

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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Friday, March 1, 2024  
Start: 10:28 P.M.  
Recess: 1:57 P.M.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Hon. Diana I. Ayala, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés  
Chris Banks  
Tiffany Cabán  
Chi A. Ossé  
Lincoln Restler  
Kevin C. Riley  
Althea V. Stevens  
Sandra Ung

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Rivera, Hanif, and Brewer

## COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

## A P P E A R A N C E S

Salif- Advocate, Representing Self  
Accompanied by translator

Boubacar- Advocate, Representing Self  
Accompanied by translator

Molly Wasow Park-Commissioner of The Department  
of Social Services

Molly Schaeffer-Interim Director of the New York  
City Mayor's Officer of Asylum Seeker Operations

Nicole Krishtul-Housing Organizer at New York  
City Comptroller's Office

Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer-Executive Director at the  
Interfaith Center of New York (ICNY)

Madeleine Elfenbein-Jews for Racial and Economic  
Justice

Anthony Feliciano-Vice President for Advocacy at  
Housing Works

Christine Clarke-Chief of Litigation and Advocacy  
at Legal Services NYC

Alexandra Dougherty-Senior Staff Attorney and  
Policy Counsel Civil Justice Practice- Brooklyn  
Defender Services

Chris Mann-Assistant Vice President of Policy and  
Advocacy at WIN

Will Watts-Deputy Executive Director for Advocacy  
with the Coalition for the Homeless

Adam Roberts, Policy Director for the Community  
Housing Improvement Program (CHIP)

## COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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

Jose Perez- Representing Self  
Accompanied by Translator

Johan Velasquez- Representing Self  
Accompanied by Translator

Ann Fawcett Ambia-Bay Ridge Community  
Contributions for Floyed Bennett Field; Retired  
Public Interest Attorney

Christopher Leon Johnson- Representing Self

Towaki Komatsu- Representing Self

Ameya Biradavolu- Licensed Social Worker,  
Representing Malukah

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2 SERGEANT LYNCH: This is a microphone check for  
3 the Committee on General Welfare - recorded in the  
4 Chambers on March 1, 2024, by Layla Lynch.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, everybody, and  
6 welcome to the Committee on General Welfare. At this  
7 time we ask that you please place all electronic  
8 devices to vibrate or silent mode.

9 As a reminder, no one is permitted to approach  
10 the dais during the hearing. We appreciate your  
11 cooperation.

12 Chair, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [GAVEL SOUND] [GAVELING IN]

14 Thank you, and good morning, everyone. Welcome to  
15 today's hearing; my name is Diane Ayala, and I am the  
16 Deputy Speaker of the New York City Council, and the  
17 Chair of the General Welfare Committee.

18 Today we are holding an oversight hearing  
19 regarding the Department of Social Services  
20 Manipulation of Monthly Eligibility Rate Reporting.

21 We will also be hearing two bills: The first will  
22 be Intro 210, sponsored by, Council Member Hanif,  
23 prohibiting the Department of Social Services, or any  
24 other city agency, from imposing length of shelter  
25 stay restrictions in a shelter of any type. The

1  
2 second bill is Intro 349, sponsored by Council Member  
3 Nurse, would make clarifying edits to Local Law 34 of  
4 2024 to indicate that required reports are to be  
5 submitted on a quarterly basis.

6 In January of this year, the Department of  
7 Investigations issued a report detailing its findings  
8 after conducting an investigation into allegations of  
9 unlawful overnight stays and PATH Intake Centers in  
10 the summer of 2022, and improper manipulation of the  
11 publicly reported PATH eligibility rate from 2017 to  
12 mid-2022. Among these findings, DOI indicated that  
13 the Department of Homeless Services, under both Mayor  
14 Eric Adams' administration and former Mayor de  
15 Blasio's administration, had unreported right to  
16 shelter violations, inadequate recordkeeping, and a  
17 blatant manipulation of statistics.

18 In addition to violations being unreported, the  
19 DOI found that top homeless service officials had  
20 artificially lowered a publicly reported statistic,  
21 which ultimately painted the wrong picture of what  
22 shelter capacity needs are New York City. This could  
23 have resulted in longer wait times for families to  
24 qualify for housing vouchers and move into permanent  
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2 housing - further clogging up an overburdened shelter  
3 system.

4 Council Member Hanif will be speaking about her  
5 bill, Intro 349. I want to underscore that rather  
6 than issuing a shelter stay limit for asylum seekers,  
7 the City should be finding ways to ensure that asylum  
8 seekers can live with dignity. This cruel policy is  
9 destabilizing to so many who are already struggling  
10 to navigate being here.

11 I look forward to hearing from the Administration  
12 and advocates today, and gathering feedback on this  
13 oversight topic - and on Intro 210.

14 At this time, I'd like to acknowledge my  
15 colleagues who were here today: Council Member Cabán,  
16 Council Member Ossé, Council Member Ung, Council  
17 Member Avilés, Council Member Rivera, Council Member  
18 Stevens, and Council Member Hanif.

19 I would also like to thank the committee staff,  
20 who worked hard to prepare this hearing, Aminta  
21 Kilawan, Senior Legislative Counsel; David Romero,  
22 Legislative Counsel; Caroline Strauss, Legal Extern;  
23 Julia Haramis, Unit Head; Phariha Rahman, Financial  
24 Analyst; Anne Driscoll, Data Analyst; and finally my  
25 staff, Elsie Encarnacion, Chief of Staff.

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2 I also want to take this time to express my  
3 gratitude to our counsel, David Romero, who will be  
4 moving on from his time with the Council. David has  
5 been an invaluable asset to this body, while we are  
6 sad to see him go, we wish him the best in his future  
7 endeavors. We will really, really miss him.

8 I will now turn it over to our panel of impacted  
9 individuals, and I just really want to point out that  
10 I'm very disappointed that the Administration is not  
11 here to hear from these individuals, because that is  
12 the whole point - when we allow these panels to go  
13 first, it is really to give an opportunity for the  
14 Administration to hear from the people who are  
15 impacted by our policies and about the detrimental  
16 ways that these policies are impacting their lives.

17 With that, I will pass over to counsel.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning, everyone, my  
19 name is Aminta Kilawan, Senior Legislative Counsel to  
20 the Committee on General Welfare at the New York City  
21 Council. I will be moderating today's hearing and  
22 calling panelists to testify.

23 The first panel will be a public panel comprised  
24 of Salif and Boubacar, and this panel will require  
25 French interpretation.

1 BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

2 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 TRANSLATOR: Let me introduce myself, my name is  
4 Salif. I am here to talk about what is going on in  
5 centers with my friend sitting right next to me.  
6

7 BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 TRANSLATOR: We are going to need help with what  
10 is going on in the center. We have been there for 30  
11 days now. So, we are wondering basically what is  
12 going to be next step forward. How are... (TIMER  
13 CHIMES) how is the Committee going to help us given  
14 our situation?

15 BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

16 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

17 TRANSLATOR: So, what my friend is saying up until  
18 now, is that the conditions at the center is not  
19 decent at all. There is only two bathrooms for up to  
20 (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

21 BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

22 TRANSLATOR: There is only two bathrooms for 80 to  
23 100 people. So, first, that is the first issue that  
24 his friend mentioned.

25 BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)



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2 TRANSLATOR: So, the food is actually the same  
3 every single day pretty much. What we eat in the  
4 morning is the same thing as we eat at night. It is  
5 just pretty much the same thing every single day.

6 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

7 TRANSLATOR: So, this is interpreted, I need  
8 clarification, please. (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

10 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 TRANSLATOR: Okay, so, what he is saying is that  
13 whenever you find a shelter that will give you...  
14 When you find a shelter, it is only for 30 days. And  
15 after those 30 days, you have to apply again. And  
16 when you find yourself in that situation, you're not  
17 sure if you're going to be finding a shelter again  
18 after those 30 days.

19 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

20 TRANSLATOR: So, my friend and I are not just  
21 talking on our behalf, we are here talking on the  
22 behalf of all of the immigrants who could not make it  
23 today. So, we are not just talking about our  
24 condition, we are just trying to represent a lot of  
25 people who are in the same situation.

1 BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

2 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 TRANSLATOR: So, we mentioned the situation about  
4 food. Food is not the only worry that we have. Also,  
5 uh, beddings and where we sleep is not decent at all.  
6 There are a lot of people who have conditions, who  
7 are sick, and they're not taken care of properly.

8 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 TRANSLATOR: We are here to talk about conditions  
10 that you don't know, but we are here as immigrants to  
11 talk about those conditions.

12 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 TRANSLATOR: First of all, thank you for listening  
14 to us and giving us an opportunity to speak. We hope  
15 that, uh, we hope that this hearing will be  
16 profitable for us and for all of the immigrants that  
17 are outside. It is very cold outside, and, uh, 30  
18 days in a shelter is not enough. As I previously  
19 mentioned, after those 30 days, we find ourselves in  
20 the same situation again. So, it is not just about  
21 food it is about an overall. So, thank you for  
22 listening to us, and we hope that in the coming days  
23 a solution, uh, you will... the Committee will be  
24 able to find a solution.  
25

1 BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

2 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 TRANSLATOR: So, first of all, uhm, as I  
4 previously mentioned, the food is not decent at all.  
5 We are given food that has been frozen for a very  
6 long time, so the food is not decent. It is only  
7 frozen food every day. And, also, I forgot about  
8 underlining something, which is that when you don't  
9 find... After those 30 days, when you do not find a  
10 shelter, you have to sleep in a church. And you can  
11 only sleep in that church from midnight to 6:00 a.m.

12 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 TRANSLATOR: And whenever that happens, we only  
14 sleep on the floor, there are no blankets or anything  
15 like that, and it is like that every day.

16 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

17 TRANSLATOR: We thank you, and God Bless you all.

18 (APPLAUSE)

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I think we have some  
20 questions.

21 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yes, come...

23 Good morning, can you translate?

24 TRANSLATOR: Good morning.

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2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I am Council Member Diana  
3 Ayala.

4 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I would like to welcome you to  
6 New York City.

7 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 BOTH: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I think that you will find a  
10 panel of individuals who welcome you to our city with  
11 open arms.

12 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I would like to understand a  
15 little bit more about your experiences in the shelter  
16 setting here in New York. So, I want to ask a couple  
17 of questions?

18 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

19 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I think the first thing I  
21 think is important to understand is, how long have  
22 you been here in New York City?

23 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

24 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

25 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

TRANSLATOR: Five months.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Five months?

TRANSLATOR: Five months.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

TRANSLATOR: Six months for him, five months for  
him.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And in that time, how many  
shelters have you stayed in?

TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

TRANSLATOR: I have been in three to four  
centers... Three to four shelters now.

SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

TRANSLATOR: Three.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Three? And is...

TRANSLATOR: Three for him, four for him.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And is that as a result of the  
30 day rule?

TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

SALIF: Yes.

TRANSLATOR: It is.

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2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. While in shelter, have  
3 you had the opportunity to talk to a social worker or  
4 a case worker to plan out your... to plan out a long  
5 term plan for exit of shelter?

6 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

7 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

10 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

14 TRANSLATOR: I... There was an office somewhere in  
15 (INAUDIBLE), and they gave me an address that would  
16 help. And... (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

17 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

18 TRANSLATOR: Nothing.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, he didn't speak to... He  
20 had... They have not spoken to anyone?

21 BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

22 TRANSLATOR: I am going to need clarification. One  
23 minute. (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

24 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

25 BOUBACAR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

1 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

2 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 TRANSLATOR: From what I understand, they, uh,  
4 someone gave them a certain address. At that address  
5 there was some type of an office, and at that office,  
6 he, uh, he had some type of procedure, and he gave a  
7 lot of documents to explain his case and all of that.  
8

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And that happened one time?

10 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 TRANSLATOR: It only happened once.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, I am asking this  
14 question, because the City has argued that there is  
15 extensive case management that happens during the  
16 transition of folks. And, so, it is important for us  
17 to understand whether or not that this is happening  
18 and to what extent it is happening. Because, the idea  
19 is that during that process folks would be, uh, you  
20 know, there would be some sort of exit plan strategy.  
21 So, if somebody had a family member someplace else,  
22 then we would have a better understanding of that. If  
23 they are not meeting with someone regularly, then  
24 that is not in fact what is happening. And that is  
25 what I am trying to ascertain.

1 TRANSLATOR: Okay. (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

2 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 TRANSLATOR: Just for me, uh, shelters have not  
4 been helpful up until now.

5 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

6 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

7 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 TRANSLATOR: He said, uh, in the shelters per se,  
9 we don't get much help. We get a lot of help from  
10 outsiders basically. People who just come into the  
11 shelters, bring us food, uh, help us with any type of  
12 procedure that we need. These are the people who help  
13 us - people who just... outsiders.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, how are they informed that  
15 they have to leave?

16 TRANSLATOR: Excuse me, my apologies... (SPEAKING  
17 FOREIGN LANGUAGE)... (CROSS-TALK)

18 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

19 TRANSLATOR: (INAUDIBLE) mention their name of  
20 their organization. They haven't given me the rights.

21 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

22 TRANSLATOR: But, those people are really the ones  
23 who are helping us in (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)



1  
2 SALIF: One second... One second (SPEAKING FOREIGN  
3 LANGUAGE)

4 TRANSLATOR: So, apart from them, he was just  
5 underlining that apart from them, he has not seen  
6 proper help. He said these people that he just  
7 previously mentioned are the only ones who bring him  
8 clothes, who bring them food, or help him with any  
9 type of procedure. They are the only ones.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, so, once they exit the  
11 shelter, how long does it take before they are able  
12 to access another bed? So, hey're standing in line  
13 for how many days, how many hours?

14 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

16 TRANSLATOR: About four days. It takes about four  
17 days. Whenever we leave one shelter, it takes us  
18 about four days to find another shelter.

19 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

20 TRANSLATOR: It actually depends on people and  
21 situations. Some people find another shelter very  
22 quickly. Some people, it takes them up to ten days to  
23 find a shelter.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Ten days?

25 TRANSLATOR: Ten days - some people.

1 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

2 TRANSLATOR: Or sometimes more.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, where do folks stay from  
4 the time that they are exiting shelter to the time  
5 that they have access to a new bed?  
6

7 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 TRANSLATOR: From the moment we leave the shelter,  
10 to the moment we find another shelter, we just sleep  
11 in different locations that are given to us, that are  
12 recommended to us by people who are basically running  
13 the shelters. But, in those locations, you can only  
14 sleep there and be there from 8:00 p.m. to, uh, it's  
15 8:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. that's it.

16 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

17 TRANSLATOR: And after 6:00 a.m., you have to get  
18 out of those locations wherever they are, and then  
19 you have to just wait until 8:00 p.m. again.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, they are just walking  
21 around?

22 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

23 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

24 TRANSLATOR: Some people are just, uh, collecting  
25 bottles to sell them back to make some money and to

1  
2 also kill time. Me, a few times, I had English  
3 courses.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Have there been times  
5 where you have been forced to sleep out on the  
6 street?

7 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 TRANSLATOR: It did happen, yes. And sometimes you  
10 just sleep somewhere, wherever you can, basically. It  
11 could be in a train, it could be anywhere. Or you  
12 just spend the night collecting bottles ,you know,  
13 just to find something to do during the night until  
14 morning.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Have there been times that  
16 they have gone without food or water throughout the  
17 day?

18 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

19 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

20 TRANSLATOR: Yeah, we are very used to that. It  
21 happens very often.

22 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

23 TRANSLATOR: But, many times we find people who  
24 are just very, uh, kind hearted and they just help  
25 you - give you food and help you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Well, thank God for those  
3 people.

4 Council Member Hanif?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I want to echo the  
6 sentiments of Chair Diana Ayala. (SPEAKING FOREIGN  
7 LANGUAGE)

8 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you for choosing New  
10 York City. I am sorry that our mayor implanted this  
11 cruel 30 day rule.

12 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: The legislation that we are  
14 hearing today was introduced by me. It would prohibit  
15 this administration from enacting shelter caps.

16 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

17 TRANSLATOR: Thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: However, he has already  
19 implemented a shelter cap - the 30 day rule for  
20 single adults, such as yourselves. And then the 60  
21 day rule for families with children.

22 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And your testimony shows us  
24 that this directive is a failure.

25 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

1 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: We want everyone housed.

2 TRANSLATOR: Pardon me?

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: We want everyone housed.

4 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

5 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

6 TRANSLATOR: Thank you, we want the same.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Where are you staying right  
8 now?

9 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

10 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 TRANSLATOR: I am still in the shelter.

12 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: You don't have to give me  
14 the address.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: We don't want the address or  
16 the name.. (CROSS-TALK)

17 TRANSLATOR: So, after... About the gentleman who  
18 is sitting right next to me... (CROSS-TALK)

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is it in Manhattan?

20 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE) Uh, he  
21 stayed in the shelter for about 30 days... (CROSS-  
22 TALK)

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, you started a new cycle  
24 of 30 days?  
25

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2 TRANSLATOR: Well, he was in a shelter for 30  
3 days, and then they give him an address... a  
4 recommendation for another shelter. It took him five  
5 days... four to five days to find that other shelter.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Find that other shelter?

7 TRANSLATOR: Yes, and once he got to that other  
8 shelter, they told him that (SPEAKING FOREIGN  
9 LANGUAGE)

10 SALIF: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 TRANSLATOR: And about that other shelter that he  
12 was supposed to be, uhm, welcome, and, uh, he said  
13 they said to him over there that they did not have  
14 any space for him. So, basically, he is back to  
15 finding another shelter again as of now.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, the gentleman in the  
17 middle, is back to finding... He is right now...

