own legacy strongly appealed to me.
20 I entered the EMS Academy in February 2020 as the
21 first member of my family to join the Department. No
22 one could have predicted that a global pandemic would
23 bring the world to a halt the following month.
24 Classrooms went virtual, restaurants were limited to
25 take-out, major league sports were suspended, and

1 almost any job could be done remotely. However, the
2 work of a first responder could not be done from
3 home. With a mere six weeks of training under our
4 belts, my classmates and I were sent the streets
5 early to be the first responders that the citizens of
6 New York City so desperately needed. As EMTs, we took
7 an oath to dedicate our lives to the service of
8 humanity. This oath was fulfilled during the City's
9 darkest times. Due to the state of emergency, myself
10 and my coworkers were mandated to work 16-hour shifts
11 for multiple days in a row. Many of us would sleep in
12 our cars in fear of bringing the virus home to our
13 families. Many of us contracted the virus ourselves.
14 Many of us showed up to work grieving the loss of
15 friends, family, and coworkers. Nonetheless, we
16 persevered, remembering that oath we took. Since
17 joining the FDNY, I am proud to say I have looked for
18 every opportunity to better serve the Department.
19 I've worked in the Lower East Side, Washington
20 Heights, and Jamaica Queens. In May of 2022, I became
21 a drill instructor at the EMS Academy. This position
22 not only allows me to help shape the future of the
23 Department but also to take my background in health
24 and fitness and apply it to our physical training
25

1 sessions. On the streets, we advocate for our
2 patients, and at the Academy we advocate for our
3 students. If the unforeseen circumstance of COVID-19
4 were to never happen, a promotional exam from the
5 rank of EMT to firefighter would have been slated for
6 2020 given the four-year cycle it runs on. Many of
7 our members including myself who would've qualified
8 to take the promotional exam in 2020 will no longer
9 qualify as we have aged out. I was 25 years old when
10 I joined the Department, and I turned 29 in March of
11 this year. We do not feel that we owed an exam or
12 deserve a handout. We simply would like to have the
13 opportunity that we would've had in 2020 if a global
14 pandemic did not shut down the world. We seek a one-
15 time age extension for this upcoming promotional exam
16 so that we may have that opportunity. We believe that
17 a minimum of a three-year extension is fair since we
18 are now a little over three years due on the exam. I
19 would like to note that the City of Los Angeles, Los
20 Angeles County, Washington, D.C., and the City of
21 Philadelphia have no maximum age limit in regards to
22 becoming a firefighter. For the cities of Chicago and
23 Houston, you cannot have reached your 36th birthday
24 by the day of hire. Roughly 10 years ago, a federal
25

1 court monitor was hired to oversee diversity within
2 the New York City Fire Department. Many of our
3 current EMS members would like to take the
4 opportunity to be promoted to the rank of
5 firefighter. We are a highly motivated and diverse
6 group of people. Our members took many steps that
7 eventually brought us to this hearing today. We've
8 met with our union, Local 2507, who stated they
9 support a one-time extension given the unforeseen
10 circumstance of a pandemic. We also received the
11 backing of multiple affinity groups within the FDNY
12 including the Vulcan Society, Hispanic Society, and
13 Phoenix Society. As FDNY EMTs, we are already trained
14 to make life and death decisions in high-stress
15 emergency situations. Medical responses make up
16 roughly 50 percent of the calls the FDNY's busiest
17 engine companies respond on. Many EMTs who are now
18 New York City firefighters raise the bar of patient
19 care when working in a fire company. An experienced
20 FDNY Captain recently described to me a cardiac
21 arrest he responded to for a 13-month-old girl. A
22 firefighter, who was a former FDNY EMT, took the lead
23 in this harrowing situation. I was once told that you
24 can either choose to be on this job or in this job.
25

2 By continuously learning and taking every opportunity
3 that has been given to me, I choose to be in this
4 job. I hope that one day I am able to call myself the
5 first New York City firefighter in my family. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 MICHAEL CAVANAUGH: Good morning. My name
10 is Michael Cavanaugh. I've been an EMT for the FDNY
11 since February of 2018. Before I start, I'd like to
12 thank Council Woman Ariola for taking the time to
13 previously meet with us to discuss the promotional
14 exam to firefighter and for also hosting this meeting
15 today. I'd also like to thank the members of the
16 Firefighters Eligibles Group, my family, friends, and
17 coworkers for taking the time to come support our
18 efforts today.

19 For as long as I can remember, I've
20 wanted to be a member of the FDNY. My family has been
21 in the Department since 1919. I take pride in the
22 fact that I've been given the same opportunity to
23 serve my community as an FDNY EMT. After getting
24 comfortable with the solid basic life support
25 foundation, I decided to pursue paramedic school and

1 will graduate as an FDNY paramedic in the coming
2 months. This is just one of many career advancements
3 I am looking to make. Over the past five years, FDNY
4 EMS has gone above and beyond for this city. We have
5 taken time away from our families, worked 16-hour
6 shifts, and stepped up for overtime when needed. We
7 all have made numerous sacrifices and selflessly
8 served the communities in New York City. In 2020, the
9 world shut down due to COVID-19. While the whole
10 world was staying indoors afraid of a new and deadly
11 virus, my brothers, sisters, and I answered the call
12 to serve our city. For months, most of our Department
13 ran on fumes. Whether it was staffing issues due to
14 over 50 percent of the Department contracting this
15 new virus, myself included, or members stepping up to
16 pick up additional shifts, we answered the call. This
17 was during one of the most difficult times in FDNY
18 history. We did our best to deal with the grief of
19 people losing family members and the dread of
20 potentially infecting our own families. The Bureau of
21 EMS shined brightest in one of our city's darkest
22 times. We served the city then, and we hope to serve
23 the city in the future. Ironically, had COVID not
24 impacted the City's hiring capabilities and finances,
25

1 many of our members would've had the opportunity to
2 take a promotional exam to firefighter in 2020. Now,
3 three years later, the same people the media and our
4 City hailed as heroes are still awaiting an
5 opportunity to advance their careers in the FDNY. We
6 have the experience, skillsets, and ability to serve
7 the City of New York as ffs. Now, FDNY EMTs and
8 paramedics who have been eligible since 2020 are all
9 in limbo. All we are seeking is clarity for a pathway
10 to career advancement in the Department. We are
11 asking for a one-time age extension for the members
12 of the Department affected by the pandemic. We seek
13 your support in making this happen. In the past, the
14 City has allowed a one-time age extension due to
15 extenuating circumstances. I believe the COVID-19
16 pandemic is a valid reason to allow a one-time age
17 extension. I thank you for your time.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 JORDAN TYMONY: Good morning. Thank you,
22 Department and Council Members as well as supporters,
23 for being here today and allowing us this
24 opportunity.

2 My name is Jordan Tymony. I am currently
3 an active FDNY EMT in the Borough of Brooklyn. I am
4 here today in regards to the FDNY EMS to firefighter
5 promotional exam to help support the members that are
6 in jeopardy of missing out on a future promotional
7 opportunity due to their current age.

8 In this testimony, you may or may not
9 hear a slight accent in my voice. If you do, that is
10 because I'm not from New York. I was born and raised
11 in Wichita, Kansas. Today, would like to tell my
12 story on how a Midwest kid ended up in the Big City.

13 In 2011, after 18 years, I finally moved
14 away from Wichita to a small college town. My first
15 year of college at the University of Kansas was a
16 struggle. I knew I needed to be in school, but I had
17 no idea of what I wanted to study. From 2012 to the
18 next few years, I became a volunteer firefighter in
19 Douglas County, Kansas. I obtained all the necessary
20 firefighter certifications, and I finally conquered
21 the intimidating EMT course that I had long put off.
22 I graduated in December 2015 with a degree in
23 communication studies even though my passion was the
24 fire service. February 2017, I was hired by the
25 Olathe Fire Department in the suburb of Kansas City.

2 During my early career, a coworker had gotten me in
3 touch with an FDNY lieutenant in the Bronx. I had a
4 special connection to him. He is also from Kansas. He
5 inspired me, and he helped point me in the right
6 direction to applying and getting on the EMS exam
7 (INAUDIBLE) to New York City. November 2019, I made
8 the decision to leave the Olathe Fire Department
9 after almost three years and returned to work in my
10 hometown of Wichita. January 2020, two weeks from
11 graduating the Fire Academy, I got the call from FDNY
12 EMS. I now had a life-changing decision to make. I
13 got my official FDNY offer. Five days later, I was on
14 the road to New York. I left everything I knew, my
15 family, my friends, my dog, my career. I was finally
16 pursuing my dream of becoming a New York City
17 firefighter. I started the EMS Academy February 2020.
18 All of a sudden, the world changed. Due to the
19 pandemic, everything was put on hold. The only thing
20 that wasn't put on hold was my age. I moved here when
21 I was 26 years old. I'm now 30 years old, still
22 hoping for an opportunity to become a New York City
23 firefighter. We worked through the toughest times of
24 the pandemic when health and safety was crucial. Our
25 families constantly worried for us every day,

1
2 confronting the uncertainties lying before us. The
3 last promotional opportunity from FDNY EMS to
4 firefighter was in August 2016. On a four-year
5 schedule, the next promotional exam should have been
6 in the fall of 2020. The only chance I have of that
7 dream now is for an age extension to be placed on the
8 next promotional exam.