18 TRANSLATOR: Yes...

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: in a precarious situation?

20 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Looking for...

22 TRANSLATOR: Yes, he is looking for another  
23 shelter at the moment... (CROSS-TALK)

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: For another spot as we  
25 speak... (CROSS-TALK)

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TRANSLATOR: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: about this... Understood.

And, then, have you both applied for asylum?

TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

TRANSLATOR: Yes, we both applied... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And was that a result of the City asking... saying that this was an available service at the shelter?

TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

TRANSLATOR: So, we just applied for asylum, because we know we have the rights to, but we have not done that in the shelters.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay. And, then, have you had access to health care?

TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

TRANSLATOR: Yes, we have, we have access to health care. We have health insurance.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, great. And, then, what other services have you had access to?

TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

1 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Like the IDNYC?

2 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 TRANSLATOR: (TIMER CHIMES) So, basically, just  
4 I.D. and health insurance, those two things.  
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, thank you. Thank you,  
7 Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Council Member Stevens,  
9 followed by Council Member Ossé.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I just want to start off  
11 by saying thank you for being here and for sharing  
12 your journey with us.

13 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: We know that it is not  
15 easy, and sometimes being in this room, sometimes  
16 it's scary, but we just want to be here to be  
17 supportive and making sure that you do get the help  
18 that you need.

19 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

20 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, I have just a few  
22 questions, and one of them is around language access.  
23 I see we are having like a three translation  
24 situation happening. How has language access been  
25 when you are at the shelters?



1  
2 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE) Just to  
3 make sure, what do you mean by language access?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Have they been able to  
5 get... Are there translators there? Is the paperwork  
6 on their native language? What has that been like and  
7 that experience?

8 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

10 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

14 TRANSLATOR: So, he said, most times when we want  
15 to apply for something, we just apply over the phone.  
16 But, in some shelters, we have someone who translates  
17 and interprets for us.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, good. So, I heard a  
19 couple of times, they kept saying they have to find  
20 another shelter, are there not... When the 30 days  
21 are up, are they not given another referral? Are they  
22 going back to the original... the intake center? I am  
23 just trying to figure out what that means when they  
24 are saying they are finding their own shelters. Are  
25 they getting support from other people? Because, I

1 know especially there have been a lot of folks  
2 helping each other, saying, "Hey, this one might be  
3 open," but I am just trying to get a little clarity  
4 about what they mean when they say they are finding  
5 another shelter to go to?  
6

7 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 TRANSLATOR: So, when we are done with the 30  
10 days, there is an office, it's called 180 something,  
11 uhm, I couldn't understand the whole... There is an  
12 office where you go to, and in that office they give  
13 you a number. And once you have that number, you just  
14 basically wait in line for a very long time in order  
15 to just be dealt with so you can talk to someone.  
16 And, then, from there, you find another shelter. But,  
17 that period where you wait at that address can be  
18 quite long.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Do we know how long? A  
20 couple of hour?

21 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

22 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

23 TRANSLATOR: Four days, about four days.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, wait you... (CROSS-  
25 TALK)

PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

TRANSLATOR: He says at that address, sometimes it takes four days, and actually that's a short period of time, it can take way longer than that, sometimes it is up to 10 days. So, basically, every single day they go to that address, and they just wait.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Oh, so, they will go and then they'll leave. And is that Saint Brigid's?

TRANSLATOR: Pardon me?

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Is this at Saint Brigid's?

TRANSLATOR: Yes, it is.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay. And just my last question, and even when they're in the shelter (TIMER CHIMES) I know one of them said that sometimes they will take English classes or language classes, are there other services like work readiness, job programs, and other language classes that are being offered while they are there so that they can start being assimilated?

TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

TRANSLATOR: No, there are no... we're not offered anything like that. We just learned the language. We

1  
2 learned English on our own, because we know that if  
3 we don't, we're not going be able to communicate with  
4 people, but we're not offered those types of  
5 services.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Oh, so, they learning...  
7 They are teaching each other English?

8 TRANSLATOR: Basically, pretty much, yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And, so there are no  
10 other services being offered? (CROSS-TALK)

11 TRANSLATOR: Nobody is teaching them anything or  
12 giving them anything... (CROSS-TALK)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE)

14 TRANSLATOR: or giving classes or anything like  
15 that. He just said that, "We learn on our own," so...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

18 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

19 TRANSLATOR: We have Wi-Fi in the shelters.

20 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

21 TRANSLATOR: But, apart from that, there is  
22 nothing.

23 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

24 TRANSLATOR: And concerning the MetroCards, the  
25 only MetroCards that are given to us, are MetroCards

1  
2 that you can use only once. They are not MetroCards  
3 that you can use all the time.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: And those are provided by  
5 the City?

6 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

7 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 TRANSLATOR: So, the shelter provides those  
9 MetroCards, only if we have an appointment, they will  
10 give us that MetroCard - only for a few hours. It's a  
11 limited pass basically, is what he is saying.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Council Member Brewer?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: (SPEAKING FOREIGN  
15 LANGUAGE) So, my question is, when you first came,  
16 it's the same issue, was there anybody in the first  
17 shelter who said, English classes, work, legal,  
18 social work, case work, anything like that?

19 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

20 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

21 TRANSLATOR: He said, I don't know what shelters  
22 provide or offer English classes, but in the shelters  
23 that I have been to, the only thing that I have  
24 experienced, the other thing that I previously  
25 mentioned, which is the bad food, bad beddings, and

1  
2 except for the Wi-Fi and the MetroCards, pretty much  
3 nothing else.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And the healthcare, did  
5 that come when you first came in, in terms of getting  
6 either Medicaid or NYC Health? How did the health  
7 care come about?

8 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

9 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

10 TRANSLATOR: I received health care, I was  
11 recommended by other immigrants who had been in that  
12 shelter, who arrived in that shelter before I did,  
13 so, they explained to me the procedure in order to  
14 have shelter. So, basically in... he got it from...  
15 he got the recommendation from other immigrants who  
16 had been in that same shelter for longer.

17 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

18 TRANSLATOR: So, basically, we became sort of a  
19 family. When we have new people coming in, we tell  
20 them the same thing. We explain to them how to get  
21 healthcare and how to get whatever we can get - we  
22 help each other.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: (SPEAKING FOREIGN  
24 LANGUAGE)

25 PANEL: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

1 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you so much.

2 TRANSLATOR: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yes, we are done with this  
4 panel, thank you so much.

5 TRANSLATOR: Thank you.

6 (APPLAUSE)

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Council Member Hanif, would  
8 you like to speak to your bill?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yes.

10 Good morning, thank you, Deputy Speaker Ayala,  
11 for including Intro 210 on today's hearing Agenda.  
12 This bill would prohibited the Administration from  
13 implementing caps on shelter stays for all New  
14 Yorkers experiencing homelessness, including asylum  
15 seekers. The implementation of the Mayor's 30 and 60  
16 day rules has been nothing short of a human rights  
17 catastrophe. I'm proud to be advancing legislation  
18 that would put an end to these cruel and  
19 counterproductive policies, alongside 12 of my  
20 colleagues in the Council, the Public Advocate, and  
21 the Comptroller.

22 The Mayor brags that shelter evictions have  
23 reduced the number of people in the City's care,  
24

1  
2 ignoring the obvious question, where are the people  
3 who are forced out of the shelter system ending up?

4 Absent any comprehensive data from the  
5 Administration, let's try our best to answer. Many  
6 are in line outside Saint Brigid in the East Village,  
7 where they wait every day in the cold, for weeks on  
8 end, hoping a bed placement opens up. Of these folks,  
9 a percentage are spending their night in City-run  
10 barebones waiting rooms that lack even basic cots.  
11 But, ultimately many, if not most of them, are  
12 sleeping in the subways or the streets, an outcome  
13 that benefits nobody. Alternatively, some are  
14 resorting to dangerous and informal congregate living  
15 situations, like the one just discovered in a  
16 storefront in Queens. Those who are unwilling to  
17 endure the suffering the City is putting them through  
18 are being reticketed by Emergency Management to other  
19 cities without any coordination with their local  
20 governments. This effectively repeats the same  
21 dynamic that occurs when Texas Governor Greg Abbott  
22 buses people to Port Authority without warning, which  
23 Mayor Adams has been decrying for the last year and a  
24 half.



1  
2 Families with children are being given new  
3 shelter assignments, but are destabilized by being  
4 shuffled around. Students who have built a sense of  
5 community in their schools are being pulled out of  
6 their classrooms. Progress that their parents have  
7 made on asylum, TPS, or work authorization  
8 applications, is stymied by the operational  
9 complications of an address change. It's tempting to  
10 say that this policy is pointless, but that would be  
11 incorrect, as the cruelty itself is the point.

12 A growing chorus of New Yorkers is seeing the  
13 harm created by the shelter evictions and calling on  
14 them to end. It was an honor to be joined earlier  
15 this morning by a broad-based coalition of faith  
16 leaders and advocates, including the Interfaith  
17 Center, JFREJ, New York Jewish Agenda, (INAUDIBLE),  
18 the Synagogue Coalition on the Refugee And  
19 Immigration Crisis, Malukah, The Working Families  
20 Party, New York Immigration Coalition, Vocal New  
21 York, Women in Need, SafetyNet Project, and Make the  
22 Road New York. I look forward to hearing their  
23 testimony later on.

24 I urge my colleagues to sponsor Intro 10 and to  
25 swiftly bring it up for a vote. Thank you, Chair.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you, I will now turn it  
3 over to counsel.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We want to now call up members  
5 of the Administration if they are here.

6 (PAUSE)

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Would you both please raise  
8 your right hands?

9 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,  
10 and nothing but the truth, before this committee, and  
11 to respond honestly to council member questions?

12 Commissioner Molly Park?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Interim Director  
15 Molly Schaeffer?

16 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: I do.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may begin when  
18 ready.

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: Good morning, I want to thank  
20 the City Council's Committee on General Welfare for  
21 organizing today's hearing. My name is Molly Wasow  
22 Park, and I serve the Commissioner of The Department  
23 of Social Services, which is made up with the Human  
24 Resources Administration or HRA, and Department of  
25 Homeless Services DHS). I'm joined by Molly

1  
2 Schaeffer, Director of the New York City Office of  
3 Asylum Seeker Operations.

4 DHS is the nation's largest and most  
5 comprehensive municipal shelter system for people and  
6 families e experiencing homelessness. Through our  
7 shelters and programs, both those directly operated  
8 and those operated in partnership with notfor profit  
9 partners, we support people through profoundly  
10 challenging moments in their lives. Our work to  
11 prevent homelessness, and our work to provide shelter  
12 to families and adults, makes a real difference in  
13 the lives of the people we proudly serve. It is our  
14 collective mission to provide support and  
15 opportunities for those experiencing homelessness to  
16 ultimately transition to safe and healthy permanent  
17 housing.

18 I open with this focus on mission to underscore  
19 what drives me, Mayor Adams, and this entire  
20 administration daily. Our focus on getting stuff done  
21 to support the lives in New York's most vulnerable  
22 communities is our ethos, our passion, our life's  
23 dedication.

24 I am before you today to discuss the findings of  
25 the DOI Report released in January of this year. As

1  
2 the report concluded, the manipulation of the PATH  
3 eligibility rate was at the direction of the  
4 leadership of the past administration. Looking  
5 forward, rather than back, I'm committed to being as  
6 transparent as possible, and will work with the  
7 Council and other oversight bodies to maintain that  
8 standard.

9 I am equally determined to support the work of  
10 this great agency and the teams that work around the  
11 clock to support New Yorkers who have fallen on hard  
12 times and need our help.

13 I want to state clearly that this manipulation of  
14 data has not and will not happen under this  
15 administration, and I have the utmost confidence in  
16 Administrator Carter and the entire team at DHS.  
17 Jocelyn Carter has dedicated her life and career to  
18 assisting the most vulnerable people in this city.  
19 Her commitment to the mission of DHS has positively  
20 impacted the lives of thousands of New Yorkers, and  
21 this city is a better place under her leadership.

22 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

23 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Before we start, I  
24 just wanted to take a moment to say that, in the  
25 midst of this humanitarian crisis, it's important to

1  
2 be mindful of the individual people who have traveled  
3 to the United States to start new lives. Thank you to  
4 the brave people who spoke today and to the council  
5 members who invited them.

6 We're about to discuss the City's response to  
7 this unprecedented crisis and how we have managed and  
8 are managing it, which often means talking about  
9 things at a very high-level. But, when we talk about  
10 the 170,000 people that have come through the City's  
11 care - or the 64,000 that are currently in our care -  
12 this administration never loses site of the  
13 individual people and the lives impacted. Thank you  
14 again for sharing your stories.

15 Now I will start. Good morning, Chair Ayala and  
16 members of the General Welfare Committee. I am Molly  
17 Schaffer, Interim Director of the New York City  
18 Mayor's Office of Asylum Seeker Operations (OASO).  
19 I'm happy to be here before you today to discuss the  
20 City's ongoing efforts to support migrants arriving  
21 in New York City and the negative impact proposed  
22 Intro 210 would have on the City's ability to  
23 effectively manage the asylum seeker response.

24 Since April 2022, New York City has led the  
25 nation's response to the migrant emergency -

1 providing immediate shelter, food, legal support, and  
2 other essential services to over 179,000 people. Our  
3 city has managed this emergency with compassion and  
4 decency. We have relied on experienced agency leaders  
5 and hundreds of public servants who have been  
6 supporting this effort- while also managing their day  
7 jobs.  
8

9 Let's be clear, there was no playbook on how to  
10 respond to a global humanitarian crisis, but what we  
11 did and continue to do is what New Yorkers do best in  
12 times of crisis- we step up to help each other- and  
13 we find creative solutions.

14 For nearly two years, that is what New Yorkers  
15 and people all over the country and world have seen -  
16 New York City taking action. Using the limited  
17 resources and tools available to us, we've opened 216  
18 emergency sites, and are currently serving over  
19 64,000 people. And, importantly, no families with  
20 children have had to sleep on the street. I think  
21 that statement is sometimes overlooked. As  
22 Commissioner Park knows all too well, it normally  
23 takes years to open a traditional shelter. We stood  
24 up over 200 emergency sites and fully staffed and  
25 operationalize them in less than two years - that is

1 a significant feat. One of these sites is our arrival  
2 center - something I'm immensely proud of - which  
3 operates 24 hours, 7 days per week with comprehensive  
4 on site services.  
5

6 Many partners, from all levels of government and  
7 around the world, have traveled to observe our  
8 operations with the intention of adopting our best  
9 practices. We are proud of the work we have  
10 accomplished, and we recognize that more needs to be  
11 done.

12 A national humanitarian crisis deserves a whole  
13 of government approach that addresses municipal  
14 governments alone cannot meet. We hear from people in  
15 our care every day, they want to work. We've been  
16 steadfast in our advocacy on work authorization to  
17 the federal government, and due to this advocacy,  
18 temporary protected status was extended to  
19 Venezuelans. While we appreciate the support we have  
20 received from our state and federal partners thus  
21 far, the work is not done. We need additional  
22 resources to keep pace with the daily influx of new  
23 arrivals into city emergency sites.

24 New York City has stepped up to support  
25 individuals and families arriving from the border,

1  
2 and we know more can be achieved. We've seen  
3 inspiring examples of our core values: New Yorkers  
4 opening their hearts, donating book bags, clothing,  
5 and food to welcome our newest neighbors. New York  
6 City's future will continue to be built on our  
7 collective responsibility to help each other,  
8 regardless of immigration status.

9       After the expiration of Title 42 in May 2023, the  
10 City had to respond to the biggest surge of new  
11 arrivals into the City's care since the beginning of  
12 the current crisis - which hit a peak of 4,300  
13 arrivals over a one week period. Given this historic  
14 influx and then the need to immediately bring on  
15 capacity, we pursued additional models to bolster our  
16 response, including establishing emergency respite  
17 sites and launching our upstate hotel program at  
18 about a dozen sites. Despite around the clock efforts  
19 to increase our sheltering capacity, it became clear  
20 that a pipeline of emergency sites was only one part  
21 of the equation. At the same time, cities like Denver  
22 and Chicago were stretched beyond capacity and  
23 implemented time limits on the length of stay at  
24 their shelters. Other cities like San Diego and El  
25



1 Paso capped their accommodations and did not open any  
2 new sites to accommodate the influx.  
3

4 In July, we established a 60 day time limit on  
5 shelter stays for single adults and adult families.  
6 This was a hard decision based on careful  
7 consideration at the individual and policy level. In  
8 September, this time limit for adults was reduced to  
9 30 Days.

10 Faced with an increasing number of new arrivals,  
11 severe capacity constraints, and an understanding  
12 that the cavalry from the federal government was not  
13 coming, we needed to continue to prioritize beds for  
14 families with children. In January, we began to  
15 implement the 60 day policy for families with  
16 children. As someone who has been at the front lines  
17 of welcoming and supporting new arrivals since April  
18 2022, this was not a decision made lightly. We paired  
19 these time limits with case management to support  
20 families in the development of their plans for how to  
21 adapt and chart course for their future. Case  
22 management teams engage with clients to identify the  
23 barriers that are preventing them from leaving  
24 shelter and then assisting with those goals.  
25

1  
2 Shelter time limits, paired with case management,  
3 are policies designed to help more households achieve  
4 self-sufficiency, find stable housing arrangements,  
5 and leave the shelter system. The shelter notices  
6 also allow us to accommodate new arrivals as people  
7 discharge. Currently, about 24% of single adults and  
8 adult families return seeking another placement - and  
9 50% of families with children return and reapply.  
10 These policies are working. More people are taking  
11 that next step on their journey and moving out of  
12 shelter. Thoughtful planning, coordination, and  
13 engagement has gone into the implementation of these  
14 policies - particularly with our colleagues at New  
15 York City Public Schools. As we've publicly stated,  
16 our goal is to minimize disruption to children's  
17 education, and we remain focused on this goal. I want  
18 to thank the New York City Public Schools for their  
19 unwavering commitment to serving the nearly 36,000  
20 students in temporary housing enrolled in our  
21 schools.

22 The number of people in the City's emergency  
23 sites has steadily decreased from over 68,000 to  
24 under 65,000 in recent weeks - an indication that the  
25 City's intensive case management, legal services,

1  
2 and reticketing initiatives are working. Our team  
3 works diligently every day to improve our operations  
4 and to support our clients working toward their  
5 American Dream.

6 I will now turn to Introduction 210 to share the  
7 Administration's position on this bill. To date,  
8 over 179,000 people have received assistance at the  
9 City's emergency sites, and we have centered our work  
10 with compassion, care, and respect.

11 We need this tool to carefully manage services,  
12 because we don't control the numbers of new people  
13 arriving into this city. Without this tool, we can't  
14 manage at all. We are at the whims of southern  
15 cities, governors, and border politics. This  
16 intervention is a common sense practice employed  
17 across the country by cities like Denver and Chicago.  
18 We've taken this support a step further by pairing  
19 time limits with case management. People want to  
20 work, they do not want to live or raise their  
21 families in emergency shelters in perpetuity. This is  
22 evident in the data I shared - about 24% of single  
23 adults and adult families and about 50% of families  
24 with children, return seeking another placement.  
25 Individuals and families are moving on from what was

1  
2 intended to be a temporary emergency based  
3 accommodation. This bill would restrict the City's  
4 ability to fund the work we are doing to identify  
5 their needs and support them. We strongly encourage  
6 the Council to work with us in service of the people  
7 in our care, and this bill does not achieve that.

8       As stated, we will continue to do all that we can  
9 to serve new arrivals in our care. For nearly two  
10 years, and with no end in sight, the City continues  
11 leading the response to a national emergency. Our  
12 limited levers and tools should not be hindered by  
13 bills that will disrupt the good work we are doing -  
14 the work that has been acknowledged by leaders around  
15 the nation, at the state and federal level, and  
16 around the world.

17       We look forward to continuing to work with the  
18 Council, and I welcome an opportunity for you to join  
19 me for a visit at one of our shelter sites, the  
20 Asylum Application Help Center, or arrival center to  
21 see our operations up close. Thank you for the  
22 opportunity to testify today, and I'm happy to answer  
23 any of your questions.

24       CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I just need a moment to  
25 compose myself. Before I... I want to just recognize

1  
2 that we've also been joined by Council Member Brewer,  
3 Council Member Restler, and Council Member Banks.

4 You know, often times when I am sitting on this  
5 side of the desk, I try to be really mindful that I  
6 have also been on that side. And I work really hard  
7 to be fair with folks who come before us, because I  
8 know that we are all doing a job, and we are trying  
9 to do that job to the best of our ability. And, so I  
10 don't want to shoot the messenger if you will.

11 However, I think that today I am going to give myself  
12 permission to shoot the messenger. And that is  
13 because, there is absolutely no compassion, care, or  
14 respect in throwing people out on the street who have  
15 no place to go. And the idea that this is a policy  
16 that we should be supportive of is insane. That  
17 action alone has tainted the good work that has been  
18 done.

19 I recognize that a lot of good work has been done  
20 in a very difficult unprecedented situation. I have  
21 often said that publicly, I don't know how you have  
22 managed to be able to absorb, and place, and identify  
23 the number of sightings - it is a very difficult  
24 position that you have been put in. That is not  
25 disputable.

1                   But, this policy is inhumane and it's dangerous.  
2  
3                   It's only a matter of time before somebody gets hurt.  
4                   We saw in the news in the last two days just one  
5                   situation, which I am sure is likely the beginning of  
6                   a longer conversation on more sightings that we hear  
7                   about where migrants are huddled in spaces that are  
8                   not suitable for housing - where a fire could break  
9                   out and people could be seriously hurt.

10                  We've seen people sleeping out on the streets,  
11                  that is not compassionate or respectful, and it's not  
12                  care. So, I refuse to lend credibility to that  
13                  statement, because the devil is in the details. Even  
14                  when we're housing folks - and I do visit, and I  
15                  have... I'll speak about Wards Island. I have heard  
16                  Wards Island, the City thought it was a good idea to  
17                  put 3,000 people on top of each other. I didn't think  
18                  that was a great idea. And the result of this is that  
19                  you have 3,000 people that have nowhere to go,  
20                  nothing to do, because they don't have working  
21                  papers, they can't work, and they are not connected  
22                  to resources even within the local community that  
23                  they are being housed in. And, so, if they go outside  
24                  it's problematic, if they stay inside it's  
25                  problematic.

1  
2       And anybody in this room, uh, I think would agree  
3 that even within your household when there are too  
4 many people, after a while, you know, people are  
5 quarreling and getting on each other's nerves. So,  
6 we're seeing that - to the point that I had a young  
7 migrant, 24 years old, murdered at Randalls Island.

8       Now, I'm not saying that everybody that comes in  
9 is a saint and that problems will not arise. I didn't  
10 hear that coming... I didn't hear anybody make a big  
11 deal of it in the Administration. And, I still  
12 haven't seen a single change in that shelter to  
13 ensure that it doesn't happen again. In fact, two  
14 weeks later, somebody else was slashed. There is  
15 inhumanity in that. The fact that people are eating  
16 food that is frozen, expired, moldy, or the same day  
17 in and out - day in and day out, is not respect,  
18 compassion, or care. I think it's important that you  
19 hear that. And I get it, you're doing a job. But, I  
20 need to do mine, and I need to be honest, and I need  
21 to be true to who I am - not only as a legislator,  
22 but as a human being.

23       And shame on you for not coming in to this room  
24 and just standing outside while those gentlemen  
25 shared their experiences. Because, that is the

1  
2 experience that you should be wanting to hear about,  
3 so that you can make the necessary changes to ensure  
4 that the unnecessary struggles that we're putting  
5 them through are being addressed. And if you don't  
6 speak to the impact to that community, there is  
7 absolutely no way that you are going be able to make  
8 those changes in the most efficient and effective  
9 way.

10 I'm sure there will be no questions... I have no  
11 questions, you know, to be honest on this. I will let  
12 Council Member Hanif address that.

13 We are also here to really speak on a very  
14 serious issue on findings on the DOI investigation  
15 that concluded that there had been some manipulation  
16 of data in regards the eligibility of folks at the  
17 PATH center. So, I will ask a few questions on that,  
18 and then I will defer to my colleagues.

19 But, actually, ,you know what, I want to just  
20 very quickly, I am going to let Council Member  
21 Carlina Rivera ask a question, because I know that  
22 she has to leave.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you so much, Madam  
24 Chair, and for your opening words, which I agree with  
25 wholeheartedly.



1  
2           It has been very... if you were not here for  
3 those first few minutes and hearing that testimony, I  
4 encourage you to just go back in and watch it,  
5 please. It was incredibly moving, and they have a  
6 very, very simple ask, which is they'd like to start  
7 their life.

8           So, my district is home to the only reticketing  
9 center in New York City, Saint Brigid, which New York  
10 Magazine called the, "The Longest line in New York".  
11 This site is the center of the chaos caused by the  
12 Mayor's 30 to 60 day shelter limit rule. Individuals  
13 seeking asylum don't know where they're going to  
14 sleep, and they have had to deal with freezing, cold,  
15 and rain - and as was mentioned by the by the panel  
16 before this one, whether it's four days, 10 days, 15,  
17 you can hear these stories over and over again. And  
18 while people are looking or waiting for a cot, a bed  
19 somewhere, they either are sleeping on the floor in  
20 some sort of facility or they're sleeping in the  
21 street or on the subway.

22           So, I have a few questions related to this. I'm  
23 going to ask them all at once for time. As my mother  
24 would say, it's okay to take out a pen and write them  
25 down.

1  
2 How many people have been asked to leave stable  
3 shelter placement due to this rule? How many people  
4 have reapplied? How many of those people have  
5 actually been placed in a bed? What is the current  
6 waitlist for a bed? How many individuals do you  
7 estimate are sleeping on the street or in the  
8 subways? Wouldn't it be safer to have people sleeping  
9 in shelters rather than crammed in commercial  
10 basements? And do you track how many people have been  
11 placed in a bed and then have cycled through re-  
12 application again? Thank you.

13 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, I'm going to take  
14 those one at a time.

15 I think just high-level, as you all know, we have  
16 served more than 178,000 asylum seekers. At this  
17 point we have given 55,200 notices to single adults  
18 and adult families - 24% are currently in our shelter  
19 system. So they have reapplied, and they are  
20 currently in our shelter system.

21 We have said many times, we are out of space. We  
22 allow people to, when they are reapplying, they come  
23 to Saint Brigid, and they are given the opportunity  
24 to join the waitlist, and at that point, we do  
25

1  
2 everything we can to get them in the next available  
3 bed.

4 I'll turn it over to my colleague for anything on  
5 the street homelessness.

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, as you know, Department of  
7 Homeless Services does 24/7 outreach to clients  
8 experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This is  
9 separate and apart from the asylum seeker crisis,  
10 it's something we've done from many years, and have  
11 increased in the Adams administration. We agree that  
12 we absolutely do not want people on the street. Our  
13 outreach workers, our annual count of people  
14 experiencing homelessness happened, the Hope Count,  
15 which is the gold standard of data, that happened at  
16 the end of January. The data collection is still  
17 under review. The analysis is under review, so I will  
18 have to hold onto specific quantitative numbers on  
19 people in any relationship between street...  
20 unsheltered homelessness and people experience....  
21 the asylum seekers. But, I will say anecdotally, from  
22 what we hear from our outreach teams, there is  
23 limited impact at this point on unsheltered  
24 homelessness related to asylum seekers. That doesn't  
25 mean none, but limited - that again is anecdotal

1 information, and we will certainly be looking at the  
2 Hope Count data when it comes in.

3  
4 You know, I think with respect to some of the  
5 Saint Brigid and the reticketing, you know, we are  
6 certainly aware that people have spent time outside  
7 either overnight or lining up early in the morning.  
8 People do have a waitlist number. We are community...  
9 and speaking as a member of the Administration,  
10 Department of Social Services is not directly  
11 involved in this site, but I can certainly assure you  
12 that we use those waitlist numbers, we communicate  
13 with clients. People do not need to be spending time  
14 outside. Keeping people safe and indoors is a  
15 priority, (TIMER CHIMES) and that's why we have the  
16 waiting room facilities that the Director Schaeffer  
17 mentioned.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: But, some individuals have  
19 a number that's like 17,000... 5,000 are those  
20 individual... Are you... When they leave the shelter  
21 system, are you... You say only 24% have reapplied,  
22 but are you tracking where they're going, how many  
23 actual people are being placed? I mean, you have a  
24 179,000 people that have come through the city,  
25 55,000 notices recently, but only 24% have reapplied.

1  
2 I mean, it's a disparity. And, so, we are trying to  
3 figure out where these individuals are going. And,  
4 then we present actual people who are going through  
5 it earlier today, and yet, I'm not sure where the  
6 disconnect is happening between listening to the  
7 stories, and then really understanding where these  
8 individuals are going. They're crammed in commercial  
9 basements, they're in the subway, they're sleeping in  
10 Tompkins Square Park across the street - hoping,  
11 hoping that they get called, but they're not.

12 So, how are you all dealing with that, with those  
13 disparities in numbers, and the number of people that  
14 we actually see going through it - predominantly  
15 Black and brown people? Thank you, Madam Chair, for  
16 the time.

17 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, we want to make  
18 sure that everyone has a safe place to be overnight.  
19 So, we have our waiting rooms where people can be  
20 overnight. If there is unsafe places where people are  
21 staying, you know, our system did its job. The last  
22 couple days when we noticed unsafe places where  
23 people were staying, our FDNY DOB got involved  
24 immediately, and we were... and we connected people  
25 to either Saint Brigid or to the arrival center -

1  
2 depending on where they were, to make sure that they  
3 had a safe place to go indoors.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: All right, thank you. Again, I  
5 don't want to take away from the DOI Report, because  
6 it is equally important in our conversation today.  
7 So, I want to just ask a few questions on that, and  
8 then I will yield to my colleagues.

9 Regarding the, uh, the investigation, is there  
10 any data on the true eligibility rate that was saved  
11 anywhere? And, if so, has an analysis been done to  
12 understand how much the rate was altered?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you, Council Member.  
14 Let me answer that question by taking a step back and  
15 talking a little bit about what happened. Families  
16 with children as... after they apply at PATH are  
17 placed in a conditional placement. So, from the  
18 moment that you apply at PATH, while the eligibility  
19 investigation is ongoing, families are in shelters.  
20 Those conditional placements are not specialized  
21 sites or anything like that. It is a shelter unit,  
22 like any other shelter unit. What happened was that  
23 in order to keep a relatively flat eligibility rate,  
24 the date of determination was altered - it appears by  
25 a few days. We cannot necessarily go back and

1  
2 recreate it on... for any given day, but ,you know,  
3 if I might have been found eligible on a Monday, I  
4 was instead found eligible on a Wednesday.

5 I want to make it very clear, absolutely  
6 everybody who should have been found eligible was  
7 found eligible. And while those eligibility  
8 determinations were underway, people were in shelter.  
9 So, there was no question of people being  
10 inappropriately denied access to shelter. It was a  
11 question on what day that eligibility determination  
12 was made in order to keep a relatively flat  
13 eligibility rate. So, overall exactly the same number  
14 of people were eligible for shelter. What changed was  
15 the day to day rate.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Before I respond to that, I  
17 forgot to acknowledge that we have also been joined  
18 by PS 62, up in the balcony, hi, guys! Uh, from  
19 Council Member Schulman's district. Welcome to City  
20 Hall!

21 So, if in fact, there's a person who was not  
22 found eligible on Monday, and... but, they were  
23 eligible on Wednesday and they were placed, then why  
24 go through the trouble of playing with the numbers?  
25

1  
2           COMMISSIONER PARK: Unfortunately, Council Member,  
3 I can't speculate why the previous administration  
4 chose to do what it did. I can acknowledge that it  
5 happened, I acknowledge that it should not have  
6 happened. I value transparency, and I am committed to  
7 making sure that nothing like this happens again.  
8 But, at the end of the day the impact was relatively  
9 marginal, because people were in shelter, and they  
10 were all... anybody who needed to be found eligible  
11 was found eligible.

12           CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Inevitably, but we do get... I  
13 mean, I wonder if there's a correlation between the  
14 calls that we get us as members of the Council from  
15 our constituents who are telling us that they  
16 continue to be found ineligible time and time again,  
17 and that they, you know, the process is extended  
18 beyond the amount of time that they should have.

19           So, you know, I think it leaves people very  
20 nervous about their housing situation when they don't  
21 have that level of permanency. Like, they don't have  
22 that commitment, right? That you will be housed  
23 indefinitely until we find you some place to stay.

24           COMMISSIONER PARK: So, we have made a number of  
25 changes recently at PATH to make a more customer-



1 focused experience. So, prior to COVID, if you were  
2 ineligible and you wanted to reapply, because  
3 families are entitled to reapply, it had to be done  
4 in person. What we have done more recently is that  
5 that first reapplication can be done over the phone.  
6 If there does need to be a subsequent reapplication,  
7 we do ask that families come in to PATH because, we  
8 want them to be able to connect with a person and to  
9 resolve the issues that are inhibiting their  
10 eligibility determination.  
11

12 We've also expanded the number of appointments  
13 that somebody has with an eligibility reviewer to  
14 make sure that there is ample opportunity to get DHS  
15 staff the information that they need so that we can  
16 reach that conclusion. We have added mediation to the  
17 process, so that when we are working to determine  
18 whether or not somebody does have another housing  
19 option, that is something that we are focused on to  
20 see if that... a previous housing option is available  
21 to them. We can find that mediation can sometimes be  
22 helpful, but if mediation is not helpful, if the  
23 primary tenant says no, Molly, can't come back, then  
24 that is certainly something that we accept.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: The DOI Reported stated that  
3 eligibility rate data was being used... is used for  
4 budget forecasting and planning shelter capacity. Can  
5 you explain how exactly the rate was used for  
6 planning during the period when it was being  
7 manipulated?

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: Eligibility data is one data  
9 point that we might look at as we are doing capacity  
10 planning. But as I noted, people who are pending  
11 eligibility review are in shelter. And we need to  
12 plan for how many people in conditional placements  
13 that we are serving as well as how many people have  
14 been deemed eligible. So, at the end of the day, far  
15 more important for our long-term capacity planning,  
16 is how many applications we're getting, and how large  
17 the census is - both of which were unchanged by this  
18 practice.

19 In addition, we generally look at longer-term  
20 time horizons, rather than daily or monthly data for  
21 doing long-term projections just because we find it's  
22 more reliable.