9 I believe that age does not define our
10 mental or physical capacity for the duties necessary
11 to perform the job as a firefighter. Not only does
12 our EMS experience enhance fire operations in regards
13 to medical treatment in the field, it also brings
14 diversity into the Department. As of December 2021,
15 between the ages of 29 and 35, there are 359 female
16 members, 213 black members, 293 Hispanic members, and
17 59 Asian members, all eligible to become
18 firefighters. This would be a huge potential to
19 increase diversity in the Department so I, as well as
20 others have shared similar story in pursuing the
21 dream of becoming New York City firefighters, are
22 here today in solidarity to ask that we are not
23 denied that opportunity in the unforeseen
24 circumstances of the pandemic. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
3 testimony.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Now we're
5 going to call representatives from the FDNY. Deputy
6 Commissioner Barbara Dannenberg, Assistant Chief Paul
7 Miano, Chief Joseph Cavaretta, and Chief Thomas
8 Tanzash.

9 Will you please all raise your right
10 hand?

11 Do you promise to tell the truth in
12 answer to the questions to the best of your ability?

13 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Thank you.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Good
16 morning, Chair Ariola and all Council Members
17 present. My name is Barbara Dannenberg, and I am
18 the Deputy Commissioner for Human Capital at the
19 Fire Department. I am joined by Chief Paul Miano,
20 Assistant Chief of EMS as well as Battalion Chief
21 Thomas Tanzosh and Battalion Chief Joe Cavaretta,
22 both of the Office of Uniform Personnel. Thank you
23 for the opportunity to speak with you today about
24 EMS career paths and promotional opportunities at
25 the Fire Department.

As our members will tell you, the Fire Department is an exciting place to work. Each year, hundreds of individuals of varied backgrounds and experiences join a team of public servants and commit themselves to protecting the people of New York. Many join the FDNY by entering the ranks of firefighters or emergency medical technicians. However, there are a variety of ways to enter the Department and numerous paths to advance one's career. I'll discuss some of those options today.

Members of the Committee are probably already familiar with some of the options available to firefighters. One path of advancement after gaining experience is to study for and take a civil service exam to be placed on a list to be promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. Subsequent opportunities include the ability to be promoted to the rank of Captain and Chief. A member may also take a promotional exam to obtain the rank of Fire Marshal, which then affords the member the opportunity to be promoted to Supervising Fire Marshal.

1
2 Firefighters may qualify for other paths
3 for advancement and promotion as well depending on
4 a member's interests and skills. After obtaining
5 some experience, a firefighter may pursue the
6 Special Operations route, joining a Hazardous
7 Materials Operations unit, a Squad Company, or a
8 Rescue Company. Similarly, a member may join
9 specialized units such as Marine Operations or the
10 Robotics unit. Other pathways create opportunities
11 for members to serve beyond their everyday roles,
12 such as training on Federal Emergency Management
13 Agency requirements and becoming qualified to be
14 dispatched as part of Urban Search and Rescue
15 teams.

16 EMS members also advance in their
17 careers in a variety of ways. They also have civil
18 service paths to promotion, including to the ranks
19 of Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Paramedic. EMS
20 members may also advance their careers through
21 non-civil service paths. Examples of that include
22 obtaining New York State certifications and
23 applying to become a Certified Lab Instructor,
24 which a member may do via completing a written
25 exam and demonstrating skills such as trauma

2 assessment and bleeding control, or a Certified
3 Instructor Coordinator, which may be done after
4 auditing lectures and passing a state exam.

5 Another career path available to EMS members is to
6 become an Alarm Receiving Dispatcher, or ARD. This
7 is obtained by completing training including a 12-
8 week course.

9 I also want to draw your attention to
10 programs that the Fire Department has created to
11 provide exposure and employment opportunities for
12 younger New Yorkers. Students at the FDNY Captain
13 Vernon A. Richard High School for Fire and Life
14 Safety enroll in FDNY elective classes including
15 EMS 101 and FDNY Prep. Firefighters, EMTs, and
16 Paramedics serve as instructors, providing
17 academic and hands-on education, giving students a
18 firsthand view into the benefits of a career at
19 the FDNY. The Department also operates the EMS
20 Youth Academy, which provides didactic and
21 practical skills training, and many who complete
22 the course go on to become New York State
23 Certified EMTs, joining the Department as EMTs and
24 firefighters. We also operate the FDNY Leadership
25 Academy, which is an elite, discipline-driven

2 program to help enrollees discover their potential
3 and develop leadership skills that last a
4 lifetime.

5 The Department operates a Fire and EMS
6 Exploring Program, which takes place at eight
7 locations throughout our five boroughs. FDNY
8 Explorers between the age of 14 and 20 receive
9 fitness training, citizenship training, and
10 character-building instruction, and they are
11 exposed to both the Fire Academy at Randall's
12 Island and the EMS Academy at Fort Totten. Members
13 gain insight into FDNY careers, make contacts to
14 broaden FDNY employment opportunities, and develop
15 a roadmap to potential careers within the FDNY.

16 In addition to these broad areas of
17 potential career paths and promotional
18 opportunities, I would like to address a topic
19 that I know is of great interest to the Council.
20 The COVID-19 pandemic foreclosed the Department's
21 ability to develop and graduate classes from the
22 existing firefighter civil service list. This, in
23 turn, disrupted the firefighter exam cycle,
24 delaying the next Open-Competitive firefighter
25 exam as well as the next Promotional Exam, which

1 is a test that enables members of EMS to be placed
2 on a civil service list to become firefighters.
3 Unfortunately, this delay has created an issue for
4 some members of EMS who are planning to take the
5 exam but, due to the delay, are at risk of
6 becoming ineligible due to their age. Under
7 Section 15 of the Administrative Code, to be
8 qualified to become a firefighter, an individual
9 must not have reached their 29th birthday on the
10 date of the filing for the exam. Some members of
11 EMS who may be affected have expressed
12 disappointment and have asked for ways to stay
13 eligible despite aging out as a result of the
14 delay. The Department understands this position,
15 and we are interested in finding a solution that
16 is fair to these members. We have also heard from
17 concerned Council Members, including Chair Ariola,
18 who has advocated for resolving this issue in a
19 way that would enable EMS members who were cut off
20 due to this delay to be able to take the next exam
21 and qualify to be placed on the resulting list.
22 These are valid concerns, and the Department is
23 interested in working with the Council to develop
24 a potential legislative solution that is equitable
25

2 and would create a path for the members who age
3 out due to this delay. We know that there are
4 potential legal and civil service issues that
5 could present challenges for any such solution.
6 Those issues will have to be resolved to the
7 satisfaction of all interested parties, including
8 the Law Department and DCAS, which administers the
9 exam, but we would like to work with the Council
10 to explore potential solutions.

11 Thank you, and I'm happy to take your
12 questions at this time.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Deputy
14 Commissioner. Thank you for stating that the
15 Administration understands and is open to positive
16 solutions for those who have aged out.

17 When was the last EMS to firefighter
18 promotional exam given, when will the next exam be
19 administered, and can you describe for the
20 Committee the process for someone going through
21 this promotion phase and how long it takes?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG:
23 Certainly. Thank you for your question, Chair. The
24 most recent promotion to firefighter exam was
25 administered in December 2016, and the upcoming

2 promotional exam for firefighter is scheduled for
3 October 2023 so October of this year.

4 The process for promotion is the same
5 test-taking process as the Open-Competitive
6 examination where members will prepare to take the
7 written exam, which for the next round should be
8 administered in February 2024 so they'll prepare to
9 take that written exam. They will take and pass
10 that written exam, and those that pass the written
11 exam then move on to the next aspects of the
12 testing which includes physical testing, medical
13 screening, and then at that point they are placed
14 on the eligible list and then are available for
15 hire.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All right. Thank
17 you. During the past two exam periods, how many
18 individuals took the exam, passed the exam, and
19 subsequently became firefighters?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
21 you. For the most recent promotional exam, there
22 were about 1,400 test-takers that took that exam,
23 and, from that exam, about 900 people were promoted
24 into the ranks of firefighter.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, great. What
3 training does the FDNY provide for the candidates,
4 and how does this training compare to those
5 individuals who are already in the Fire Academy.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
7 you for your question. The Fire Department offers
8 several different opportunities for our test-takers
9 and our employees in order to move into the rank of
10 firefighter. Those opportunities include test-
11 taking prep where we offer classes for folks to
12 receive tips in order to take the multiple choice
13 written exam. They also receive some classes in
14 reading comprehension, basic math skills, the
15 ability areas that are found on that multiple
16 choice exam. Another opportunity is for physical
17 testing, we offer training and class work. It's a
18 10- to 12-week program in order for our employees
19 to become familiar with the physical test called
20 the CPAT to become a firefighter, which they must
21 pass in order to become eligible for that job.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All right, thank
23 you. How many women were promoted during the last
24 two exams?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I don't
3 have that information in front of me, but I can
4 certainly get that information for you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I'd appreciate that.
6 Thank you. When EMS personnel are promoted to
7 firefighters, how does that affect their time
8 served with the Department as it relates to their
9 pensions?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
11 you for your question. I'm not an expert in the
12 area of pension, but City employees' time counts
13 towards the pension, and, for any specific
14 questions about pension, certainly refer to the
15 pension.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: All right. I know
17 that you went over this in your presentation and in
18 your testimony, but I can't hear it enough times so
19 for individuals who have aged out from taking the
20 promotional exam during the COVID-19 pandemic
21 suspension, what is the Department planning to do
22 to allow these individuals the opportunity to take
23 the exam? I know you're repeating yourself, but I
24 just want to hear it again.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I will
3 say it again. As you're aware, we are so thankful
4 to partner with Council and particularly with you
5 in order to find a fair solution for these members
6 that were impacted by the delay.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. I will at
8 this point yield to my Colleagues.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you so much
10 for this opportunity. Thank you, Chair, for hosting
11 this very important hearing, and, of course, my
12 gratitude to all EMS workers here. You are heroes.
13 You worked before the pandemic, during the
14 pandemic, after the pandemic. You are risking your
15 lives and saving lives every single day. Thank you
16 so very much.