23 So, while we... I absolutely do look at shelter  
24 eligibility, I do think it could be a trend and a  
25 leading indicator about what might be going on in the

1  
2 housing market, in terms of our capacity planning  
3 this was not a driving point.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: What analysis, if any, has  
5 been conducted on the impact of the eligibility rate  
6 being manipulated on shelter capacity or budgeting?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, first let me just say, I  
8 am really grateful to DOI for thorough investigation  
9 that they did. I think their report is very  
10 informative, and it is something that we have  
11 reviewed very closely. Their finding was that the...  
12 the impact was relatively marginal, that because  
13 families were in conditional placements while this  
14 was going on, so that ,you know, from a... on a day  
15 to day impact, there was little effect on the  
16 families experiencing homelessness.

17 The place where there was potential impact, and  
18 DOI laid this out in their report, was the point and  
19 time when a family might have become eligible for a  
20 CityFHEPS voucher. But, what was not called out in  
21 the report, unfortunately, is the state of the New  
22 York City housing market, which I am not saying is  
23 surprising, to say it's a very tight housing market.  
24 We currently have more than 10,000 households in the  
25 shelter system who have a CityFHEPS voucher, who are

1  
2 searching and looking for housing. On average, a  
3 family from the point and time that they receive what  
4 we call their shopping letter with CityFHEPS until  
5 they actually move out, it's about 200 days, because  
6 finding an apartment is really challenging.

7 So, while on the margins this may have delayed  
8 the point and time that somebody got a CityFHEPS  
9 voucher by a couple of days, the impact on moveouts,  
10 I don't ,you know, every day matters, but it is not a  
11 matter of days in what is a multi-month period.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I mean, for me it is more of  
13 an, uh, I think that the manipulation did not really  
14 necessarily benefit DHS but rather the  
15 Administration. Because, it gave the impression that  
16 the number of folks that were in need of shelter was  
17 significantly lower than the actual number of folks  
18 in shelter.

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, it shouldn't have  
20 happened. I do not support, you know changing data  
21 like this, and it will not.... It is not happening  
22 now, and it will not happen again. I want to be very  
23 clear about that.

24 But, what we are seeing... Right now, we are  
25 seeing fairly significant swings in eligibility rate,

1  
2 depending on whether the bulk of the people who came  
3 in in a given week were asylum seekers who really by  
4 definition don't have a two-year housing history that  
5 we look at - or whether it's people where we're doing  
6 a more in depth investigation. But, the average is  
7 about... is similar to what the average was during  
8 this time period. So, although there's more  
9 variability, but we're not talking about significant  
10 changes in overall eligibility, because what was  
11 going on, was changes on day-to-day patterns, but  
12 not... nobody was found in eligible inappropriately.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I mean, that's good news, but  
14 I think that ,you know, it doesn't take away from the  
15 fact that ,you know, there was a picture was being  
16 painted that was inaccurate. And I hate when we have  
17 quotas and numbers attached to the work that we do,  
18 because it does encourage the type of behavior,  
19 unfortunately, especially in politics, and it is just  
20 inappropriate. And obviously, it doesn't help us in  
21 our oversight ability or responsibility.

22 COMMISSIONER PARK: I agree with your, Council  
23 Member, it is not happening now, and it will not  
24 happen again.

25 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I hope not.

1  
2 In the DOI conducted investigation into issues  
3 involving the City's PATH Center, there was a  
4 response to finding weaknesses in policies and  
5 procedures at PATH. Intake censors (INAUDIBLE)  
6 tracking the entry and exit of families taking  
7 shelter. DOI recommended DSS create a process for  
8 documenting family arrival/departure times at PATH.  
9 DOI also recommended that DSS maintain structured  
10 written requirements for complying with the 10-to-4  
11 rule in Section 21-313, including procedures for  
12 reporting violations.

13 Do you plan on implementing DOI's recommendations  
14 to strengthening the procedures at PATH related to  
15 tracking entry and exit of families seeking shelter?  
16 And if yes, when?

17 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes, we do plan on  
18 implementing the recommendations. We are in the  
19 process right now of working through the  
20 technological system development that they  
21 recommended. We anticipate that we will have some  
22 pieces of that rolled out the spring; although, the  
23 complete system that they recommend will take some  
24 time - we want to make sure that we get it right. We  
25

1  
2 will... we will absolutely do policy and procedure  
3 documents that go with that and train staff fully

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do we know our process will be  
5 developed for documenting, uhm, the arrival and  
6 departure times?

7 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, we're doing initial policy  
8 and procedures right now, and then as we build this  
9 technology system to do it, we will certainly have to  
10 revise.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

12 DOI also recommended that DSS track families who  
13 choose intermittently leave PATH to attend to other  
14 needs. Will this recommendation be implemented?

15 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, this one is a place where  
16 it's a little bit challenging, because DOI's  
17 recommendation and families actual behavior doesn't  
18 entirely line up. Right? Their recommendation assumes  
19 the family always moves as a unit. In fact, if you  
20 have two adults ,you know, one adult may stay in the  
21 building, the other adult leaves the building. Right?  
22 So, it is a little bit more complicated than what  
23 they recommended, and we do need to make sure that we  
24 are taking into account the full breadth of human  
25 behavior. As we are putting together our system, that

1  
2 is the kind of thing that we are thinking through  
3 right now.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Are you thinking... are you  
5 having conversations with DOI about the complexities  
6 of that to get some guidance on what would be  
7 acceptable?

8 COMMISSIONER PARK: We are certainly following up  
9 with them about our compliance with their  
10 recommendations, yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I mean, I just keep thinking  
12 about when I go in to the DMV ,you know, they give me  
13 that ticket that has the time that I got there, and  
14 then when ,you know, as I am moving along, they're  
15 tracking every ,you know, if I went to the bathroom,  
16 if I went outside to get something to drink. It  
17 doesn't seem like, in 2024, that it would be that  
18 difficult.

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: I think that is the general  
20 structure that we are going with. And I say, will  
21 have pieces of that in the spring. The slight  
22 difference between moving through the DMV, which you  
23 typically do as an individual versus moving as a  
24 family, where people may be making different  
25 decisions about where they are in the building, we



1  
2 just need to make sure that we can accommodate all of  
3 those nuances. But, yes, we are working on it.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

5 DOI recommended that tracking families through  
6 PATH be fully automated by using scanners to track  
7 those families through PATH rather than rely on  
8 handwritten input. I just... I am always surprised at  
9 how outdated the system is at DSS. You really... We  
10 need to invest a little bit more efficiently in your  
11 agency to modernize you and bring you up to code.

12 But, is that something that is going to... so, I  
13 am assuming that's something that's being...

14 COMMISSIONER PARK: We are in the process of  
15 system development now. I would absolutely love to do  
16 even more systems modernization across DSS. It is  
17 something that we are looking at across the board and  
18 managing our budget there.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

20 And the DOI recommended that there be an  
21 automated process for notifying PATH leadership  
22 Housing Emergency Referral Options Unit management  
23 and DHS, DSS leadership at 4:00 a.m. each morning of  
24 the number of families who arrived at PATH at/or at  
25 10:00 p.m. and who remain at PATH, and if the number

1  
2 is greater than zero, the current shelter assignment  
3 status of each family.

4 Will this be implemented?

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, we are certainly working  
6 on how that tracking gets built into the overall  
7 system development that we are doing. I think we want  
8 to make sure that there is opportunity for quality  
9 assurance in that as well. But, absolutely, part of  
10 what we are doing is making sure that staff are fully  
11 trained with the tools that we have now, and then the  
12 tools that we ultimately build on what escalation  
13 looks like should there ever be another incident.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, those tracking mechanisms  
15 that were found... that were not in place, they're  
16 still not in place, so how are you tracking them now?  
17 What is different from what you are doing now than  
18 what was being done then.

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, we have some level of  
20 tracking system now. You know, people do get a ticket  
21 when they come in, and it is... It is a more limited  
22 number of points through the journey. So, we are  
23 fleshing that out. We are building it. But, the  
24 process of who is in the building at four o'clock in  
25 the morning is fairly manual. It does depend on

1  
2 talking to people. So, I think with the more evolved  
3 system that you and I just spoke about, that we will  
4 be able to strengthen that significantly.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Would that eliminate the  
6 burden of human person that's actually now manually  
7 submitting that documentation from having to do that.  
8 Because, I am just... Yeah...

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: I am speculating a little bit  
10 here, because it is a system that is still in its  
11 ,you know, design requirement stage, but certainly  
12 using technology to support staff, rather than make  
13 their lives more complicated, is something that we  
14 always look to do.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And there will be training?

16 COMMISSIONER PARK: Of course, yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, has there been any  
18 training... retraining now?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: We have certainly... Yes, we  
20 have done retraining to make sure that people are  
21 fully up to date on existing policies and procedures,  
22 and reinforced escalation strategies, uh, approaches,  
23 if there is an incident. You know, frankly, the fact  
24 that there was some question about the escalation  
25 policies is some ways a reflection of positive news,

1 because this hadn't happened in the past. Right?

2 There weren't staff who had been through this before.

3 But, in an unprecedented emergency, and, really, I do

4 want to take us back to what was going on at PATH in

5 July of 2022, at that point - this was before the

6 response to the asylum seekers had become the whole

7 of government effort, so really DHS was it. We were

8 on the frontlines, buses were dropping people off on

9 random street corners. Hundreds of families were

10 walking in. We were getting double or more than

11 double our number of clients. And sort of adding to

12 that and really creating a perfect storm, in that

13 week in July when this was... when we missed the

14 standard when families stayed past 4:00 a.m., we were

15 doing upgrades to CARES, which our system of record.

16 So, it was mandated security upgrades that were

17 really important to happen, but it meant that

18 placement work that normally gets done on an

19 automated basis was getting done on paper and by

20 phone call. So, you really had a perfect storm going

21 on. And I am so grateful to the frontline staff who

22 actually really did manage that perfect storm and

23 were able to serve families in that environment. But,

24  
25

1  
2 certainly, we are reinforcing what needs to happen if  
3 there is another need for escalation.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, you said that there's  
5 training, that there has been training, has... is  
6 there an audit process that has been put in place to  
7 ensure that the training is working and to catch  
8 deficiencies in a timely manner?

9 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, what we're doing is that  
10 we are moving this particular... We are moving data  
11 points and data management away from some of the  
12 frontline staff and moving into our centralized data  
13 management team at DSS. They are reviewing  
14 methodology and walking methodology for how we  
15 collect data. They will... This is going to provide  
16 some additional checks and balances. And then they  
17 will be reviewing data on regular basis.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Perfect.

19 Do we know... I don't think that I saw in the DOI  
20 Report, there was no clear way of... Because the  
21 record keeping was not great of determining how many  
22 families were impacted by the changing of the  
23 numbers. Do you have an idea?

24 COMMISSIONER PARK: No, unfortunately, I don't.  
25 There are a number of reasons why somebody's

1  
2 eligibility determination could be put on hold. Some  
3 of which are... Many of which are very valid. If a  
4 family is getting the last piece of information that  
5 we need, we don't want to find them ineligible if we  
6 know they might have it in a couple of days. We will  
7 hold their determination, so that they don't have to  
8 start over from scratch. That is actually a very  
9 valid reason for putting a hold on an eligibility  
10 determination, and I cannot retroactively separate  
11 the two.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Understood.

13 What are the requirements for reporting  
14 violations to City leadership?

15 COMMISSIONER PARKS: Just to clarify , Council  
16 Member, you're talking about the 10-4 standard?

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Mm-hmm.

18 COMMISSIONER PARKS: So, frankly, this is an  
19 exceedingly rare occasion or occurrence, and the  
20 protocol is that staff on the ground need to pick up  
21 the phone and call leadership immediately.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is that happening?

23 COMMISSIONER PARKS: It has not happened, because  
24 we have not had any violations, but, yes, it will  
25 happen if necessary.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, we haven't... Okay, so  
3 the next question was going to be, how many  
4 violations have been reported since the  
5 investigation? Is that... Are you saying that number  
6 is zero?

7 COMMISSIONER PARKS: I will confirm that there  
8 might have been one. I will note that right now, the  
9 standard operating procedure has been paused as per  
10 Executive Order, given the asylum emergency.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

12 And DOI also investigate a separate allegation  
13 that DHS has manipulated eligibility data from June  
14 2017 to 2022? They concluded that these efforts to  
15 downplay the eligibility rate made the homeless  
16 crisis appear less severe.

17 How was the PATH monthly eligibility rate  
18 calculated from 2017 to mid-2022?

19 COMMISSIONER PARKS: So, the eligibility rate  
20 calculation is the number of people who are found  
21 eligible divided by the number of people for whom any  
22 form of determination was made - eligible or not  
23 eligible. That is still the way that calculation  
24 happens. What was going on in the prior  
25 administration was that on any given day, the number

1  
2 of people who were found eligible was changed. So,  
3 maybe there would have been... And these are  
4 hypothetical numbers...

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Mm-hmm

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: I just want to be clear about  
7 that. Maybe 15 people - 15 families, uh, could have  
8 been made eligible that day. In order to maintain a  
9 steady eligibility rate, five of those were held.  
10 They were found eligible the next day. So, the  
11 calculation did not change, it was the date of the  
12 eligibility determination. As I noted, during that  
13 time period, families were in conditional placements,  
14 nobody was denied shelter, and the total number of  
15 people found eligible for shelter, did not change. It  
16 was the date of the eligibility. That doesn't make it  
17 right. We should not change data. We need more  
18 transparency. But, I do want to just be clear about  
19 the impacts.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I appreciate that.

21 With DHS's family shelter population being at  
22 record highs, it is important for DHS to maintain  
23 accurate information about the circumstances at PATH.  
24 DOI recommended that an internal audit process should  
25 be implemented to ensure that the data made public by



1  
2 DHS is accurate and truthful. So, you said that ,you  
3 know, you would implement that. I believe you have  
4 implemented that. When did you... When was this  
5 policy implemented?

6 COMMISSIONER PARK: We are in the process right  
7 now of implementing our auto procedures. We received  
8 this report at the... in January, so we are  
9 operationalizing now.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I am sure that you heard  
11 rumors before January that this was an issue. So,  
12 there was no audit process put in place?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: We are working to make sure  
14 that we have careful procedures that comply with the  
15 DOI investigation. We are doing that now.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

17 And what has the PATH eligibility rate been since  
18 the investigation on a monthly basis?

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, right now we are seeing  
20 quite significant swings in eligibility rate,  
21 anywhere from about 35% to about 60%. That is quite  
22 unusual. It is really a reflection of our work as  
23 part of the asylum seeker response. When we are  
24 making significant numbers of determinations on  
25 families... on asylum seeker families, because really

1 almost by definition, they don't have a two year  
2 housing history, they are highly likely to be  
3 eligible. So, you might see the... some of the spikes  
4 in eligibility rate, uhm, when we are dealing with a  
5 more traditional client base, uhm, it... the rate  
6 becomes something that looks a little bit more like  
7 the historic.  
8

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I appreciate that. I will  
10 leave any further questions to my colleagues, but I  
11 wanted to ask three questions to - I believe it will  
12 be Miss Shaeffer.

13 On January 6th, as I mentioned before, a young  
14 man was murdered at Randalls Island. Since this  
15 event, what measures have been taken to ensure the  
16 security of people residing at Randalls Island and  
17 other emergency shelters?

18 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Thank you for that  
19 question.

20 We take the safety and security of everyone in  
21 our shelters as the utmost priority. We have worked  
22 to ensure that we have NYPD presence at Randalls, and  
23 that we have added security cameras. And at all of  
24 our sites, we have done a comprehensive security  
25 analysis to make sure that we have everything we need

1  
2 to ensure that our... the folks in our sites are  
3 safe.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you know what the staffing  
5 ratios at HERCS are?

6 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: I'd have to get back  
7 to you on that.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, and that would  
9 include... I would specifically like to know case  
10 managers and security. Because, my understanding is  
11 that at Randalls Island there are 50 security  
12 officers for 3,000 individuals.

13 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: We have spent a lot  
14 of time reviewing the different security ratios and  
15 other staffing ratios to ensure that it makes sense  
16 for the sites that we have. And I am happy to follow  
17 up specifically on Randalls.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. There have been further  
19 instances of violence in migrant shelters across the  
20 city, including another situation at Randalls where a  
21 security guard was assaulted, and a stabbing of a  
22 migrant at Lincoln Center. Actually, the security  
23 guard was assaulted, but then the security guard, I  
24 just want to clarify, slashed a migrant in the neck,  
25 I believe it was. And, then we had the... the issue

1 at Lincoln Center on the 28th. What is the  
2 Administration doing to keep shelter residents and  
3 staff safe at all City shelter sites - specifically,  
4 because I continuously heard the Administration say  
5 that there are... they are looking in to maybe  
6 possibly putting in metal detectors and cameras, and  
7 looking at their security... the current security  
8 structure. But, there has been no change that has  
9 resulted from those statements, so I am curious to  
10 see ,you know, to hear what has changed and what is  
11 the plan moving forward?  
12

13 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, shelter  
14 management is an iterative process, we're constantly  
15 looking at doing our operations better. As mentioned,  
16 we are going through a process or we have gone  
17 through a process to look at all the security at our  
18 sites and see where tools like metal detectors, tools  
19 like cameras are best deployed. And...