17 I have a few questions. Number one, what
18 is the number of vacancies at the Fire Department
19 right now? How many job opportunities do we have?
20 Do we have the total number of vacancies at the
21 Fire Department?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
23 you for your question, Council Member. I do not
24 have that information, but I can certainly make
25 sure that you receive it.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: I guarantee you
3 have a lot of vacancies so we need to do everything
4 possible so our Fire Department does not have
5 vacancies because, again, you're talking about life
6 and death. It's so important that we do everything
7 possible to recruit as many firefighters as
8 possible.

9 Second question, how many EMS workers
10 apply for this promotional exam last year?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
12 you for your question. For the most recent
13 promotional exam, there were 1,400 who applied to
14 take the job, and, of the 1,400, 900 were promoted
15 to firefighters.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Which means
17 probably if problem will be resolved, you'll get
18 minimum 1,400 more who will apply so, again, do we
19 need a legislative solution or it can be done just
20 by the Department?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
22 you for your question. As the age requirement is
23 stated in the Administrative Code, it's a subject
24 of law, so therefore, again through discussions
25

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2 with the Council and the City's Law Department, we
3 are looking to come up with a solution.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Council Member
6 Yeger.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you, Madam
8 Chair. Good morning.

9 What's the practical difference in the
10 ability of somebody to be a firefighter whether
11 they're 29 years old or 30?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Good
13 morning, Council Member. Thank you for your
14 question. I'm not able to answer that question.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: There's an age in
16 a Statute. Somebody must've determined that's the
17 age. Is there a practical difference between 29 and
18 30 in somebody's ability to be a firefighter?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Again,
20 the age of 29 in order to become a firefighter is a
21 subject of the Administrative Code which is law,
22 and it's not something that I can speak to as far
23 as how that was developed or where that number came
24 from.

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay. I'm not
3 asking how it was chosen. I'm asking what's the
4 practical difference, you're sitting surrounded by
5 three gentlemen who are heroes in New York, have
6 presumably fought a lot of fires, maybe one of them
7 can help us out. What is the practical difference
8 between a 29-year-old's ability to be a firefighter
9 and a 30-year-old's ability to be a firefighter?
10 Does anybody know? Can anybody speak to that? Does
11 anybody have a position on whether or not there is
12 a difference between somebody's ability at 30 to be
13 a firefighter versus 29?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Again, I
15 would like to remind the Council Member that the
16 age requirement to become a New York City
17 firefighter is subject to the Administrative Code.
18 It is not a Fire Department rule.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: I know the law. I
20 know the Statute. I read the Statute. I know it's
21 there. I'm asking about practical difference
22 between someone's ability at 29 versus 30. In other
23 words, if the Council were to change the law, one
24 of the things we'd want to know is there a
25 difference if somebody's 30 versus if they're 29 so

1 I'm asking if anybody at the table has an idea of
2 if there's a practical difference in somebody's
3 capacity to fight a fire if they're 30 versus what
4 their capacity to fight a fire is if they're 29.
5 Does anybody know?
6

7 Okay, all right. Let's move on to
8 something else. You testified, ma'am, that... Okay,
9 I'll wait. Maybe we found an answer. No answer?
10 Okay. You testified that the last EMS firefighter
11 promotional exam was in December 2016 and that the
12 next exam is scheduled to be administered this
13 year, and, obviously there was one as we heard from
14 the first panel, the first witness at this hearing
15 testified that there was one that was unfortunately
16 canceled due to circumstances beyond our control,
17 beyond your control, and that would've been
18 approximately four years from the 2016 exam and now
19 we have one that is three years after the canceled
20 2020 exam, but, all told, it's about seven years in
21 difference, and the gentleman, my Colleague who
22 questioned you earlier, I believe asked whether or
23 not there are sufficient number of promotions and
24 personnel to do the work. If not, I'm asking it
25 now. Do we have enough firefighters in the City of

2 New York who are moving through the ranks with the
3 proper experience, and would this test help us out
4 in filling those ranks?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
6 you for your question.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: You're welcome.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Yes, we
9 are fully supportive of our members advancing their
10 careers and advancing through the ranks, of
11 whichever career pathway they choose. We had
12 planned for classes of both firefighters and for
13 entry-level EMS workers, there's currently a June
14 class happening right now, so that we can provide
15 more candidates and have people move throughout
16 that pipeline.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Madam Chair, may I
18 just continue? Okay, thank you.

19 The 2020 exam that was canceled
20 obviously had a list of applicants who had
21 registered to take the exam. Do you have the
22 ability to tell us, number one, how many people had
23 registered for that exam?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I'm
25 sorry. Can you repeat that question?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Sure. The 2020
3 canceled exam had EMTs who had registered, in other
4 words a subset of the people who wanted to take the
5 exam or to the extent that it was a promotional
6 exam was all of the people who had registered to
7 take the exam. Do you know how many people had
8 registered to take the exam?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
10 you for that question. I'm not aware that that exam
11 actually opened for filing.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: However,
14 that would be a question for DCAS.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay. Do you know
16 or are you able to tell us how many EMTs in 2020
17 who would've taken the exam were at 29 years of age
18 or under and are now over that age?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Yes. We
20 calculated and took a look back, and it appears
21 that there are 324 members who would be eligible
22 for this upcoming exam.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Who would have
24 been...

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Who
3 would have been.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: And who are not
5 currently...

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Correct.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: And, if the law
8 were to change and change the year from 29 to 30,
9 do you know what the differential would be and how
10 many more people would be eligible to take the
11 exam?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I do not
13 have the breakdown by year, the number.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay. Would you be
15 able to find that out, by year, just like punching
16 in a little question into a computer, not now, but
17 I'm saying get that back to the Chair and see if we
18 can get that answer?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: We can
20 certainly provide that analysis.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: All right. Thank
22 you, Madam Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Before we go
24 further, Deputy Commissioner Dannenberg, honestly,
25 you're probably four for four on what you don't

2 know, and that's just unacceptable at our hearings.
3 Anyone from the Department, I know this is your
4 first hearing before me in this capacity, we're not
5 okay with that so you do have a team here that can
6 find out those answers for you and perhaps Council
7 Member Kagan was not clear in saying EMS vacancies
8 as opposed to firefighter vacancies, but we're here
9 to talk about vacancies, we're here to talk about
10 pensions, we're here to talk about promotions, and
11 you should have every answer that we need so, if
12 you don't have it now on your list, I ask you to
13 please get that while my other Colleagues are
14 asking their questions, and we can always revisit
15 it.

16 Council Member De La Rosa, you're up.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you so
18 much, Chair.

19 I Chair the Committee on Civil Service
20 and Labor, and we've been digging into the civil
21 service exam. You testified that the Administration
22 was open to exploring with DCAS and the Law
23 Department some possible solutions. Can you speak
24 to that and what the obstacles have been to this
25

2 point that has prevented you from already
3 proactively looking into the solutions?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
5 you for your question. As we're all aware, this is
6 a complex issue, and we are working diligently. We
7 have been working diligently with the Council and
8 with the City's Law Department and other oversight
9 in order to come up with a fair and swift solution.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Can you
11 describe what that looks like so we have a better
12 understanding of what the challenge is so that we
13 know as Council Members how we can assist in the
14 conversation?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
16 you. This is a complex issue, and it's a complex
17 legal issue so, again, I can't speak to what path
18 would be taken as I'm not an attorney as far as
19 correcting that legal barrier. However, we are
20 fully supportive and working towards gaining that
21 solution with the City's Law Department, with the
22 Council, with other (INAUDIBLE)

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: I'll just say
24 that I appreciate the fact that you mentioned that
25 the Administration is open to having the

2 conversation. It doesn't seem like a hard fix here,
3 and maybe I'm missing something. I've been sitting
4 here listening to these heroes testify about their
5 experiences, and I'm like why is this issue, like
6 why can't we fix this, and if it takes us amending
7 the Administrative Code and we have the ability to
8 do that then who is opposed to this? What is the
9 challenge?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
11 you. I'm not aware of any opposition to finding a
12 fair solution for our members who have been
13 affected.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Chair, count
15 me as part of the crew of Council Members here that
16 are in favor of us fixing this however we can.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Council Member Carr.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you, Chair
20 Ariola, Deputy Commissioner, Chiefs, good to see
21 you all today.