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: The reason I am asking the  
21 question is, because after the (INAUDIBLE) who is the  
22 young man who was murdered there... By the way, that  
23 happened January 7th, I believe - 6th or 7th?  
24 He's... his body is getting home today. It took us a  
25 lot of effort to make sure that we got him home to

1 his mom, because the City didn't even call or offer  
2 words of condolences or make any effort to help  
3 ensure that that the family got the body, that it was  
4 transported back to his native country. But, after  
5 the (INAUDIBLE) was stabbed and killed there, there  
6 was no urgency. There still to date hasn't been any  
7 level of urgency to make any changes to the security  
8 structure there. And in fact, one of the news outlets  
9 was out there a few weeks after the second slashing,  
10 and they saw that there were migrants that were  
11 selling food. Right? And in the preparing of the  
12 food, they had access knives. Which, you know, it...  
13 I'm not assuming that they had those knife for...  
14 with bad intentions, but the fact that they were  
15 knives in the facility that were coming in and out  
16 after something so tragic had already occurred, and  
17 then was almost repeated two weeks after, and still  
18 no change has been made. It gives me the impression  
19 that there is no intention of making any additional  
20 changes to the security structure there. And that  
21 worries me, one, because I find it as a disregard to  
22 this young man's life, but, two, the fact that there  
23 are people there that may be feeling really unsafe is  
24 troublesome. And I haven't... again, I haven't seen  
25

1  
2 any effort to change the security structure. When  
3 you put 3,000 people in one... in any space, it  
4 doesn't matter whether they're migrants, whether they  
5 are children, whether they are... whoever they are,  
6 there is going to be conflict. We need to be prepared  
7 that before we put the 3,000 people there. Fifty  
8 guards... and I heard it through good authority, that  
9 that's what the number is, it's not sufficient. And  
10 the fact that there hasn't been an effort to ensure  
11 that no weapons are coming in since then, I need an  
12 explanation for that.

13 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Thank you for your  
14 concern. I'm also happy to sit down with you to  
15 specifically go over Randalls, but I will say there  
16 is absolute urgency on making sure that Randalls is a  
17 safe as possible. You mentioned 3,000 people in any  
18 site is it not something we've wanted to do - ever.

19 I want to take a step back and remind folks that  
20 we are municipal government dealing with a national  
21 crisis. While you may disagree with a lot of... or  
22 some of our policies, you can't say we haven't led  
23 with care and compassion. I just want to kind of also  
24 mention that, because we have tripled our shelter  
25 system in the span of two years. In two years we've

1  
2 tripled our shelter system, and we've provided TPS,  
3 work authorization, asylum. We've helped connect  
4 people to apartments. We've helped connect people to  
5 jobs, but we need more help so that we don't have to  
6 create sites that are 3,000 large. We need help from  
7 the federal government. We need them to help  
8 coordinate where people are going. We need them to  
9 give us more resources. We continue to iterate. We  
10 continue to have urgency around the safety of people  
11 in our care, but we can't do this alone.

12 COMMISSIONER PARK: If I could add in here, and  
13 I'm preaching to the choir a little bit, because the  
14 council members who are here represent some really  
15 terrific partners, but finding locations for shelters  
16 has been tremendously challenging. I think there's  
17 large scale agreement that bigger sites are hard to  
18 operate, but finding sites for smaller shelters is  
19 also something that is challenging. In community  
20 after community, this is true - before the asylum  
21 seeker crisis, but it continues to be true, ,you  
22 know, DHS gets push back. We want to be providing the  
23 highest quality sites that we possibly can. We want  
24 to be working with good providers. We want to have  
25 quality real estate. We send a letter, as I think you

1 all know, every year to community... council,  
2 members, community boards, other elected officials  
3 looking for sites, want to really make sure that we  
4 are continuing that partnership with this body, with  
5 community boards to make sure that we are having the  
6 most community-based siting practice possible, and  
7 that we are finding options for smaller community-  
8 based shelters. Again, I do think I'm preaching to  
9 the choir here, but I think that it's something that  
10 we would really like to partner even more with the  
11 Council on.

13 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: And just one other  
14 point, is that I was just at Randalls yesterday, I  
15 believe, with the Mayor, talking to the asylum  
16 seekers, because as you mentioned, we talk regularly  
17 with people in our care, we regularly go out on site  
18 visits, because we want to ensure that we know how  
19 things are affecting people. But, talking to the  
20 staff members there, talking to the asylum seekers  
21 there to really emphasize the security and try to  
22 figure out ways we can do things better on that site.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: But, still, no change has  
24 happened terms of... if I were operating that  
25 facility and somebody died under my watch, my first



1  
2 instinct would be to go in there and figure out what  
3 I did wrong, or what could've been done better.  
4 Understand, I don't want to... again I've been  
5 very... I've tried to be very fair, because I do  
6 understand how difficult of an endeavor this has  
7 been, but once this young man was murdered, somebody  
8 should've gone back and said, you know what, maybe  
9 this existing structure is putting other people at  
10 risk. Maybe people are bringing a knives because they  
11 feel unsafe. At city shelters routinely, we have  
12 metal detectors in many of them. Am I correct, Molly?

13 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: To ensure that people are not  
15 bringing in weapons. And we still have not done that  
16 at the HERCS. And, so, I just want to understand, is  
17 there plan to add metal detectors and ensure that  
18 everyone that is in those facilities is safe or not?

19 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: As mentioned, we are  
20 doing a security assessment at all of our sites,  
21 Randalls is on the top of that list. And, again,  
22 happy to sit down with you to talk about the  
23 specifics. We have made some changes already and  
24 we'll continue to make changes.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. I just want to share  
3 with you that the other day, uh, last week we had a  
4 ,you know, we've been working with the family of the  
5 young man that passed away. I've gotten to know a few  
6 of the family members and people, you know, friends  
7 that have come here. And, there was a young man who  
8 came from Denver and was sited at Wards on a  
9 Tuesday.. It was last week, I don't know the  
10 (INAUDIBLE) and by Wednesday morning he wanted to  
11 leave. He was like, it's horrible, there's no place to  
12 put your stuff, people can easily just take whatever  
13 property you have. But, there are fights in there.  
14 There was a fight that was pretty disturbing, and the  
15 guards didn't come until after it was already too  
16 late. They felt unsafe. They felt that people were...  
17 they said that they witnessed people that had been  
18 barred from the center, uh, from the site coming in  
19 through the back doors. That to me is... It raises a  
20 lot of red flags. And, again, I want to make sure  
21 that everybody in there is feeling safe enough that  
22 they don't have to be bringing in a knife, and that  
23 people that are not bringing in knives feel safe  
24 enough to know that they're not going to be witness  
25 to that.

1  
2 But, I still wanted to ask, because of how really  
3 important is, after the incident where the young man  
4 was murdered in front of many other migrants, was  
5 there any effort to bring in any level of mental  
6 health support so that they had somebody to talk to  
7 about what they had just experienced?

8 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: And again, happy to  
9 have a conversation specific on Randalls, but, yes,  
10 we have behavioral health specialist on site, and we  
11 worked with our... Health + Hospitals runs that site,  
12 and we worked with them to ensure that there was  
13 support for the people who in that.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you, I appreciate it.  
15 We will now go to Council Member Stevens, followed by  
16 Council Member Restler, Council Member Hanif, and  
17 Council Member Brewer.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good morning, I think  
19 it's still morning, oh, no, it's afternoon, good  
20 afternoon. Thank you guys for both being here. And I  
21 just have like two sets of questions. And I will  
22 start one with ,you know, I think our chair talked...  
23 said our sentiments right. I felt that it ,you know,  
24 it would have been really important for folks to hear  
25 the testimony that was happening here earlier today

1 with those courageous young men who were here to kind  
2 of talk about their experiences. And I say that,  
3 because I also was at a mosque recently near my  
4 district where about a 100 to 200 asylum seekers have  
5 been staying because of the 30 day rule. And just  
6 seeing the conditions there, and them just saying  
7 that we want to work, we want to do something. And  
8 even the mosque saying, like, we want to help the  
9 people, but we are not even getting support from the  
10 City. And, like, they're like, we're helping with,  
11 uhm... And they are happy to do it, but they are,  
12 like, they are helping ,you know, with food, and they  
13 are getting donations from community members for  
14 clothes and all of the things. And ,you know, I have  
15 reached out to the Administration, and have not  
16 gotten any response back on this. And I want to note,  
17 I am fully aware that this is a federal issue. And I  
18 agree that they should definitely being doing more.  
19 And ,you know, I say it all the time, I didn't sign  
20 up to be a council member to figure out immigration  
21 issues, I signed up to figure out potholes and stop  
22 signs, but now here we are. And, so, we are all in  
23 this together. But, that doesn't mean that we don't  
24 lead with compassion and love and do what's right.  
25

1  
2 And this is not saying that you guys are not working  
3 as hard as you can, but it's still a problem. So, we  
4 can't negate one for the other, because, yes, it is  
5 not... It's a problem, it is a federal issue and all  
6 of those things, but it's here. And, so, that means  
7 that as we are trying to find it together, we need to  
8 be leading with love and compassion. And what I saw  
9 at the mosque when I visited is unacceptable. And,  
10 then even the stories that these men told today is  
11 unacceptable, so we do have to do better as a people.  
12 And this is not even just the City, this is just me  
13 saying this as a human being, I don't think that  
14 people should just suffer in this way, and all of the  
15 stories that have been coming out. And I kind of lost  
16 my train of thought, but even something that was said  
17 here today that the wait time after the 30 days, that  
18 they are waiting five to 10 days in order to get  
19 placed again. And, so, my thinking around this is,  
20 like, how is this helpful? And it kind of seems like  
21 a redundant of services if we have people cycling in  
22 and out? And it actually seems like it was cost more  
23 money. Because, if I leave, now we have... We're  
24 readministering people over and over again. It sounds  
25 like this is a weird cycle that we are putting in,

1  
2 and it doesn't sound like it is really cost effective  
3 either.

4 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, thank you for  
5 your concerns. And I would also love to talk to you a  
6 little bit more about that masque, because we  
7 obviously want to make sure places where people are  
8 staying are safe.

9 We... Since the spring, we have, as I said  
10 before, we have served over a 179,000 migrants, and  
11 we have led with care and compassion and love.  
12 Because, we have done everything in our power to  
13 stand up a site to give people immigration support.  
14 We have done everything in power to help people along  
15 with the journey... Bring in (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-  
16 TALK)

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Well, if you were here  
18 earlier, you would have heard that the young men, the  
19 gentlemen who were here this morning, they said,  
20 actually, that hasn't been happening, and that they  
21 have been doing that on their own. So, that is why I  
22 think even hearing that today, your statement is...  
23 it could be true, but it's not happening  
24 consistently, because it was said here.

1  
2 So, that is what I mean. Like, the inconsistency,  
3 right?

4 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Yeah, and I mean, we  
5 stood up a system of 216 sites in less than two  
6 years. We, I want to follow up with those  
7 individuals, see which sites they were at, really see  
8 what's happening at those specific sites. We... That  
9 is why I talk to people all the time, that's why I  
10 got to sites, it's to really see what's happening,  
11 and ensure that we are delivering on the most quality  
12 product that we can. But, I mean, I just, again, I am  
13 going to take a step back and say, when you are...  
14 When we are dealing with an influx of 1,000 to 5,000  
15 people every week, and we currently over 64,000  
16 migrants in our care, we have to make hard choices -  
17 and complicated choices, and choices that provide  
18 support for the most vulnerable in our care at the  
19 most critical points in their journey, which is when  
20 they first get here. We cannot control what happens  
21 at the border. All the things that we can control are  
22 what happens when people are in our shelter. And we  
23 can't... We need all of the tools in our toolbox to  
24 continue supporting these newest arrivals and ensure  
25 that we are doing that with care and compassion.

1  
2 (TIMER CHIMES) At this point, more than 76% of people  
3 leave our care before the 30 days, and it really has  
4 helped ensure that we have space and the staff  
5 capacity to give people what they need in that first  
6 30 days.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Just... And, Chair, just  
8 I need a couple quick more seconds.

9 Just really quick, because it's something that  
10 you said that was just like a red flag for me, just  
11 even saying, like, the critical, you like to serve  
12 people at their most critical moment. I think that is  
13 subjective. Because, I think if you ask all of them,  
14 it is a critical moment. And, so, that becomes  
15 subjective. And, so, I think that that is... And,  
16 again, this is not saying folks are not doing their  
17 jobs. I think that there are holes in this system.  
18 And I think the 30 day thing is actually creating  
19 more holes than you are anticipating than solving.  
20 Right? And, so, if people are already leaving at  
21 large numbers before the 30 days are up, then you  
22 don't need to have the mandate there. So, that to me  
23 doesn't ,you know, those things don't sit well with  
24 me.



1  
2 But, I do have another question that I do want to  
3 ask Commissioner Molly - in my district as we know,  
4 an HRA site was just closed, and I know it was  
5 because there was a leasing issue or something else,  
6 but I am really concerned that a whole section of  
7 people in the Bronx, in the West Bronx, now have to  
8 travel so far to get to a new site. And I am really  
9 trying to just get a better understanding. Because,  
10 the reasoning behind it, and the way my office has  
11 been having an influx, because we were their next  
12 door neighbors, and now we have become an HRA center,  
13 which, we can't, right? Everyone is saying that they  
14 have not gotten notices and all of these things. I  
15 just... This rollout has been very messy in the sense  
16 of , like, like I said, we have been getting a lot of  
17 folks in my office, we have had a lot of people  
18 standing outside not being able to notice... people  
19 coming back to the office saying that they weren't  
20 being able to be served. And just thinking about how  
21 this could have been a better transition, and also  
22 how we are now really putting a number of people in a  
23 community out of their way to now to get services.  
24 And I am really concerned about this. And is there a  
25

1  
2 plan on getting services closer to the West Bronx and  
3 to my district any time soon?

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes, thank you, Council  
5 Member. You're correct that this traced to back to a  
6 landlord issue. We were... We're subject to the winds  
7 of the real estate market as well, so we lost... Did  
8 lose our... Or fairly suddenly lost the lease on one  
9 site, and so we had to re... restructure services, so  
10 that we were making use of the real estate that we  
11 did still have. We acted very quickly to make sure  
12 that we still had a physical presence for all of our  
13 real estate... for all of our functions. And I think  
14 over the... In a couple of years, we will be able to  
15 do better, uh, and to distribute services more evenly  
16 across the borough. But, we do need to do some work  
17 on building out some of the site space before we are  
18 able to do that. Certainly if we have the notice  
19 piece of it, if that has not been adequate, we can  
20 make sure that we are re-noticing. And I think from  
21 the point that Deputy Speaker Ayala flagged this to  
22 us that we have done some additional noticing. Happy  
23 to follow up with you offline if we need to be doing  
24 more.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes, I just want to say  
3 again, like, I have seen sometimes especially folks  
4 forget how my district is a little isolated,  
5 especially the Highbridge area. And to go from  
6 Highbridge to Hunts Point, that is like, a two  
7 (INAUDIBLE) zone, and so we have people who already  
8 need services now having to figure out how to make a  
9 journey. And, so, even the thought around, like, oh,  
10 uhm, some of them have been told, like, oh, you can  
11 do some of this stuff on line, and blah, blah, blah,  
12 if they had those services, they wouldn't need it.  
13 And ,you know, even to go to the extent of like - a  
14 lot of times when they were going to the HRA office,  
15 they would still have to come to my office, whether  
16 it's to get copies and all these other things. And,  
17 so, there is a whole slew of services that they're  
18 going to miss out on now, because we did not work  
19 kind of hand to hand. And I am not saying that they  
20 needed to be there, but I think the consideration for  
21 how far it is out, it is really displacement and a  
22 disservice to my district. And I think that I know  
23 you said it is going to take a couple of years, I  
24 don't know that we have a couple of years, because

1  
2 people will suffer in the High Bridge area in my  
3 district.

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: We are happy to work with you  
5 on that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Council Member Restler?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you, Chair Ayala, I  
9 really appreciate your tremendous leadership. And to  
10 recognize my friend and colleague, Council Member  
11 Hanif, for her courageous leadership, and thank you  
12 both for testifying here today.

13 Just because, uh, there's only so much time in  
14 Q&A, I would love if it's okay, Commissioner Park,  
15 I'm gonna read the DOI Report, and would love to  
16 follow up with questions. I have not had a chance to  
17 read it yet. We've had some real issues in our  
18 district at Lejoli Shelter, and haven't gotten great  
19 communication from your team on updates and...  
20 except for from Vincent, who we appreciate. And  
21 similar issue that Council Member Stevens raised,  
22 there been just a lot of changes. I know it was part  
23 of a long-standing plan to benefits centers in  
24 downtown Brooklyn, and we've been hoping to just get  
25 a briefing to understand the timeline and plans. If

1  
2 you could provide that overview for us, we would  
3 greatly appreciate each of those things.

4 COMMISSIONER PARK: I am happy sit down any time.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you.

6 Okay, so for today, I appreciate the chance to  
7 put those aside... Commissioner Park, you know, every  
8 year, if I recall correctly, we see a big increase in  
9 children, families in our shelter system at the end  
10 of the school year. Is that right?

11 COMMISSIONER PARK: Uh, that is the pre-COVID  
12 traditional pattern. In the last few years, things  
13 have been a little bit unsettled, but yes, that's  
14 historically accurate.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And, you know, families  
16 do their best to hold on in doubled up circumstances  
17 and tenuous challenging dynamics, so that kids can  
18 stay close to and can ,you know, the school that  
19 they're attending during the school year... And  
20 I'm... I just can't understand how a 60 day rule for  
21 children, for families with kids, is good for them. I  
22 can't understand how uprooting a family that has, you  
23 know, we have a shelter that just opened... a HERC  
24 that just opened in Council Member Hudson's district  
25 on the border of mine in Clinton Hill, is sending

1 many dozens of families - dozens of students to two  
2 schools in my district - PS 54 and (INAUDIBLE)157.

3 And we have brought in all of these donations and  
4 supports, and the school communities have done an  
5 extraordinary job and welcoming these students and  
6 families into our community. And we're approaching a  
7 60 day deadline where they're gonna be relocated and  
8 presumably will go to some other school somewhere far  
9 away from Clinton Hill and Bed-Stuy, is that right?  
10

11 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: I will take this  
12 question.

13 So, this administration has really prioritized in  
14 this period of emergency, families with children. We  
15 haven't made... It was an incredibly hard decision to  
16 start doing the 60 day notices. It's not something we  
17 wanted to do. As everyone knows, the cavalry didn't  
18 come from the federal government. We have also said  
19 many times that we do not want to disrupt education.  
20 Because of really careful coordination and planning  
21 with the Department of Education, and our staff, and  
22 the HERC staff, and everyone at the arrival center  
23 90% of the children that were affected by this policy  
24 remained in the same school. Some of the 10% that  
25 didn't, some moved away, some moved to other parts

1 of the nation or other parts of the country, but 90%  
2 stayed in their school after they made this change.  
3 And, so, we really, really did prioritize education  
4 and the education of the youngest children when  
5 making these types of choices and moves.  
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So 90% of the kids who  
8 were subject to a 60 day rule, who were forced to  
9 uproot their lives, and in all likelihood moved to  
10 not just different neighborhood, but a different  
11 borough, are staying in the same school according to  
12 the data that you have as of

13 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: January.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: January. Uhm...

15 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: And the same borough.  
16 I mean, I think it's more than same borough of...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But, they're staying in  
18 the same school is... The point is. I am just  
19 meaning...

20 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Yes...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I mean, the point is that  
22 they maintain enrollment. And, I'll give an example,  
23 in Clinton Hill, Bed-Stuy, in this area, you know,  
24 I... as you know, as a native of the 33rd, t's  
25 probably the most expensive in Brooklyn. And it's not

1  
2 easy to live there, especially for a newly migrant  
3 family. They're probably moving to a very faraway  
4 place - like the Bronx or Staten Islan, or Southeast  
5 Queens or Brownsville, where they can manage to live  
6 and afford to come into our community. So, are you  
7 looking at travel times as folks are staying at the  
8 same schools - of the distances the people are  
9 traveling and how far people are going - spending  
10 multiple hours a day (TIMER CHIMES) in each direction  
11 is? It's not good for a six or seven-year-old either.

12 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: The majority of our  
13 families were placed in the same borough as well or  
14 the borough their children... their youngest  
15 children. We don't track when people leave our care,  
16 where they're going, but everyone was given the  
17 opportunity to either stay in their same school or  
18 change... (CROSS-TALK)

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Got it. So, the 90%...

20 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: And we worked with  
21 our department... (CROSS-TALK)

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: figure you're referring  
23 to is for people who were reticketed, placed in  
24 another shelter, they were placed in another shelter

25



1  
2 in... and a majority were replaced in the same  
3 borough, and then... (CROSS-TALK)

4 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: The majority were  
5 placed in the same borough... (CROSS-TALK)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: and then 90% stayed in  
7 the same school. For the families that went through  
8 the reticketing process, went to a different shelter  
9 and stayed, but for everybody else who couldn't make  
10 it through that process, we don't actually have any  
11 indication of whether they are staying in the same  
12 school? Are you tracking that data?

13 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: I have to check with  
14 the Department of Education.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That is not something  
16 that your office is tracking in a proactive manner?

17 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: We are coordinating  
18 with our colleagues at the Department of Education. I  
19 am happy to follow back up with you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: What percentage of the  
21 families who have been subject to 60 day rule, stayed  
22 in shelter for that... and went to another shelter  
23 upon relocate... upon being uprooted?

24 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Sorry, say that  
25 question again?

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: For the families that  
3 have been subjected to the 60 day rule so far, it  
4 sound like the most recent date you have is January,  
5 what percentage of those families stayed in the  
6 shelter system and what did not? How many left...

7 (CROSS-TALK)

8 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: I would have to  
9 follow back on the exact numbers... (CROSS-TALK)

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. I just... look I  
11 think that it's fair for... you're not gonna have  
12 every data point at your fingertips. But, and I  
13 appreciate, I mean this, you all have really hard  
14 jobs, 170 odd thousand people coming through the city  
15 of New York without the appropriate federal  
16 assistance, it has been deeply challenging. I am  
17 empathetic to the challenges the you all have faced  
18 and how hard you have worked to try to provide some  
19 services and care. But, I do think that uprooting  
20 families after 60 days is inhumane, and it is  
21 heartless, and it is a really problematic policy for  
22 kids and their ability to learn. And, you know, I  
23 would've thought that would've been a central piece  
24 of the testimony. I would've thought we would've had  
25 better data today to discuss this, because, to me I

1 just can't understand how we don't want that kid  
2 staying in the same school all school year to get the  
3 help that they need with transitioning to a new  
4 country - getting the support that they deserve - and  
5 figuring things out in the summertime - if we need to  
6 do so. That would be a much more compassionate and  
7 effective policy, from my vantage point, to support  
8 our kids. And I leave this hearing no more... even  
9 more dissatisfied and concerned than when we started.  
10 So, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Council Member Hanif, and then  
13 Council Member Brewer.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much

15 First, I would just like to start with some  
16 kindness. I see Chris here, and we've been working  
17 very closely. We are welcoming a new shelter in my  
18 district, and it's been in the news as of late with a  
19 lot of opposition, and actually since the end of last  
20 year - a lot of opposition coming in from our  
21 neighbors. And I've been steadfast and firm in  
22 welcoming this new shelter. It'll have 400 beds, and  
23 the coordination that we've had with DSS has been  
24 very critical and alongside of my elected colleagues  
25 the community board, community groups, and other

1  
2 leaders. And while there's a lawsuit now, and other  
3 sort of tactics being utilized to oppose the shelter,  
4 we remain committed to welcoming asylum seekers. And,  
5 so, I share this because I know that I have been one  
6 of the most critical voices of the Administration's  
7 operations, and that is a part of my responsibility  
8 while also recognizing the reality in which we live  
9 in. And I'll be welcoming as many shelters as I need  
10 to in my district while pushing for better policies.

11 And, now, Molly, your statement, I found very  
12 offensive. I found it very offensive. I think we  
13 can... We can agree that the 30 and 60 day policy is  
14 a bad policy and not defend it. I think that the  
15 Administration can just say that... that we have to  
16 do this and leave it at that. I just wish that we  
17 could accept that we didn't have to defend inhumane  
18 policies. Because, one, you weren't here for when the  
19 two gentlemen, who have only been here for less than  
20 six months, told us their stories- they've been in  
21 already four shelters, three and four shelters. One  
22 of them is not in a shelter right now. One of them is  
23 still looking for a shelter. He had been assigned to  
24 a shelter, and he had transportation issues and  
25 couldn't find his way to the shelter; when he arrived

1 to the shelter, he was told, there's no more room for  
2 him, and then referred somewhere else. That shouldn't  
3 be the story of individuals who are arriving here in  
4 the span of three to four months. I don't consider  
5 that success. And we've seen over the course of the  
6 last several weeks, we heard about the storefront in  
7 Queens. We heard about the makeshift bus. We're  
8 hearing about overcrowded apartments. We're hearing  
9 about cars and trucks. We're seeing our sidewalks...  
10 New Yorkers are witnessing what's happening.

11  
12 COMMISSIONER PARK: So, Council Member, let me  
13 start by thanking you for your leadership and your  
14 steadfast support. It really means a lot to have a  
15 strong partner as we work on shelter siting, so  
16 thank you.

17 I mean, I think what you were describing right  
18 now is over in a separate and apart... or compounding  
19 the asylum situation that we're talking about, is  
20 really a reflection of the overwhelming shortfall in  
21 New York City of affordable housing. Right? The  
22 Department of Housing Preservation Development came  
23 out with data a few weeks ago, the vacancy rate  
24 overall for rental housing is 1.4%. It's much lower  
25 for more affordable apartments. It's why the

1  
2 Department of Social Services is actually getting  
3 into the affordable housing development space. We  
4 using Social Service dollars to actually grow the pie  
5 of affordable housing. We're working really closely  
6 with HPD to make sure that there are units for people  
7 who are experiencing homelessness - and other low  
8 income households. It's why we've taken CityFHEPS and  
9 made it a statewide tool, so that people are able to  
10 look at a broader supply of housing. It's really  
11 also, I think an argument for the Administration City  
12 of Yes policy that we have to be doing more  
13 development.

14 So, you know, I hear your concerns. But ,you  
15 know, I think everything that you are speaking to  
16 really gets back to the... down to the fact that we  
17 need more places for people to live, and we look  
18 forward an administration to working with you on  
19 it... (CROSS-TALK)

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And I appreciate that,  
21 because that, what you just said was nowhere in  
22 either of these testimonies. And the housing  
23 investment piece is what continues to be left out.  
24 And, so, I'm really glad that that came up in this  
25 moment, because that is exactly what the crisis, I

1  
2 think, exists in the city. It's not an asylum seeker  
3 the crisis, it's a housing crisis. That it has  
4 existed, and that investment needs to speed up. And  
5 I'm glad to hear that DSS has this component coming  
6 up, and I'm gonna... I will support... excited by  
7 City of Yes as well as we continued explore all of  
8 the options.

9 I have a couple of questions I want to get into.

10 How many asylum seekers applied for an overnight  
11 shelter bed yesterday and were rejected?

12 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: We will have to  
13 follow up with you on that exact number. And nobody  
14 was rejected. People were put on the waiting list

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, what is the waitlist?

16 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Uhm, after 30 days,  
17 people can go to Saint Brigid and be put on the wait  
18 list for the next available bed.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Right, but the wait list is  
20 like, like code for they don't have a bed.

21 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Everyone is offered a  
22 place indoors, outside of the elements, to wait  
23 overnight while they wait for a bed placement.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Will you repeat that?  
25

1  
2 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Everyone is offered a  
3 place indoors to wait while they wait for a bed  
4 placement at their shelter... or a new shelter  
5 placement. If they... (CROSS-TALK)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Where do they... (CROSS-  
7 TALK)

8 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: (INAUDIBLE)

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Where do they, uh, wait  
10 indoors?

11 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: There is a... We have  
12 a couple of sites where people can wait.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Can you describe, uh, the  
14 conditions of this waiting centers?

15 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: They are a place  
16 indoors where people can wait, where we provide food  
17 and other services while they are there.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, do they have amenities  
19 like beds or cots?

20 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: I am going to step  
21 back here, because I think that we are going a little  
22 down a rabbit hole. But, we have over... We have  
23 served over 179,000 migrants. We have said over time  
24 again, and again, that we are running out of space.  
25 We have hit our capacity. We have said that many,



1  
2 many months ago. And we are doing everything we can  
3 to get people, uhm, to get people new shelter  
4 placements as quickly as we can.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That's not the point. We  
6 know that. We know that... We know that that's... We  
7 know that from the start. We have been saying that  
8 over and over for the last two years. It is okay to  
9 say that there isn't a bed in these waiting centers.  
10 That what we are witnessing... What this... What the  
11 members have said here, that what we are seeing is  
12 true. What kind of data is available right now? Like  
13 how are you... Like, the percentage that was shared  
14 about leaving the system, how are you collecting that  
15 data?

16 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: As you know, it is a  
17 vast program that we run. And, so, we have a data  
18 system that all of our agencies use to be able to  
19 better understand where people are in our system. So,  
20 we use our data system, and we make... To make the  
21 best data determined decisions we can, and report  
22 things like how many people stay and how long they  
23 stay.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And, then for those who  
25 accept the reticketing option that the City is

1  
2 pressuring folks to take, how is the City working  
3 with other municipalities to coordinate arrival and  
4 transfer case management on things like applications  
5 for asylum, TPS, and work authorizations?

6 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Thank you for asking  
7 about reticketing, it is one of the tools in our  
8 toolbox. We started doing reticketing in the arrival  
9 center, because we knew that a lot of people, as they  
10 were coming from the buses in Texas, didn't actually  
11 necessarily want to be here. That was the only way  
12 out of town. And, so, we are really proud of the fact  
13 that we have been able to help people take the next  
14 point of their journey, connect with family or  
15 friends in other parts of the nations. And at this  
16 point, I think we have reticketed over 20,000  
17 including... Which is more than 25% of our shelter  
18 population.

19 COMMISSIONER PARK: I want to really emphasize  
20 what Director Shaeffer said about people not  
21 necessarily wanting to come to New York. I mean, it  
22 is actually astounding to me - some of the families  
23 that we have worked with in the DHS system who  
24 actually wanted to be in Texas. They had families  
25

1  
2 there, uh, family members there other things like  
3 that. But, they were put on a bus... (CROSS-TALK)

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Right.

5 COMMISSIONER PARK: Irrespective of where they  
6 wanted to be. So, you know, I heard the mention of  
7 pressuring people, and actually this is what... This  
8 is the right option for a lot of people, because they  
9 were not given options when they crossed into Texas.  
10 And just... (CROSS-TALK)

11 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Sorry, just one other  
12 point on that, the majority of our reticketing  
13 actually happens at our arrival center, and we give  
14 the option to be reticketed throughout the entire  
15 stay.

16 The other thing that is really important about  
17 what Commissioner Park said is that one of our top  
18 destinations is Texas. So, people are being sent  
19 here, and then they want to go directly back.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And is there a relationship  
21 with any of the municipalities there or the elected  
22 officials?

23 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Yeah, absolutely. So,  
24 we have our own coordinating meeting with other  
25 cities that have OASO entities that are really

1  
2 dealing with this crisis to really talk about best  
3 practices and figure if there are ways to do more  
4 formal resettlement programs. Where are also, through  
5 MOIA's Cities for Action Coalition, we constantly  
6 talking to other cities and trying to figure out what  
7 makes the most sense for all of us.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then for the, uhm, the  
9 Saint Brigid's uh, reticketing center, on the line  
10 are you... Is there, uhm, case management, and folks  
11 there to share out their options to apply for asylum  
12 or TPS or any of the other services?

13 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, we do case  
14 management throughout our entire system. So, from the  
15 second that you get into a shelter placement, you are  
16 given case management options as well as when we have  
17 appointments - appointments with our asylum  
18 application help center or if you want legal support,  
19 we will sometimes refer you to Action NYC or other  
20 resources that the City has to help people with their  
21 legal paperwork.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Understood.

23 So, I just want to name how indicative it is that  
24 the Administration is unwilling to describe the  
25 conditions of the waiting rooms. I have been on the

1  
2 site of the line at Saint Brigid and had asked about  
3 the waiting room, and had even witnessed some of the  
4 individuals who had been sleeping in some of these  
5 waiting rooms, and had scars on their bodies, because  
6 they hadn't showered for days and had no access to  
7 medical care; no beds or cots, just like whatever  
8 space they could find enmasse and sleep in whatever  
9 position they can. And your unwillingness to provide  
10 a yes or no answer is very telling. And I think as  
11 an administration, even if the answer is, no, there  
12 are no beds, that should be the answer.

13       You could easily set these up, but you're trying  
14 to makes as untenable as possible, uh, for these  
15 folks so they leave. And we are certainly witnessing  
16 some of that, but we are also seeing and experiencing  
17 the exploitation - a wave of exploitation this is  
18 going to increase, and, then we will have to address  
19 that as well. Thank you so much.

20       COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I, too, want to thank you.  
21 I know it's a hard job. And I do want to thank,  
22 because Manhattanites are staying in Manhattan, and I  
23 appreciate that - in terms of schools. I checked  
24 every single one, that's why I know.

25

1  
2 But, my question is, so, you stay in Manhattan,  
3 you're in school, up to fifth grade. Then what  
4 happens after 60 days in your new location? That's  
5 what I... And parents are asking me, and I don't know  
6 the answer to that. In other words, you know, summer  
7 comes, you want to go stay at PS 87 or whatever, how  
8 does that work?

9 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, it's the same  
10 process that people have now. They will go back to  
11 the arrival center, they will reapply, we will take a  
12 holistic picture of their family composition - what  
13 schools they're in and what vacancies we have - and  
14 attempt to place them as close to their school as  
15 possible.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I have to say, then it  
17 gets really crazy, because I think what is happening  
18 is that some folks are going just to the apartment  
19 basement in Queens. A lot of them are going to Newark  
20 as you probably know, because they are afraid of the  
21 next step, right, that you're just describing.

22 So, at some point, maybe for the legislation, I  
23 hope 60 day - 30 days for families ends. Because, I  
24 do... Okay, now we have got them under a first guise,  
25 maybe they do have family in Texas, and that's worked

1 out. Some of them are coming back, though, as you  
2 know. And they are calling the schools, because  
3 that's where they know trusted partner, and they're  
4 returning. Because, wherever they ended up, in Idaho,  
5 or whatever, is not great. So, I am just suggesting  
6 that we don't go through this again. I mean, I... I  
7 do know that the numbers of families going into the  
8 schools are going down. Because, I assume that  
9 whatever is going on at the border, whatever, people  
10 are not hearing great things about New York for  
11 whatever reason. So, maybe we don't have to go  
12 through the 60 day thing again with the families. Is  
13 that being considered?

14 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, I want to say  
15 that things at the border are incredibly dynamic as  
16 you know... (CROSS-TALK)

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We know...

18 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Numbers are starting  
19 to tick up again, which is ,you know, is what it is.  
20 And, so we constantly have to pivot and shift and  
21 manage in terms of peaks and valleys, in terms of  
22 times of surge, and times of not surging. We... I  
23 cannot speak enough about the heroic nature of school  
24 staff.... (CROSS-TALK)  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I have said that over and  
3 over...