22 I guess I want to follow a little bit
23 the line of reasoning my Colleague, Council Member
24 Yeger, was trying to get to earlier about the
25 practical difference, if any, based on age at the

2 Fire Department so I'll try to ask it a different
3 way. There are a number of folks who serve in
4 firefighter and fire officer titles across a
5 spectrum of age ranges. Do you have available the
6 youngest person in a firefighter title and the
7 oldest person in a firefighter title today?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
9 you for your question. I do not have that
10 available, but we can certainly provide such an
11 analysis.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I expect based on
13 the number of years folks work to get a full
14 pension and generally kind of anecdotally that
15 there's a range of folks in their 20s, their 30s,
16 40s, maybe even early 50s. Do we think that's a
17 fair thing to say for the purposes of this
18 conversation?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: While I
20 can't speak to the actual array of ages, it is fair
21 to say that there is a broad range of ages.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Right, and these
23 folks are acting competently at a minimum, if not
24 heroically in these titles across that spectrum of
25 age ranges. Would that be a fair thing to say also?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: The
3 Department is extremely proud of the work that our
4 emergency medical services staff and our
5 firefighting members perform each and every day for
6 this city.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: That's good to
8 know, but I think what we're trying to establish is
9 is that there's a range of folks who serve in the
10 Fire Department and firefighter and fire officer
11 titles and they do so with distinction despite that
12 divergence in age, so I think in terms of the
13 special allowance we're discussing today, I think
14 the Committee is supportive of it, I'm glad to hear
15 that the agency is open to it and wants to work
16 towards it, but I think it just also lays bare the
17 larger question, which is why some of us here are
18 also supporters of legislation to permanently push
19 back the age for taking the exam and then actually
20 starting with the Department so I think even though
21 we may be able to fix this problem and I hope we
22 can in short order, we need to kind of take a
23 larger look at the bigger picture because I think
24 there's a lot of New Yorkers now and in the future
25 who would love to serve in the Department and

2 aren't able to do so because of the strict cutoff
3 we have in age. Do you have any comment about that
4 at all at this point?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
6 you. Again, our focus today is for our current
7 members and providing a solution for the current
8 issue, but we are certainly open to other
9 discussions regarding the topic of requirements to
10 enter the firefighting service.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: You mentioned there
12 were legal issues that were being worked on. Who's
13 working on them?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Again,
15 it's a partnership between the Department, this is
16 not something the Department can resolve on its
17 own, the City's Law Department, and, of course,
18 with the support of our Council.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Okay. Appreciate
20 that. I have a number of constituents who have
21 reached out to me for help in this particular
22 category. I reached out to DCAS, but I know that
23 ultimately the answer lies with us hopefully
24 tackling the Administrative Code issue, and
25 hopefully we can resolve this in short order with

2 the leadership of our Chair and our other
3 Colleagues. Thank you.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
5 you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Council
7 Member Carr.

8 Deputy Commissioner, since the next
9 promotional exam will be given in October 2023 and
10 we're already in June, it's our hope that the Law
11 Department will come to a positive decision in this
12 matter so that the people who are here today and
13 who couldn't be here today and would be eligible if
14 this particular rule was changed would be able to
15 take the test in October 2023. Do you see that as
16 an option for them?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
18 you for the question. Yes, we definitely see an
19 option for addressing this current situation with
20 the next promotional exam.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. What is the
22 average duration of employment for paramedics and
23 EMTs, and what is the annual attrition rate of
24 paramedics and EMTs?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
3 you for your question. I don't have that
4 information...

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Stop, stop, stop.
6 Maybe we need to get someone in your seat that
7 knows how to answer the questions. We did not come
8 here to play. We did not come here, [APPLAUSE]
9 okay, take a moment, thank you for that, we did not
10 come here to hear we don't have an answer. We took
11 time out of our day to be here, everybody took time
12 out of their day, you couldn't have not anticipated
13 the questions so I ask you, and I ask your team, is
14 there someone we can get here in a reasonable
15 amount of time to answer the questions of this Body
16 who has every right to ask questions. They're not
17 difficult questions, and, as the Deputy
18 Commissioner for your Department, you should be
19 prepared. Please, I don't see how we can go further
20 with no answer as an answer.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I have
22 received the vacancy numbers if you'd like to
23 revisit that question.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Absolutely.
25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Okay.
3 Before me, I have the numbers as of last month,
4 which is May 2023. Our total vacancies for
5 firefighter is 245, and we don't have any vacancies
6 for EMT, we have 91 vacancies for paramedic.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And how many women
8 were promoted in the last promotional exam?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I do not
10 have the breakdown by gender.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I think that this
12 Council is all about diversity, and I think you
13 should have the number broken down by gender and
14 ethnicity, and honestly we'll wait here until you
15 do so I want to know how many women were promoted
16 in the last promotional exam. It is not that
17 difficult. It has been the thrust of this Council
18 and the Administration from day one since I was
19 elected, and that's a question you should have an
20 answer to.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Madam Chair,
22 perhaps we can recess for five minutes and maybe
23 they can get together and maybe get somebody over
24 here or get some answers that they can help us out
25 with.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We're going to take
3 a five-minute recess at the request of my esteemed
4 Colleague, Council Member Yeger, five minutes.
5 Thank you. [GAVEL]

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you for your
7 patience. If everyone could please find your seats,
8 we will be beginning shortly.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, we're about to
10 resume, and I believe that you have additional
11 information for the Committee.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Good
13 morning. Yes, I do.

14 You had most recently asked about the
15 number of women who were promoted from EMS into the
16 firefighting ranks from the last exam. The last
17 exam, there were 34 women who were promoted, and
18 most recently there were seven women included in
19 the last firefighter class.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: From what I
21 understand, Council Member Yeger's question, the
22 information has not come back yet, but we are going
23 to that information to the questions he asked.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I do
25 have, I apologize, I can't recall who had requested

2 the attrition rates, but I do have the attrition
3 rates if you are interested in that.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That was me. Thank
5 you.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Okay.
7 Thank you. The attrition for EMS has remained
8 steady between the last year and this current
9 Fiscal Year, and it's 8.7 percent for EMS.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. What is
11 the average length of service for an EMS worker and
12 the disaggregated per hour for basic life support,
13 advanced life support, and ambulances, and what are
14 the percentages of EMS workers on the job with less
15 than one year of service?

16 ASSISTANT CHIEF MIANO: I'm sorry. Can
17 you just repeat the question so I can answer it for
18 you?

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Sure. What is the
20 average length of service for an EMS worker?

21 ASSISTANT CHIEF MIANO: I'll have to get
22 back to you on that, although you did ask about,
23 the other question you asked was about how many
24 people have less than one year?

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes. What are the
3 percentage of EMS workers on the job with less than
4 one year of service?

5 ASSISTANT CHIEF MIANO: EMS has been
6 actively putting in classes to their Academy
7 starting with 160 students per class. They've been
8 going on about three each year so, if we want to
9 say that 150 of the 160 graduated from those
10 classes, I would say that it would be reasonable to
11 estimate that there are 450 members that have less
12 than one year on the job.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, thank you.
14 What is the average EMS worker shift length?

15 ASSISTANT CHIEF MIANO: EMS has two
16 schedules. One shift is 12 hours, and the next
17 shift is 8 hours and 45 minutes.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: How does that
19 compare to the national average or best practice?

20 ASSISTANT CHIEF MIANO: I will have to
21 get back to you on what the national average is of
22 shift work for EMS. Every agency follows different
23 models.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, and how does
3 attrition within EMS contribute to the overtime
4 usage?

5 ASSISTANT CHIEF MIANO: With an average
6 attrition of 8.69, there would be 4,200 members, 10
7 percent would be, I'm not good in math, I'm sorry,
8 but it would push the amount of members that we'd
9 need with that vacancy rate to be able to cover
10 those vacancies, that 8.7 percent of 4,200.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: What recruitment
12 efforts has the Department made to attract
13 individuals to EMS?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: Thank
15 you for that question. We hold continual
16 recruitment events in order to make our community
17 members of the many career opportunities that there
18 are within the Fire Department including EMS. We
19 work with our current officers and members, and
20 they serve as our ambassadors in our communities in
21 order to better engage our potential jobseekers
22 into a career with EMS.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Do you know what the
24 total annual budget during the past three Fiscal
25 Years was for EMS recruitment?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I'm not
3 aware of that number.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. Do you know
5 what the current salary is for an EMT and
6 paramedic?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: The
8 starting salary for an EMT or EMD 39,000,
9 paramedics 53,000, and then, of course, there are
10 additions to gross and other on top of that salary.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: What are their
12 salaries after a five-year period of service?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: I have
14 the starting salaries. I don't have the five-year
15 incremental salary increases. Can certainly get
16 that information for you.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: At this point, my
18 Colleague, Council Member Carr, has a statement to
19 read onto the record.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you, Chair.
21 This is on behalf of our Colleague, Council Member
22 Robert Holden, who couldn't be with us this
23 morning. He wanted me to just put into the record
24 of this hearing that he's the author and lead
25 sponsor of Introduction 395, which I referenced

2 earlier in my questioning, which would push back
3 the deadline to take the firefighter exam from
4 before one's 29th birthday to before one's 31st
5 birthday and then the time to actually become a
6 member of the Department from before the 34th
7 birthday to the 36th birthday. There are currently
8 11 co-sponsors in addition to Council Member Holden
9 including Chair Ariola, Council Members Farah
10 Louis, Sandy Nurse, Lynn Schulman, Christopher
11 Marte, Nantasha Williams, Amanda Farias, Kamillah
12 Hanks, Crystal Hudson, David Carr, myself, and
13 Council Member Ari Kagan, and he's asking all of
14 our Colleagues on the Committee and in the rest of
15 the Body to sign onto this legislation so that in
16 addition to hopefully addressing this issue on a
17 one-time basis we can be a little bit more
18 inclusive with FDNY hiring moving forward. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Council
21 Member Carr. At this point, I don't have any
22 further questions. Do any of my Colleagues?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANNENBERG: In
24 response to your last question about the five-year
25 incremental pay, the five-year salary for an EMT is

2 59,000 and for a paramedic is 76,000 at the five-
3 year mark.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Thank you.
5 Okay. Our next panel will be Page Miller, Dominick
6 DeFranco, Tabitha Schnepf, and Brandon Rodriguez.
7 You may begin when ready.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Before you begin
9 your testimonies, I just want to thank all of you
10 and everyone in this room for your service and for
11 putting your lives on the line every day. We, here
12 at the Council, appreciate that, and we want to
13 make sure that your needs are met, heard, and that
14 you get the answers that you deserve, and although
15 the panel prior to this one had no answers for us
16 we will be sure to follow up, make sure that we get
17 the answers that we need and to really push to make
18 sure that people who were ineligible during the
19 COVID-19 pandemic shutdown become eligible in a
20 timely fashion so that you can take that test in
21 October so, please, I would love to hear your
22 testimony. Thank you.

23 BRANDON RODRIGUEZ: Good morning. First
24 off, thank you, Council Woman Ariola, thank you,

Council Members, for taking the time to listen to myself and my peers.

My name is Brandon Rodriguez, and I've been an FDNY EMT since 2019. I was born and raised in Brooklyn New York to a Guyanese father and a Trinidadian mother and always had a desire to serve the city that raised me. In 2015, I was a passenger in a vehicle involved in a serious accident. Little did I know at that moment that the EMTs who would come to my aid would also inspire me to pursue a career as a first responder. Later that year, I decided to take a class and worked hard to receive my New York State EMT license, keeping in mind the first responders that provided high-quality patient care the day that I was injured, I knew I wanted to do just that. Between 2015 and 2019, I obtained hands-on experience throughout the five boroughs working as an EMT for various agencies. However, in 2019, I decided to pursue a career with the best agency, FDNY. When citizens are in distress, they call 9-1-1. Since 2019, I had worked as a dispatcher. I am the reassuring voice on the other end of the phone providing step-by-step patient care until an ambulance arrives on scene. When the

1 pandemic hit, I felt an obligation to pick up extra
2 work on the street, not only for the FDNY but for
3 the various EMS agencies that I worked for at the
4 time. When the global pandemic shut down the entire
5 City of New York, myself and my peers were there to
6 answer the call, whether it was a dispatcher, EMT,
7 or paramedic. Unfortunately, like many others of my
8 coworkers, I contracted the virus. I isolated for
9 weeks from my family and friends as a preventative
10 measure to keep them safe from what I encountered
11 on a daily basis. I eventually made a full recovery
12 and was able to return to work. Although this
13 period of time was uncertain to us all, all I knew
14 was that I had an obligation to uphold to the City
15 of New York to help the sick and injured. The
16 promotional exam for EMT to firefighter typically
17 runs on a four-year cycle. Due to the global
18 pandemic, the promotional exam slated for 2020 was
19 delayed. We are now seven years without a
20 promotional exam. In 2020, I would have fully
21 qualified to take this opportunity. However, I am
22 now 32 years old and no longer qualify because I
23 have aged out. We're here today to ask the Council
24 to grant a one-time extension for those of us who
25

2 served our great city throughout the pandemic. I am
3 one of many who have aged out due to the testing
4 delay and the shutdown of the City and feel that
5 due to these extreme circumstances, the members of
6 the FDNY Bureau of EMS should be afforded the
7 opportunity to become a New York City firefighter.
8 Thank you for your time.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
10 testimony. Next.

11 DOMINICK DEFRANCO: Good morning. I'd
12 like to thank Council Woman Ariola for hosting this
13 hearing and allowing me the opportunity to share my
14 story. I'd also like to express my gratitude to the
15 Chiefs, Council Members, and everyone present who
16 supports this cause.

17 My name is Dominick DeFranco. I'm an
18 FDNY paramedic in Coney Island, Brooklyn and have
19 been working for the Department for over six years.
20 Prior to joining, I became a New York State EMT in
21 June 2014. For the past nine years, I have
22 consistently strived to progress throughout my EMS
23 career and in my own personal well-being. I was
24 sworn in to the FDNY in March 2017 at the age of
25 22, became a HAZ-TAC EMT, this entails training to

1 respond to various chemical disasters in 2019,
2 upgraded to paramedic in November 2021, and finally
3 became a HAZ-TAC paramedic in December 2021. In
4 March of this year, I was accepted into the
5 Dignitary Protection Unit, or DPU, to provide ALS,
6 advanced life support care, to the high-ranking
7 officials of the world such as the Pope or the
8 President when they visit the City. Recently, I
9 participated in the EMS competition where I
10 represented Division 5, Brooklyn South, Staten
11 Island, and came in second place in New York City
12 for ALS with my team. I have also competed for the
13 FDNY boxing team and continue to train with the
14 members. While achieving these accolades, I
15 graduated college in 2019 with my Bachelor of
16 Science in psychology and currently finishing my
17 second degree in nursing. Aside from learning new
18 skills at work and climbing up the ladder in my
19 career, I take pride in going the extra mile for
20 our station, a second home for our members. Every
21 month, I organize and facilitate the station's
22 commissary fund, design station clothing to
23 increase the morale, and speak with my members
24 about improvements. I have planned multiple events
25

1 for my members as well, especially for FDNY EMT
2 Ashley Diaz, who has lost her leg to an intoxicated
3 driver in September 2022.
4

5 COVID-19 has greatly impacted our City
6 and members' careers. During the pandemic, members
7 operated at the highest call volume while treating
8 patients with improper PPE, or personal protective
9 equipment. Many first responders become infected
10 with COVID, which resulted in multiple areas in the
11 city without EMTs and/or paramedics. The COVID-
12 negative members, like myself, clocked in every day
13 while getting mandated to work 16-plus-hour shifts.
14 I eventually became COVID-positive along with 60
15 percent of our fellow EMTs and medics. We've
16 experienced some of the toughest jobs and
17 situations over these past few years due to the
18 pandemic. As a result, the firefighter promotional
19 exam for EMS employees was delayed from its
20 scheduled cycle that was anticipated for 2020. I am
21 just one of the many EMS members who have devoted
22 their time and dedication to the Department and
23 City. EMTs and paramedics who have worked through
24 this pandemic will or have aged out by October
25 2023. I will turn 29 in August, and then I will

1 unfortunately age out. I started this job as a
2 career at 22, and there has not been a firefighter
3 promotional exam for over seven years. This is the
4 longest period the Department has seen without an
5 exam. It is unfortunate members who have worked for
6 the FDNY for many years will not have this
7 opportunity to file due to the pandemic. As an
8 individual who strives to better myself (INAUDIBLE)
9 Department, I find it unreasonable to be judged by
10 age. This City has the youngest age requirements
11 for the major municipal fire departments in the
12 United States. Back in 2012, the court approved a
13 waiver to allow members under the age of 36 to file
14 for the FDNY firefighter exam, meaning the age
15 extension has occurred before. I believe EMS
16 members should be given the opportunity to file for
17 this upcoming promotional exam with an age
18 extension due to their contributions during COVID
19 and their career. EMTs and paramedics offer our
20 prior experience that cannot be obtained from
21 civilians, especially after the pandemic, and are
22 highly motivated to fulfill the Department's needs.
23 We do so much for so little, and we'd appreciate a
24 one-time age extension for compensation. It would
25

2 be a waste to see almost 1,000 EMS members with
3 diverse backgrounds and experiences, ranging from
4 the ages of 29 to 35, not be granted this
5 opportunity. These men and women that were of age
6 in 2020 who were challenged with the unpredictable
7 circumstances are the greatest assets to this
8 Department and City. We deserve a chance. I greatly
9 appreciate your time. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
11 testimony. Next.