4 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Like, it is amazing  
5 what they... what they have been able to provide the  
6 kids. And we will continue to make sure that we are  
7 not disrupting kids' schooling as best as possible...  
8 (CROSS-TALK)

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. But, I am just  
10 ,you know, so your kid goes from fifth grade to  
11 middle school, and then you're screwed, because  
12 you're not under *the elementary school you can stay*  
13 *in Manhattan* issue. So, I am just suggesting that the  
14 second round of 60 days, we reconsider. I am putting  
15 it on the table.

16 Number two, I always ask, and you hate to answer,  
17 but the faith-based, what in hells name are we doing  
18 about the faith-based? I have synagogues and  
19 churches, forget the sprinkler system, we got two  
20 exits, we've been doing it for 30 years, nobody ever  
21 got hurt. And, of course, in the mosques, you got  
22 hundreds of people. I know plenty of (INAUDIBLE)  
23 they're just doing it, but they're doing it for  
24 eight, they're doing for ten. They don't have a damn  
25 sprinkler, because they don't need one. They got two



1  
2 exits. I know this may not be your fault, you can get  
3 a 1,000 or 2,000 people tomorrow, if we open up these  
4 faith-based. All of which want to open up. I'm sorry,  
5 it... And it costs half of what you're paying in the  
6 shelters or maybe less. I don't understand this,  
7 really.

8 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: We 100 percent agree  
9 with you. (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But you're not... But...  
11 (CROSS-TALK)

12 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: It's a key tenet of  
13 where we want to move forward. We have actually been  
14 able to open a couple (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Three! Three!

16 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Yeah, but is moving  
17 much more (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: There were two last week,  
19 now there are three...

20 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Yes! There is... It  
21 is moving much more quickly than it has been. We have  
22 been able to work with our partners in DOB and FDNY  
23 to ensure that we are doing this is the safest way  
24 possible, but also loosening some of the restrictions  
25 so we can bring on these sites more quickly. It is

1  
2 something we also really want to see as the next  
3 phase of this and where we actually help connect  
4 people so they can have that community and faith  
5 support.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I mean, it's... I will  
7 leave it at that, but just so you know, I don't think  
8 even what you have loosened in terms of the rules are  
9 going to be enough to open up enough. You want to 19  
10 to 15, fine. Some of these folks only take ten. Take  
11 ten! Okay, it's the same thing. It's too rigid - too  
12 rigid, and that's why you have some of these issues,  
13 because you're being too rigid - in my opinion.

14 My other question is, do we know how many people  
15 are living in New York? I mean, you heard about the  
16 stores in Queens, blah, blah, blah, we've got the  
17 mosque. Do we have some sense of how many other folks  
18 are living in condition because they have no place  
19 else at this moment? They don't want to be in the  
20 shelters, they can't get in to the shelter. Do you  
21 have any sense of what those numbers are?

22 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: So, we don't track  
23 where people go after they leave our care. But,  
24 whenever we find unsafe environments, we invite  
25 people back to shelter, if that's the, uhm, (TIMER

1  
2 CHIMES) where they need to be while we vacate a  
3 location.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And, then, just, uh,  
5 finally, the question of what are you going to do  
6 about the food issue? Because, that's does seem to be  
7 a challenge. I think (INAUDIBLE) is great. I know  
8 that DHS is helping, but is there some rethinking  
9 about food contracts?

10 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: We are always  
11 rethinking all of our contracts, especially as we are  
12 in this period of transition. We have been doing this  
13 for now a year and a half, almost two years. And, so,  
14 we are looking at all of our contracts and looking  
15 how we can save money and how we can do this better,  
16 especially with our PEGS. And, so, we are constantly  
17 looking for better ways to do food.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I have one...  
20 Just... No, I'm sorry, I have just one further  
21 question regarding the... Council Member Hanif's  
22 mention... mentioned something that reminded me that  
23 in the beginning of the pandemic when folks were  
24 coming in to the... not only through the intake  
25 center, but at the HERCS when they would come in...

1  
2 When they were arriving, there was a... they were  
3 screened for any communicable diseases. Is that still  
4 happening?

5 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And are we still quarantining  
7 folks who have COVID?

8 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, I just wanted to check.  
10 Thank you for so much to both of you for  
11 coming... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We like Chris, too, just  
13 so you know.

14 (LAUGHTER)

15 INTERIM DIRECTOR SCHAEFFER: I like Chris, too.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you, that will be all.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, we are now going to  
18 call up the next panel which will be comprised of  
19 Nicole Krishtul from the New York City Office of the  
20 Comptroller.

21 And you can begin whenever you are ready.

22 NICOLE KRISHTUL: Thank you, General Welfare  
23 Committee for calling this hearing and to Council  
24 Member Hanif for introducing a bill, which would put

1  
2 an end to the City's cruel and inefficient 30 and 60  
3 day shelter limitations.

4 My name is Nicole Krishtul, Housing Organizer at  
5 New York City Comptroller's Office.

6 As a child of immigrants from Ukraine, I've seen  
7 the ways government assistance made all the  
8 difference. When my family came to the US, it did not  
9 take them 30 or 60 days to get on their feet. It took  
10 closer to a decade, a decade with a rental  
11 assistance, free English Language classes, and a  
12 strong community of support and political will.

13 The New York City Comptroller's Office strongly  
14 opposes the 30 and 60 day shelter limit policies,  
15 which are nothing more than a backdoor effort to chip  
16 away at the City's 40-year-old right to shelter. Our  
17 office commends Council Member Hanif for standing up  
18 to the scapegoating of immigrants and urgently  
19 support her bill.

20 Better management, not shelter evictions, would  
21 help asylum seekers get on their feet, join our  
22 workforce, and accelerate our economic recovery. Our  
23 office has been closely tracking the numbers of  
24 recent arrivals impacted by these shelter stay  
25 limits. As of February 4th, a total of over 7,000

1 families with children in emergency shelters have  
2 been given 60 day notices.

3 Those 7,000 households include approximately  
4 14,200 adults and 13,400 children. I'm happy to break  
5 those numbers down further.

6 In January, our office launched an investigation  
7 into the 60 day rule to learn more about how this  
8 policies being implemented, its potential harmful  
9 impact on asylum applications and work authorization,  
10 and the extent to which this policy is displacing  
11 children from their schools.

12 This investigation is currently ongoing, and we  
13 will update the Council when we have findings to  
14 share.

15 Earlier this week, our office released a report  
16 that found a lack of coordination across multiple  
17 emergency contracts that lead city agencies to  
18 overpay millions of dollars to (INAUDIBLE) asylum  
19 seeker services.

20 Rather than evicting family from shelter in the  
21 middle of winter, the City should insist on getting  
22 the most competitive prices from its own contractors  
23 to keep cost down.

1  
2 Emma Lazarus famously said, "Give me your tired,  
3 your poor, but not just for 30 or 60 days." There  
4 other paths forward through immigration legal help,  
5 workforce development, and real case management. We  
6 can't roll back the City's fundamentally ingrained  
7 right to shelter in the moments when we need it most.  
8 We can address this challenge with common sense,  
9 competence, and compassion. Thank you.

10 We've submitted more detailed written testimony  
11 that also highlights the experiences our office has  
12 had with the asylum seeker crisis, thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

14 I will now call up the next panel. The next panel  
15 will be - and I apologize if I am mispronouncing your  
16 name - Yajaira Saavedra from La Morada, Chloe Breyer,  
17 Madeleine Elfenbein, and Anthony Feliciano.

18 And just a reminder, due to time constraints, we  
19 have a two minute time limit on witnesses who are  
20 members of the public. And you can begin whenever you  
21 are ready.

22 REV. DR. CHLOE BREYER: Greetings, and thank you  
23 to the Committee and for the Introduction of 210. I'm  
24 here today representing the Interfaith Center of New  
25 York, where we work on something called equipping

1  
2 houses of worship to support migrants an initiative  
3 that has garnered a large number of houses worship  
4 across the five boroughs to do just that. Likewise, I  
5 support the asylum seekers Asylum Seekers Shelter  
6 Program, which has City participation. In this  
7 capacity, it has been an honor to work with houses of  
8 worship who offer every week men, women, and children  
9 who come from outside New York, and are fleeing  
10 violence and poverty to exercise a sacred  
11 responsibility to welcome to the stranger. This means  
12 meals, clothing, legal consultation, temporary  
13 shelter - some in partnership with the City -but not  
14 enough - and then also vital communications - mosques  
15 that, as I mentioned outside, have become glorified  
16 P.O. boxes, so that people are actually able to  
17 receive critical information from the federal  
18 government about their asylum or immigration status.  
19 They also are doing accompaniment with family members  
20 who are having to check in at the Roosevelt Hotel to  
21 make sure that the family feels safe - that children  
22 aren't separated, that the school bus doesn't arrive  
23 and there's no parents there. So, these are some of  
24 the ways, and in some cases, the goals are shared  
25 between the City and these houses of worship, we all



1 wish to make New York stronger place, because of the  
2 gifts that people come from around the city around  
3 the world with... and other times there are  
4 obstacles that the city has (TIMER CHIMES) created.  
5 Those include the general obstacle of hostility in in  
6 so many places, often fanned by the flames of  
7 polarizing rhetoric. We've seen the obstacle of  
8 inconsistency across government agencies, houses of  
9 worship that set forward that as Council Member  
10 Brewer said, are often stymied by bureaucratic  
11 regulations despite the invitation, and, finally, the  
12 destabilizing impact of the 30 and 60 day rule - the  
13 evictions, the reticketing and so forth. And right  
14 now, those warming centers just add an extra step in  
15 prohibiting the ability of people to settle in. We  
16 wonder if they if the places that are currently  
17 providing chairs have even been asked if they would  
18 be able to provide cots that would help people get a  
19 night of sleep.

21 So, thank you very much. We hope that moving  
22 forward we can be more aligned with goals that we all  
23 as New Yorkers embrace. And if we want evidence that  
24 we've all been able to do this before, I think a  
25 visit to the Tenement Museum on the Lower East Side

1  
2 is a good reminder that immigration is truly one of  
3 New York City's life blood. So, thank you.

4 Madam Chair, my name is Madeline Elfenbein and I  
5 am one of 6,000 members of Jews for Racial and  
6 Economic Justice. I'm here today to speak and  
7 support of ending shelter restrictions as a Yorker as  
8 a parent and as a Jew my child is a student at PS 125  
9 in Morningside Heights last September she started  
10 second grade along with two new classmates who are  
11 asylum seekers from Venezuela in December. We learned  
12 that one of them was forced to leave because our  
13 family had been turned out of their shelter after  
14 reaching the 60 day limit her classmates road letters  
15 to mayor Adams to let him know what happened, and  
16 here is a part of the letter that my daughter wrote  
17 would you like to have made friends and have to leave  
18 them. I definitely would not like that. My friend  
19 Chris Marie had to leave our class because she had no  
20 housing. I think you should give migrants more  
21 housing so no one has to leave their friends. How is  
22 it that a second grader understands what our city  
23 does not the cruelty shelter restrictions goes beyond  
24 the children and forces out into the cold. It rubs  
25 off on all of us. In fact, much of our city does

1 understand this. Our school has doesn't of students  
2 were asylum seekers. We have room for them, and we  
3 are glad to welcome them across the city as we just  
4 heard Ordinary New Yorkers are stepping up we're  
5 doing our best to find shoes and coats and underwear  
6 and toothbrushes and jobs for our new neighbors, but  
7 our best efforts are not enough when our city  
8 government refuses to do its part and provide the  
9 bare minimum, which is a safe place to return to  
10 every night instead, the current labyrinth theme  
11 bureaucracy, we just heard describe in detail only  
12 adds to their litany of hardships. The system is not  
13 doing its job. The cruelty of these restrictions  
14 would be bad enough on their own, but it's deeply  
15 offensive the way this cruelty is being justified as  
16 if it were on our behalf. What I've heard from the  
17 mouth of our New York mayor is beyond what I ever  
18 expected to hear, and I'll say that, as a Jew, the  
19 hairs on the back of my next stand up when I hear him  
20 blame migrants for the budget cut, he proposes for  
21 reasons of his own. My four bears are migrants. All  
22 of our four bears are migrants, and today's migrants  
23 do not threaten my will but the mayors xenophobic  
24 lies, and his policies do for racial economic  
25

1 justice, stands alongside dozens of other groups in  
2 calling foul on the mayors attempt to put the house  
3 against the unhoused. We know that all of us come  
4 from somewhere that we are all here together now, and  
5 there are fats are bound together. I also just want  
6 to end by saying that our kids are watching us the  
7 people sleeping in the rough every day, they see  
8 their friends disappearing from classrooms. They see  
9 people falling asleep while standing up, waiting in  
10 line for a chance to sleep in doors they want to know  
11 what kind of a city they're being raised in. Are we a  
12 city that turns it back on their friends. Thank you

14 MADELEINE ELFENBEIN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

15 My name is Madeline Elfenbein, and I am one of  
16 6,000 members of Jews for Racial and Economic  
17 Justice. I'm here today to speak and support of  
18 ending shelter restrictions as a Yorker, as a parent,  
19 and as a Jew.

20 My child is a student at PS 125 in Morningside  
21 Heights. Last September, she started second grade  
22 along with two new classmates who are asylum seekers  
23 from Venezuela. In December, we learned that one of  
24 them was forced to leave, because our family had been  
25 turned out of their shelter after reaching the 60 day

1  
2 limit. Her classmates wrote letters to Mayor Adams to  
3 let him know what happened, and here is a part of the  
4 letter that my daughter wrote. "Would you like to  
5 have made friends and have to leave them? I  
6 definitely would not like that. My friend, Chris  
7 Marie, had to leave our class, because she had no  
8 housing. I think you should give migrants more  
9 housing so no one has to leave their friends." How is  
10 it that a second grader understands what our city  
11 does not? The cruelty of shelter restrictions goes  
12 beyond the children it forces out into the cold, it  
13 rubs off on all of us. In fact, much of our city does  
14 understand this. Our school has dozens of students  
15 who are asylum seekers. We have room for them, and we  
16 are glad to welcome them. And across the city, as we  
17 just heard, ordinary New Yorkers are stepping up.  
18 We're doing our best to find shoes and coats and  
19 underwear and toothbrushes and jobs for our new  
20 neighbors. But, our best efforts are not enough when  
21 our city government refuses to do its part and  
22 provide the bare minimum, which is a safe place to  
23 return to every night. Instead, the current  
24 labyrinth-themed bureaucracy we just heard described  
25 in detail, only adds to their litany of hardships.



1  
2 indoors. They want to know what kind of a city  
3 they're being raised in. Are we a city that turns it  
4 back on their friends? Thank you

5 ANTHONY FELICIANO: Thank you, Chairperson Ayala  
6 and Council Member Hanif, for the opportunity to  
7 testify today.

8 My name is Anthony Feliciano, I am Vice President  
9 for Advocacy at Housing Works. Housing works comes  
10 today, because we are in support of the proposed  
11 Local Laws under consideration by the Council.

12 Housing Works is proud to operate two hotels for  
13 asylum-seeking families that currently house 535  
14 individuals, of whom almost half -244- are children.  
15 Each household we serve is eager to work, to  
16 contribute to the life of New York City while  
17 bettering their lives. They have the same hopes and  
18 dreams as every group of immigrants that have come to  
19 our City and have made it the rich and diverse place  
20 that we love. Indeed, the asylum seekers we house  
21 have a deep culture of working and are eager to gain  
22 employment, they take the best possible care of their  
23 families, and they endeavor to ensure that their  
24 children receive the education they deserve. But,  
25 like every group of new immigrants they are dealing

1  
2 with formidable legal, language, and cultural  
3 challenges. Erecting additional barriers to basic  
4 survival services can only deepen their  
5 marginalization. Housing Works believes that as a  
6 City we have not only a legal but also moral  
7 obligation to provide safe shelter for new arrivals.

8       We at Housing Works are deeply relieved that the  
9 asylum-seeking families we serve in our Department of  
10 Homeless Services-funded hotels are not impacted by  
11 Mayor Adams' 60-day shelter limit – at least not yet,  
12 at least not yet.

13       We have been shocked, but nothing could have  
14 prepared us for the unimaginable next step of  
15 imposing a 60-day limit on safe shelter for families  
16 who happened to be housed in shelters operated other  
17 agencies, such as the Office of Emergency Management  
18 and Health + Hospitals' system.

19       Housing Works and the new immigrants we house  
20 have every reason to believe that this lawless and  
21 unconscionable process of denying shelter will  
22 continue unless the City Council steps in to stop it  
23 as you are doing now.

24       We are all be proud that our New York State  
25 constitution, reflected in over 40 years of court



1 orders and local laws, requires that our City and  
2 State provide shelter and services (TIMER CHIMES) to  
3 all single adults and families experiencing  
4 homelessness.  
5

6 It is simply not true that we lack the resources  
7 and capacity to meet current needs. What we lack is  
8 political will. In the face of record homelessness, a  
9 record number of evictions, and unacceptable numbers  
10 of vacant affordable and supportive housing units, we  
11 can and must deploy every tool at our disposal to  
12 keep low-income households from losing housing and  
13 get New Yorkers experiencing homelessness back into  
14 permanent housing more quickly.

15 We of course join the call on the Federal  
16 government to increase funding to help the City meet  
17 the needs of new immigrants, and to grant immediate  
18 work authorization for new arrivals who desperately  
19 want employment.

20 Meanwhile; however, these new immigrants who have  
21 undertaken long and arduous journeys at the risk of  
22 their lives are our neighbors, and we cannot abandon  
23 them.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you, and thank you all  
25 for your support. Obviously, we heard today from

1 those two brave individuals who came in to testify.