12 PAGE MILLER: Good morning and thank you
13 for the opportunity to speak to you all today. My
14 name is Page Miller, and I am a 30-year-old FDNY
15 EMT. I have known my entire life that I wanted to
16 help others so, like many others, I have made it my
17 goal to become an FDNY firefighter. First, I became
18 the best EMT I could be. I already had the
19 compassion that it takes for the position but
20 lacked the knowledge. I studied hard in order to
21 provide the best treatment for the sick and
22 injured. Through experience and medical education,
23 I have achieved that objective. Even so, I did not
24 want to stop there. I have plans on entering the
25 FDNY paramedic program in the fall. To become a

1 firefighter, I have trained my body and mind in
2 many ways. I've competed in CrossFit and Olympic
3 weightlifting for over 10 years. I have worked
4 side-by-side with firefighters, and I have learned
5 many of their day-to-day activities. I know that
6 having five years of experience as an EMT is an
7 enormous benefit to being a firefighter as they
8 play a vital role in emergency medical service. I
9 know I have the drive and passion to become a
10 firefighter. I find it very hard to accept that
11 only being a year or two older than the current age
12 requirement for the position will prevent me from
13 becoming a firefighter, especially when obstacles
14 such as testing delays were the result of
15 circumstances beyond our control. My coworkers and
16 I served the City during the entire COVID pandemic.
17 They were stressful times for many New Yorkers. The
18 long hours, the frequency of calls, the time spent
19 away from our families made Emergency Medical
20 Service a profession tougher than most. The
21 conditions we faced should lead to more
22 opportunities and promotions, not limitations. We
23 have gained a toughness that can only benefit and
24 further the City service. I hope you take in
25

2 consideration the hard work we have all provided
3 over the years and grant us this opportunity to
4 apply for the firefighter position.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
6 testimony.

7 TABITHA SCHNEPF: Good morning, everyone.
8 My name is Tabitha Schnepf, and I have been an EMT
9 for the New York City Fire Department for the past
10 three and half years. As stated in my peers'
11 previous testimonies, we are all truly grateful for
12 this chance to share our stories and appreciate the
13 time and effort and all parties included to make
14 this day happen.

15 Today, I stand here with many of my
16 fellow classmates and coworkers asking for the
17 chance to pursue our dream of becoming New York
18 City firefighters. For as long as I can remember,
19 I've lived my life preparing for the day when I
20 would be the first in my family to join the FDNY.
21 February 18, 2020, was the beginning of my story.
22 Here I am lining up for orientation at headquarters
23 to begin my journey. A month into an already
24 challenging and scary yet rewarding path came a new
25 challenge. Three weeks into the Academy we were

1 informed by our drill instructors that COVID-19 was
2 tearing through our city and the call volume was
3 reaching numbers that haven't been seen since 9/11.
4 Our City needed our help. My peers and I were then
5 informed that our time at Fort Totten would be most
6 likely be cut short so that we can provide aid to
7 our future colleagues. With only six weeks to
8 prepare, our workload was doubled, our days were
9 longer, but we all took an oath for circumstances
10 such as this. I knew the road was long, but I was
11 ready. What I wasn't ready for was finding out that
12 I may not be able to begin the next step of my
13 career because of the uncertainty of the next
14 promotional exam. I turned 29 in January of this
15 year. I joined the Department at the age of 26 with
16 a clear goal in mind, and I am now being told that
17 I may have to choose a new one. If it had not been
18 for COVID-19, myself and many, if not all, standing
19 here would have qualified for the promotional exam
20 that would have been given according to its four-
21 year cycle. This Department promotes diversity and
22 thrives on experience, all of which we bring to the
23 table. We've been trained by the best to be the
24 best, and our knowledge and perseverance has been

2 put to the ultimate test. All we are asking for is
3 a chance to prove that we can also be a tremendous
4 asset as New York City firefighters. I believe I
5 can speak for all here that we are proud to be a
6 part of this family and have our names stitched
7 onto our uniforms that we wear with pride every day
8 for our City, but this is only the first chapter,
9 and our stories are not finished yet.

10 I'd like to thank Council Woman Ariola
11 for whom this hearing would not have happened.
12 Also, thank you to everyone standing beside us
13 today for your support and allowing us all to share
14 our thoughts and concerns. I truly hope for a
15 positive outcome.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL KINGSLEY: Thank you.
17 We're going to call our last panel. Regina Wilson,
18 Michael Greco, and James Daly, Jr. You may begin
19 when ready.

20 MICHAEL GRECO: I usually start out with
21 good morning, but I don't even know what time it is
22 anymore.

23 First of all, Chairperson, I'd like to
24 thank you for holding this hearing. As always, you
25 do give you an extraordinary time to EMS.

2 To my fellow coworkers, I'm actually
3 glad I have this many members here today, hearing
4 the Department's uselessness on their answers. They
5 know how hard it is for me to do my job every day.
6 That's the same sort of preparation we get, and
7 you're an elected body in charge of oversight, in
8 charge of figuring out what is going on in the Fire
9 Department, and we can see how much trouble you're
10 getting to answers so I'm glad everybody got to see
11 sometimes how hard it is.

12 There's a couple of corrections even in
13 the agenda itself. The training on EMTs is not 120
14 hours. It's 480 hours so that's an important
15 understanding that it's not just three weeks of
16 training. It's actually three months. We look at
17 the salary difference, 60,000 for a top-pay EMT to
18 92,000 for a firefighter. It's definitely a crazy
19 situation to ask why is the attrition, why is the
20 turnover rate in EMS so bad when you create a
21 position called the promotion, that's highly
22 debated amongst those who are career EMS versus
23 those who want to go over to the Fire side, the
24 fact that it's a promotion for someone, consider
25 myself, 30 years old I started, wanted to be an

1 EMT, I'm a paramedic, it's career. To turn around
2 and say now that's a promotion, you look at the
3 1,600 hours to train as a paramedic, you get to
4 75,000 dollars, then you go over to the Fire side
5 and get a different training, you have to give up
6 your certifications or lose all that training, it's
7 actually a demotion in medical stature while a
8 promotion in different sort of training. I
9 understand it. One of my members said that the
10 union is for a one-time extension. Granted, that is
11 with a caveat. Everybody who knows me and knows the
12 union, it's clear that we feel the promotion with
13 our pay structure is singlehandedly keeping us down
14 as EMS. However, if you are doing a test this year
15 and it's going to be in October 2023, well, by all
16 means, you might as well give these heroes who did
17 work during the pandemic a chance to get a test
18 that they would've gotten. We met with them, and we
19 are in agreement that, if it's 29 now and it's a
20 one-time extension, I know there is some
21 legislation to increase that, obviously we'd have a
22 different sort of answer for that, but a one-time
23 extension. I watched kids, and some of them are
24 kids, they came in in 2020 with this three-month

1 training they were supposed to get and got kicked
2 out early, sent to the streets to deal with one of
3 the worst pandemics the world has ever seen, and
4 they haven't been supported since then. They
5 haven't been given grief counseling. We haven't had
6 debriefing. It's been two years of extended
7 operations so the mental health that they're
8 dealing with. They came out in what we call wartime
9 protocols. Cardiac arrests, we left dead bodies in
10 the street. It was just mayhem. So when I hear
11 about the Fire Department sitting up here and start
12 talking about their training, they're willing to
13 train these members for 12 weeks to get ready for
14 an upcoming promotional exam. I'd like to call them
15 back to ask how much training they give a paramedic
16 to take the promotion exam to lieutenant,
17 supervising emergency medical, the answer is zero.
18 It's up to the unions to try and figure out how to
19 maybe prepare them. They're so for promotion and
20 they're so for taking care of their people. Ask
21 them about their blocking of State law put in about
22 six years ago for civil service exam for captain,
23 chief, division commander. Those are supposed to be
24 civil service exams, but they're ready to sit there
25

2 and support, by words because you can see this is
3 probably the first time they've ever heard about
4 it, but there is so much to digest here.

5 Council Member Kagan, you want to know
6 about vacancies. There are numerous. There are
7 about 150 paramedic vacancies. They claim budgeted
8 3,000 EMTs, and, oh, we're at staffing level.
9 They're not telling you the amount of unaccounted-
10 for vacancies that we have. We have non-budgeted
11 lines all throughout the Fire Department, whether
12 it be Chief's Aide, 10 percent (INAUDIBLE), 15
13 percent (INAUDIBLE) at times, sick leave so that
14 takes away about 600 people out of our 2,600. Every
15 member here can tell you how much overtime they do.
16 I sat in this City Council in March 2020 and
17 screamed to this Council that if the call volume
18 went to 6,000, we would be decimated, and sure
19 enough, a month later, we were decimated. We had to
20 call the National Service Ambulance Corps to come
21 over here. EMS is not supported the way it should
22 be if you're talking about retention. Their number
23 they finally got to you, about 10 percent
24 recruitment. My paramedic can't do math, 10 percent
25 of 4,500, that's 450 people that lose every year.

1 They just told you they train 450 people. We have
2 trained about 500 people per year for the past 10
3 years, and we haven't gone above head count. There
4 is something fundamentally wrong. Every single
5 person here is talking about they got three, four,
6 five years on the job, and, if they don't get
7 fired, they're probably going to leave, and I don't
8 blame you. This job doesn't support us. This job
9 beats us down every day so it's crazy talk to be
10 sitting here wondering why are we leaving, why do
11 they want to go. 1,200 people left from the last
12 class. It was 1,200 people. I was elected, and I
13 watched them all go out the door. Give me pay
14 parity, I bet you I only lose 600. We can talk
15 statistics, not an individual person. A third of
16 them will go. I heard Mr. Cavanaugh talk about he's
17 got family in the Fire Department since 1919 if I
18 remember that correctly. That member is going to be
19 a firefighter. Tommy Richardson, Chief Richardson,
20 Chief of Department for a time, his son is an EMT.
21 Of course, there's a chance he is going to want to
22 be a firefighter. It's a culture. But out of those
23 1,200, that's 400 that are going to go to become a
24 firefighter. There are 400 who if you just paid
25

1 them properly, they would never sniff the job. And
2 then you're dealing with 400 more. Let them decide.
3 Call it a lateral transfer movement because that's
4 what it is. As a lifelong paramedic, we all have to
5 work eight hours a day, five days a week for our
6 entire lives. You should be happy doing what you're
7 doing, and, if you're happy being a firefighter,
8 then by all means I will support you in every
9 chance to get you there, but, you know what, I have
10 thousands of people that are happy being EMTs and
11 paramedics and they're looking to get out. Mike,
12 how do I get to this, and that's what they're
13 asking me to do. So I tell you as my members, I
14 don't want you to leave. I think the firefighter
15 promotional exam is the biggest detriment to EMS as
16 a service, but, until this Council, and you have
17 supported us, I will say there's a nonbinding
18 resolution that was put in many years to support,
19 this Council has always been supportive, until we
20 get that pay parity that we're currently suing for,
21 we're talking about diversity, they're talking
22 about 34 women. I have 35 percent women. I have
23 over 1,700 of the bravest women, and they're
24 basically, oh my god, I was about to curse, they're
25

1 pooped on, and that's what happens to our service.
2
3 I have kids who are just not supported. Council
4 Member Kagan, there is no difference. 30, 29, there
5 is absolutely no difference in the physical
6 fitness. I'm 43. You put through the CPAT, I'm
7 going to do a damned good job. I probably don't go
8 to 60, but a 29-year-old to a 30-year-old should
9 have zero issues statistically to take that test. I
10 wrote so quick.

11 In closing, I just want to say that EMS
12 is supported by you guys, EMS is supported by
13 people here, it is not supported by the City of New
14 York, it is not supported by the FDNY. They train
15 their people on the Fire side extensively, and they
16 leave us to the wolves. Our supervisors are
17 sometimes a joke because of the fact that they're
18 not moving up because of this diligence, which I
19 respect the firefighters command rank for this,
20 their value in wanting to train and teach others
21 and be leaders. Our guys are broken. It's only a
22 3,000-dollar bump to go to a lieutenant, that's it,
23 and then I think you get like 3,000 more after that
24 to be a captain so I have lieutenants and captains
25 who are making less than a five-year firefighter so

2 they say, whether you want to attribute it to
3 Einstein or you want to attribute it to anyone in
4 recovery, they say the definition of insanity is
5 doing the same thing over and over and expecting a
6 different result. You can have all these Council
7 meetings you want. Until you start to pay us what
8 we're worth and bring parity to the three first
9 responder agencies, I'll see you guys next year at
10 the next budget hearing. Thank you. I'm available
11 for any questions that the Fire Department didn't
12 want to answer. I have no bureaucracy.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Council Member Kagan
14 has a question for you, Mike.

15 MICHAEL GRECO: Go ahead, sir.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: First of all,
17 thank you for your passionate speech. Clearly, you
18 are talking our heroes, like you're trying to
19 defend them as much as you possibly can. If I heard
20 correctly, Fire Department numbers, the starting
21 salary of EMS worker today in New York City is
22 39,000 dollars.

23 MICHAEL GRECO: That is correct.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: I know like it's a
25 rhetorical question, but what in your opinion

2 should be the starting salary of EMS workers in New
3 York City?

4 MICHAEL GRECO: 250,000 dollars a year. I
5 mean if you're asking my opinion. Give or take. The
6 Fire Department, what do you value a life, right?
7 That's the first thing so I'm not going to begin to
8 say what, I'm a paramedic. There's firefighters and
9 there's cops, right. We all have screws loose in
10 the head. They're just different screws so to say
11 that a firefighter deserves more starting
12 (INAUDIBLE) than an EMT, I don't believe anybody in
13 here would say that. I don't believe I'm one bit
14 better than any firefighter or any cop out there.
15 What I do know is EMS is of integral three-prong
16 system in the first responder community. Police,
17 Fire, and EMS. Our problem is we're never there at
18 the end. We're always the last line in a paper. EMS
19 took them to the hospital because by the time the
20 video cameras get there, by the time all the
21 politicians get there, our ambulance is gone and
22 actually on our third job by now. We don't have the
23 time to sit around. We have public relations
24 nightmare when it comes to HIPAA. I can't tell you
25 about all the people I've saved. They can't tell

2 you about all the people I've saved because it's
3 actually against federal law. So while they're out
4 there doing their jobs and other people are out
5 there, the starting salary should be a living wage.
6 It's one thing to say pay your dues. I get that.
7 250,000 dollars is obviously something that's a
8 joke, but 50,000 dollars is not much in New York
9 City. Forget about these Tier 6 members. They have
10 to pay close to I think it's 12 percent into their
11 pension, then you take away 42 percent for taxes,
12 so you're only taking home about 20,000 dollars. No
13 wonder why, it's a travesty is what goes on so I
14 don't blame any one of them. I've lost some great
15 people to the Fire side, people that I would love
16 to still get back here today, but we should make
17 what we deserve, and we would let the budget people
18 let us know what we deserve, and the problem is
19 they've told us what we're worth. They've told us
20 what they think of us. We're 39,000 dollars to
21 start and 60,000 with the most experience. How
22 would that make you feel, Council Member?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: I feel terrible.
24 Listen, I remember, was it testimony by Police
25 Commissioner, and I mentioned that the starting

2 salary of police officer was 42,000, and it looks
3 like many people in New York City didn't even know
4 the starting salary of police officers was 42,000
5 and then everybody is like how is it even possible,
6 and now we know that the City raised it to 55 so
7 same story here. I believe 39,000 is completely,
8 absolutely ridiculous.

9 MICHAEL GRECO: And they raised it
10 because it was a hard-to-fill title, right. That is
11 the unfortunate problem with the promotion system.
12 I have about 1,500 people on the DCAS list waiting
13 to become EMS. The promotion is part of that. A lot
14 of people come on because of that. We always say
15 get rid of the promotion because let the people not
16 apply because I only have 200 people waiting, and
17 they're trying to hire 500 a year, maybe then
18 they'll start to realize what the problem we have.
19 I have 60 percent of my service with less than five
20 years. I can ask by a show of hands how many of you
21 people who came out for COVID were a mentor six
22 months later, teaching a new person? We don't have
23 field training officers. People who came out with
24 six weeks of experience trained the next class in
25 the field. Experience matters. Ask any firefighter

2 sitting next to me. I don't think a probie gets
3 trained by a guy who still has an orange visor. We
4 do that all the time so it's a multiprong problem.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
7 testimony and your advocacy.

8 MICHAEL GRECO: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Next.

10 JAMES DALY, JR.: Good afternoon. You'll
11 have to pardon my appearance. I didn't think I'd be
12 saying anything today, but when I looked in this
13 crowd I felt compelled because it was like looking
14 in a mirror 40 years ago for myself. I took the
15 test in 1982 when I was 19 years old and turned it
16 into a 33-year career. My name is James Daly. I'm a
17 retired three-star Chief from the FDNY, retired as
18 Assistance Chief Operations.

19 I don't have a horse in this race. I
20 know some of these young men, and Chief Richardson
21 here was my cohort at headquarters, and I felt to
22 show some support. When I saw these young folks and
23 what they're looking to do I felt compelled to talk
24 a little bit. I want to read you a quote. It's from
25 the Chief of Department Edward F. Croker from 1899

1 to 1911, and it's an old quote so bear with me. "I
2 have no ambition in this world but one, and that is
3 to be a fireman. The position may in the eyes of
4 some appear to be a lowly one, but those who know
5 the work which a fireman has to do believe his is a
6 noble calling. Our proudest moment is to save
7 lives. Under the impulse of such thoughts, the
8 nobility of the occupation thrills us and
9 stimulates us to deeds of daring, even of making
10 the supreme sacrifice."

12 You have a group of young men and women
13 in this room that I'm sure you realize but I want
14 to reiterate that are an asset to the City of New
15 York. The desire to serve others starts at a young
16 age. This quote hung in a frame in my room when I
17 was a teenager, and I made it a reality, and I did
18 it for 33 years. I'm now 60 years old. Like I said,
19 I don't have a horse in this race, but I feel a
20 familiarity with these young people. You have
21 people in this room willing to give their life for
22 the people of the City of New York, could be your
23 mother, your daughter, your grandchild. That is a
24 rare trait. That is not inherent in all human
25 beings. It is a rare trait. What you have here,

1 this group, is an asset to the City of New York,
2 and they're serving now, but I would venture to say
3 that not given the chance to move up to
4 firefighters, you're going to lose a large majority
5 of these people to higher paying jobs outside of
6 City service because, like Mike said, the wage that
7 the EMTs make is ridiculous. It's probably slightly
8 above minimum wage. You could be flipping burgers
9 and make the same money, and these young people
10 worked through the pandemic doing CPR 10, 15 times
11 a night, dead bodies, leaving them behind like Mike
12 said, willing to risk their lives now as
13 firefighters to move up in the pay structure of the
14 Department, and you as the City of New York risk
15 losing that asset class because, if they're not
16 given the opportunity to move up and become
17 firefighters, a majority of them are going to leave
18 the City of New York employment and they're going
19 to go for higher paying jobs, and so that's
20 important to think about. I know all the statistics
21 are important too, but that human aspect of what
22 you have now as a group of employees is critical
23 because it doesn't come around every day, people
24 that will give their life for a stranger, and we do
25

1 it and we give our lives all too often. In my 33
2 years, hundreds and hundreds of men have given
3 their lives in my 33 years. I've been at fires
4 where men have given their lives for people they
5 have no idea who they are, and that is not an asset
6 class you want to lose in the City of New York.
7 Thank you.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. Please go
10 ahead.

11 REGINA WILSON: Good afternoon and thank
12 you to the Chair, Council Member Ariola, and all of
13 the Members of the Fire and Emergency Management
14 Committee that are here for the meeting today.

15 My name is Regina Wilson, and I'm the
16 President of the Vulcan Society. The Vulcan Society
17 is an African American affinity group of the FDNY
18 whose members are uniformed and civilian employees
19 of the FDNY. The subject of the hearing today has a
20 concern of our organization that has been expressed
21 to the current Administration and previous
22 Administration, but there is a serious concern at
23 the Vulcan Society regarding the lack of diversity
24 in the officer and executive ranks for uniformed
25 and civilian employees of the FDNY. There is a

1 current emergency which I must bring to your
2 attention because it is pressing and will impact
3 the diversity of the FDNY Fire Suppression
4 Workforce for years to come. The current hiring
5 list expires in 2025. Because of the anticipated
6 retirements, the next list will shape the
7 demographics of the Department well into the
8 future. The FDNY is preparing for a critically
9 important recruitment campaign for the next test,
10 and they are not prepared. The City's Recruitment
11 Blueprint which was shared with us leaves the most
12 central questions unanswered. No one reviewing the
13 City's plan could possibly walk away understanding
14 why the City believes the recruitment work and its
15 plan will be enough to achieve the goals of hiring
16 firefighter list that reflects the diversity of the
17 City. As they say, fail to plan and plan on
18 failing. The FDNY cannot be permitted to proceed
19 with the plan to fail our City's residents one more
20 time. The FDNY failed our residents last time it
21 gave the test, and the current list of the City is
22 hiring from the adverse impact against both black
23 and Hispanic test-takers so the City must plan to
24 do better. It proposes doing far less recruiting
25

2 without explaining why recruiting far fewer people
3 and attending few recruitment events can expect to
4 yield better results. The City offers generalities
5 when specifics are needed. It is one thing to hope
6 for the best, we all do. It is quite another thing
7 for your plan to be inspirational. You don't win a
8 Council election by hoping to get more votes than
9 your opponents. You review past patterns, estimate
10 future changes, make best guesses, and plan
11 accordingly. You create a plan that could be
12 explained, defended, and tweaked based on new input
13 and information. The FDNY must be required to do no
14 less than what is done by City Council Members. The
15 recruitment and retention offices also into the
16 next recruitment campaign severely understaffed
17 with civilian and uniformed members to accomplish
18 our collective goals. To seize the moment and
19 ensure the next four years of FDNY hires can come
20 from a list that truly reflects the diversity of
21 our city. I would like the Committee to review the
22 attached documents that I have with concerns
23 regarding the Recruitment Blueprint which may give
24 you a better understanding of our position and why
25 this issue is a matter that affects every member of

1 the Fire and Emergency Management Committee. We
2 need your assistance in making sure the FDNY is
3 truly committed to diversifying the Department as
4 the Commissioner stated on several occasions in
5 press and print. I implore the Council not to allow
6 the FDNY to squander the opportunity of the next
7 hiring list. This list will impact the diversity up
8 the ranks well into the future. Diversity is a
9 probably throughout the FDNY, the Department's
10 leadership ranks remaining disproportionately
11 white. Within Fire Suppression, the problem is
12 twofold. First, you must have diversity to promote
13 into the next rank, and the FDNY's history of
14 discrimination makes this a persistent problem.
15 Secondly, testing procedures must be designed to
16 select the most qualified candidates, and the FDNY
17 relies upon outdated tests for promotions. For Fire
18 Suppression promotions, the FDNY relies upon a
19 simple written test that emphasizes memorization
20 over other critical leadership competencies that
21 cannot be tested into multiple choice questions.
22 The Council should require the FDNY to adopt best
23 practices adding test components that allow it to
24 assess key leadership skills. The Vulcan Society
25

2 believes that the FDNY adopts better testing
3 procedure as many other fire departments have
4 already done, and it will result in more diverse
5 and higher skilled officer ranks. I ask the Council
6 to hold a hearing on the FDNY testing procedures so
7 that the Department can implement best practices
8 that will benefit all of New Yorkers. I have
9 provided a copy of the FDNY Medal Day pictures
10 which shows the make-up of FDNY executive staff for
11 your review. I will also urge the Committee to look
12 at the diversity in special operation ranks. These
13 specialized units lack diversity out of all of the
14 units in EMS. These positions allow for specialized
15 training and a 12 percent increase in salary. With
16 all of these great opportunities, there are few, if
17 not any, blacks in these selected units. The
18 favoritism of selected positions within the FDNY
19 must come to an end. We are confident that under
20 the new leadership of Chief Fields these changes
21 can happen but only with your direct support. The
22 FDNY failure to ensure its procedures are designed
23 to promote the most qualified candidates and are
24 free from radical animus has been costly for the
25 City and discriminatory promotional practices

1 within the civilian workforce. Many black and
2 female employees were passed over for promotions
3 based on race. Now that the FDNY has settled a
4 lawsuit, it is essential to ensure that the hiring
5 and promotion practices change. Civilian employees
6 demand transparency when it comes to understanding
7 the procedures for promotion. It should be made
8 clear to the applicants why they are not selected
9 or the determination made to send employees back to
10 their original rank after a promotional period has
11 nearly been completed. The Vulcan Society continues
12 to hear from civilian staff about managers
13 arbitrarily sending employees back to their lower
14 ranks without explanation, sometimes just stating
15 it just didn't work out. There is no underlying
16 pathway to promotion from upward mobility, no
17 guidance given to employees who do not excel past a
18 probationary period to work on certain skills to
19 better their chances of succeeding in the future.
20 This leaves many employees in the dark and lack the
21 motivation to stay in the FDNY. The promotional
22 problems plaguing the FDNY are present with the EMS
23 as well. To become captain and above in FDNY EMS,
24 you must be interviewed by a panel of high-ranking
25

2 officers. Because of this selection process,
3 favoritism can and does influence promotions.
4 Biases from EMS superiors to move black officers
5 into all ranks of the FDNY has always been a
6 problem to promote up in ranks. The FDNY should
7 adopt best practices for all hiring and promotions
8 to ensure the FDNY is led by those that are capable
9 of serving the City.

10 I would like to also lastly add that the
11 Vulcan Society supports increasing the age limit to
12 all of those EMTs that were denied the opportunity
13 to do so in reference to the pandemic. We've done
14 it before, and I think the Council Members can do
15 it again. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 That concludes our hearing today. I
19 think we did a lot. Although we did not get a lot
20 of answers from the people who came from the
21 Administration to give testimony, we did get a lot
22 of answers from those who testified who are EMTs,
23 paramedics, firefighters, from the union, and for
24 that I'm grateful.

2 As I said before, we will work with the
3 FDNY to get the answers to the questions that were
4 asked, and we will not let up until we do get them,
5 but we have so much more to do. We have to work on
6 diversity. We have to work on pay parity. We have
7 to work on pensions being able to cross over once
8 you do become a firefighter. That would stop the
9 attrition rate for those who want to be paramedics
10 as a career and who want to be EMTs as a career and
11 don't want to go over to be a firefighter, but how
12 can you stay at that salary and provide for your
13 family. 100 percent, I absolutely support that.
14 Council Member Yeger, Council Member Kagan, and
15 many of the Members of this Council do support
16 that, and we do fight for it every day.

17 Normally, we don't allow clapping in
18 this forum, but we do kind of a thing like this
19 with our hands, but today we allowed clapping
20 because each and every one of you deserve a round
21 of applause and you've clapped many times, and,
22 right now at the closing of this hearing, I'd like
23 my Colleagues and myself to stand and just applaud
24 all of you.

2 That concludes the Fire and Emergency
3 Management hearing for today. Thank you for coming
4 out. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 15, 2023