2 And I say brave, because there were people who were

3 registered to speak and did not feel comfortable

4 coming in to do so, because they fear retaliation.

5 And it takes a lot, and it shouldn't take so much

6 energy and mental clarity to come here and be able to

7 share your truth. So, thank you, because I know that

8 without the resources that you all provide

9 individually, these individuals would be completely

10 lost. And please thank your daughter for that

11 beautiful note. From the mouth of babes, right? Thank

12 you.

13  
14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel for

15 your testimony.

16 We will now move to the next panel, which will be

17 a hybrid panel. It will be comprised of Christine

18 Clarke, Alexandra Dougherty, Chris Mann, Will Watts,

19 Jose Perez, and these are all individuals joining us

20 in person, and virtually, Adam Roberts.

21 And we will begin with those who are in person.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: You may begin.

23 CHRISTINE CLARKE: Good afternoon, Chair Ayala,

24 thank you for the opportunity testify.

25

1  
2 My name is Christine Clarke and the Chief of  
3 Litigation Advocacy at Legal Services NYC. We provide  
4 civil legal services to over 100,000 low income New  
5 Yorkers every year in range of areas, including  
6 housing, immigration, law, family law, public  
7 benefits assistance, and workers' rights.

8 Many of our clients are immigrants, and many of  
9 them have experienced occur experiencing  
10 homelessness. Some of them are in the shelter systems  
11 that were talking about today.

12 I don't think I have anything to say that  
13 probably isn't gonna be said by my colleagues, but I  
14 felt obligation on behalf of my clients and my  
15 neighbors to say it anyways.

16 These length of stay restrictions being imposed  
17 on newly arrived New Yorkers are cruel, unnecessary,  
18 and punitive by design. They, in many ways, harm  
19 children the most - I think we've talked about that a  
20 lot today. It prevents them from creating the  
21 community bonds that children need to thrive,  
22 particularly children in crisis, or children who have  
23 experienced trauma. It prevents them from getting an  
24 education of really any kind, let alone the of  
25

1  
2 education the New York State Constitution promises  
3 them.

4 I think we've heard a lot from the Administration  
5 today implying the kids aren't being moved out of  
6 their schools. You know, we're New Yorkers, these are  
7 our neighbors, their kids go to school with our kids  
8 - we know what's happening with them, and these  
9 parents are in crisis. They're terrified of what's  
10 going happen to their kids.

11 Of course, this chronic instability hurts  
12 children, not only the newly-arrived children - we've  
13 heard from teachers and parents about the harms, for  
14 example, the letter that that person who just  
15 testified about that her kid wrote, you know this is  
16 destabilizing for the entire classroom. It is  
17 horrible for children to watch these kids cycle in  
18 and out of their schools and not be able to make  
19 friends with them - and to explain to them why it's  
20 happening that's heartbreaking.

21 There are a slew of collateral consequences that  
22 happen from limits for children -for everybody.

23 (TIMER CHIMES) It prevents people from getting  
24 employment, obtaining work authorization, and  
25

1  
2 maintaining the stability that the Administration  
3 claims to want.

4 I do want to say briefly, the extent that the  
5 Administration refers repeatedly to his as an  
6 "emergency" or a "crisis", implies that it's short  
7 term or that it's going to end soon, and there's no  
8 reason to think that. We have to come up with long-  
9 term solutions, and making 50,000 people sleep on the  
10 streets or in waiting rooms every 60 days, is not a  
11 long-term solution. Thank you so much again, I really  
12 appreciate the opportunity to testify.

13 ALEXANDRA DOUGHERTY: Hi, good afternoon.

14 My name is Alexandra Dougherty, and I am a Senior  
15 Staff Attorney and Policy Counsel of the Civil  
16 Justice Practice at Brooklyn Defenders, and I would  
17 like to thank the Council for inviting us to testify  
18 today.

19 I would specifically like to talk about barriers  
20 to accessing shelter, as well as increasing instances  
21 of punitive actions by shelter staff, which has made  
22 the right to shelter inaccessible too many New  
23 Yorkers.

24 All families living in shelter are under high  
25 levels of stress and uncertainty and are subject to

1  
2 heightened surveillance. Residents are at an  
3 increased risk of contact with the criminal and  
4 family legal systems, because shelter staff are not  
5 adequately trained to deescalate potential conflicts,  
6 and they often resort calling law enforcement or ACS  
7 rather than problem solving. And this just  
8 perpetuates the trauma and disruption that residents  
9 are already experiencing.

10       Recently, we have been seeing shelter staff call  
11 ACS report residents based on completely unfounded  
12 allegations and minor shelter rule infractions.

13       One client was recently informed that a failure  
14 to participate in a mandatory fire drill, which was  
15 set to happen within a 24-hour window, would be  
16 considered child neglect and would result in an ACS  
17 complaint.

18       Involvement in the criminal or family legal  
19 systems can have particularly devastating  
20 consequences for any family, but for particularly for  
21 recently arrived immigrants without legal or pending  
22 status.

23       An arrest alone can lead an asylum seeker to  
24 immigration detention, and the recently announced  
25 changes to our detainer laws would allow ICE to

1  
2 detain and deport someone without any criminal trial  
3 or conviction even. Amidst this environment, shelters  
4 are increasingly creating a pipeline from migrant  
5 shelters to the criminal and family systems.

6 Because our clients are often navigating (TIMER  
7 CHIMES)... I will direct you to our written testimony  
8 for more detail.

9 I will just wrap up by saying that we wholly  
10 support today's bills, it is an important step to  
11 ensuring the right shelter for all New Yorkers. And  
12 we'd like to encourage the City to take this  
13 opportunity to address problems in shelters with more  
14 about robust social services, as folks before me have  
15 mentioned. We need access to benefits and housing  
16 subsidies in all shelters. We need access to mental  
17 health care, legal services, to get folks into  
18 permanent, stable housing.

19 CHRIS MANN: Good afternoon, thank you, Deputy  
20 Speaker, for having this hearing today.

21 My name Chris Mann, I am the Assistant Vice  
22 President of Policy and Advocacy at WIN. We are the  
23 largest provider of shelter for families experiencing  
24 homelessness in New York and also the nation. We

1  
2 serve around 7,000 people every night, including more  
3 than 3,600 children.

4 And through all of this, I always try to remind  
5 people that 75% of the new arrivals that are coming  
6 are families with children. So, these 30 and 60 day  
7 rule policies are having a direct impact, not just on  
8 single adults, which is egregious, but particularly  
9 on children.

10 WIN is proud to provide shelter for families in  
11 need, helping satisfy the City's right to shelter.  
12 Since its inception four decades ago, the right to  
13 shelter has prevented nearly a million people from  
14 having to sleep on the streets.

15 We know that are right to shelter sets us apart  
16 from other cities, and we should be proud of that. We  
17 should be protecting that. And we also know it's  
18 popular - in a poll commissioned by WIN and The New  
19 York Immigration Commission Coalition, we found that  
20 80% of New Yorkers support the right to shelter. So,  
21 it's not just humane, but it's also supported by a  
22 very large majority of New Yorkers.

23 Unfortunately, Mayor Adams has a eroded the right  
24 to shelter by implementing the 30 and 60 day  
25 policies. Because of these forceful evictions,



1  
2 thousands of homeless New Yorkers and migrants have  
3 been evicted from shelter and forced to the streets.

4 We know what these policies do - they rip  
5 children out of their schools, they disconnect  
6 families from the support network that they have  
7 built, and they force people onto the streets - all  
8 during the coldest months of the year.

9 Right now, there are over 4,000 people waiting  
10 for shelter placement, and more than 1,000 people on  
11 the street (TIMER CHIMES) as a result of these  
12 policies.

13 We are to support Council Member Hanif's  
14 legislation, Intro 210, that would ban the 30 and 60  
15 day rules. And I'll end by saying, the only answer to  
16 mitigating homelessness is housing. We need to  
17 implement the CityFHEPS expansion that you all passed  
18 this summer; get faith-based shelter beds online,  
19 make sure that people have legal ability to work, so  
20 that they can really thrive.

21 WILL WATTS: Good afternoon, thank you, Deputy  
22 Speaker and the Council for this opportunity to speak  
23 with you today.

24 My name is Will Watts, and I am the Deputy  
25 Executive Director for Advocacy with the Coalition

1  
2 for the Homeless, which has over 40 year, been  
3 defending, expanding, and protecting the right to  
4 shelter along with our partner, Legal Aid Society.

5       When I was here in August, I opposed our  
6 arbitrary time limits on shelter stays that failed to  
7 consider each person's individual circumstances. What  
8 we have witnessed at Saint Brigid reinforces our  
9 conviction that no policy should relegate people to  
10 sleeping on chairs, on bare floors, the streets, or  
11 in the subway. We encounter numerous people who,  
12 like the gentlemen from earlier today, are  
13 experiencing such horrors after reaching the end of  
14 their 30 day in shelter. Take for instance, Mr. Amir  
15 from Sudan, at the time we met him, he had been  
16 without a placement for 20 days. He diligently  
17 returned to Saint Brigid day after day, waiting for  
18 his number to be called for a new shelter bed.  
19 Unsuccessful, his only option was to return to a  
20 church that he had been staying at in order to escape  
21 the cold - something that was actually really  
22 important for him, because he suffers from a heart  
23 condition that is aggravated by cold weather. Yet,  
24 there were evenings when he wouldn't make it back to  
25 the church in time, so his only option was to stay in

1  
2 the subway. Now, this was a foreseeable result of a  
3 policy focusing more on shuffling people around than  
4 keeping them in shelter, engaging in the casework  
5 that's necessary to facilitate transition to self-  
6 sufficiency.

7 To our knowledge, families with minor children  
8 are not having the same experience; nonetheless, the  
9 60 day limits are equally inhumane and unnecessary,  
10 especially when the state Migrant Relocation  
11 Assistance Program has housed only 174 families.  
12 Instead of subjecting children to disruptions in  
13 their education, (TIMER CHIMES) and further trauma,  
14 this Administration should, among other things, be  
15 putting pressure on the governor to improve that  
16 program, so that more families can be resettled in  
17 permanent housing. Otherwise, it's just a matter of  
18 time before families with children will be sheltering  
19 in subways just like Mr. Amir. Thank you

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I don't think that  
21 people understand the dynamics of what's happening  
22 here and just how many hands it takes to really  
23 ensure that we are providing adequate resources for  
24 human beings. Because these are people. As I am  
25 sitting here listening to you, the mother of the

1  
2 young man that was murdered at Randalls Island is  
3 sending me a photo of her son arriving to Venezuela,  
4 and you know, how badly she feels that she had to get  
5 her son back in this way. But, I don't think as I  
6 am... The more I learn about this, this is a very  
7 difficult subject. And there has been so much that  
8 has been said, that has I think poisoned ,you know,  
9 the minds of your average New Yorkers into thinking  
10 that ,you know, people who are asylum seekers,  
11 migrants, are ,you know, are the bad guys here - not  
12 realizing ,you know, that families like the one that  
13 I was just talking ,you know, they're making \$20 a  
14 week in salaries and have to feed and entire  
15 families. Young children, people who are really ,you  
16 know, that are persecuted, and have to stand in line,  
17 sometimes for days, just to be able to have access to  
18 the bag of rice to have something to put on the  
19 table. So, they don't leave willingly just because  
20 we're offering ,you know, all of these lavish gifts -  
21 because we're *not*. They leave out of necessity. And,  
22 when they get here, we have a responsibility to make  
23 sure that they're safe while they are under care. And  
24 I want to be clear, I've always said that I don't  
25 believe that ,you know, we should house people

1 indefinitely. We shouldn't. We should be helping them  
2 figure out what the path is towards self-sufficiency  
3 - and that requires intensive case management. And  
4 that is why ,you know, I asked that question at the  
5 beginning, it is because I think that that factor is  
6 missing, and, unfortunately, a lot of you are filling  
7 in those gaps. But, the demand is higher than ,you  
8 know, even with all of these resources we are able to  
9 really truly effectuate any change. So, thank you for  
10 your services, and thank you for coming today. I  
11 think this is important not only to show solidarity  
12 and support for, uhm, the bills that are being  
13 introduced, but also to shine a light on your  
14 experiences. Because, those experiences are real,  
15 too. So, thank you, and I think we have one more  
16 person online.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we will turn it over to  
19 Adam Roberts who is on Zoom.

20 ADAM ROBERTS: Thank you for holding this hearing  
21 today. I am Adam Roberts, Policy Director for the  
22 Community Housing Improvement Program also known as  
23 CHIP. We represent New York's housing providers,  
24 including apartment building owners and managers. Our  
25 members operate New York's rent-stabilized housing,

1  
2 which makes up nearly 1 million units of affordable  
3 housing for voucher holders and other New Yorkers.

4 We strongly support Intro 210 and other  
5 legislation that would prohibit city agencies from  
6 imposing limits on the length of shelter stays.  
7 Shelter stay restrictions create a major challenge to  
8 residents looking for permanent housing. They rely on  
9 shelters as temporary housing while awaiting  
10 placement in rent-stabilized or other types of  
11 permanent housing. The approval process to place a  
12 voucher holders can take up to six months. Yet,  
13 limiting the length of time in shelters, even with  
14 other actions the Council has taken - like expanding  
15 voucher eligibility - will not sufficiently help  
16 shelter residents secure permanent housing. The  
17 biggest obstacle to permanently housing shelter  
18 residents is the lack of rental housing currently  
19 available to voucher holders.

20 Tens of thousands of rent-stabilized units remain  
21 vacant after long-term occupancies. According to the  
22 Independent Budget Office, 42,275 units were vacant  
23 in 2022, of which 13,362 were vacant for two years.  
24 The 2023 Housing and Vacancy Survey showed there were  
25

1  
2 26,310 units "vacant but not available," in the first  
3 six months of 2023.

4       These apartments remain vacant because the  
5 renovation costs are incredibly costly. Most  
6 apartments coming off long-term occupancies require  
7 lead abatement, asbestos remediation, kitchen and  
8 bathroom renovation, electrical rewiring, and  
9 subfloor replacement, which combined can cost  
10 \$100,000 for a one-bedroom unit.

11       This problem is compounded by a voucher holder's  
12 inability to use the full amount of their voucher if  
13 the apartment's legal rent is below the voucher  
14 amount. Two years ago, the State created Private  
15 Housing Finance Law 610 to address this problem.  
16 Unfortunately, city agencies refuse to implement this  
17 law, (TIMER CHIMES) severely reducing the amount and  
18 quality of housing available to voucher holders.  
19 Voucher holders would have access to better quality  
20 housing if this law were implemented as broadly as  
21 the statutory language permits.

22       We appreciate the Council's commitment to housing  
23 current and prospective voucher holders, particularly  
24 those residing in shelters. However, we need to  
25 ensure homes are actually available for shelter

1  
2 residents so there are places to permanently house  
3 them.

4 Again, thank you for holding this hearing today.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

6 We are now going to move on to the next panel...  
7 Thank you to this panel for your testimony.

8 The next panel will be comprised of Jose Perez,  
9 Johan Velasquez, Ameya Biradavolu, Towaki Komatsu,  
10 Ann Fawcett Ambia, and Christopher Johnson.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: We are going to start on the  
12 right.

13 JOSE PEREZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 TRANSLATOR: Yes, okay, so he is thanking you  
16 guys, and then he is basically saying that he wants  
17 to talk about issues surrounding social security?

18 (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

19 JOSE PEREZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

20 TRANSLATOR: He is saying that they say that they  
21 offer these services, but when you arrive at the  
22 place, they don't have the services. And those  
23 services just send you to another place.

24 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)



1  
2 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon, we are both migrants  
3 from Venezuela.

4 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

5 TRANSLATOR: (TIMER CHIMES) We are here because we  
6 have issues with the system that are very obvious.

7 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

8 TRANSLATOR: We have come to our government,  
9 because we are struggling and we need assistance.

10 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 TRANSLATOR: Because we are migrants, and we only  
12 have a certain amount of... 30 days before we can  
13 leave...

14 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 TRANSLATOR: He is saying that he has his social  
16 security already, but he is not able to find a job,  
17 and he needs more support, and he's not getting it in  
18 order to actually get on his feet.

19 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

20 TRANSLATOR: He is saying the food in the shelters  
21 is not sufficient, and they have to go to the  
22 churches to get food.

23 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

24 TRANSLATOR: So, today they decided, because they  
25 are not getting enough food, to come to City Hall,

1  
2 and coincidentally, today, we were talking about this  
3 issue, and there was as protest outside about this  
4 issue.

5 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

6 TRANSLATOR: He is saying (TIMER CHIMES)

7 coincidentally, he spoke to one of the people in the  
8 protest outside, and he said, "Because of destiny, we  
9 are having this city council meeting, and you can  
10 speak your issues here right now, today."

11 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 TRANSLATOR: He migrated here, and they are  
13 urgently needing recourses to mobilize themselves.

14 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 TRANSLATOR: You guys understand, but basically  
16 instead of focusing on just getting people out within  
17 30 days, focus on helping people be connected with  
18 job opportunities, so that they can, in turn, leave  
19 the shelters, because they would have work to support  
20 themselves.

21 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: He's basically annoyed with  
23 ,you know, because the focus has been on transiting  
24 people in and out of the shelter system within the 30  
25 day timeline, and enough effort has been put into

1  
2 ensuring that they are employed, even when some of  
3 them actually do have the ability to work - because  
4 he has his papers, and hasn't been able to identify  
5 work. But, he is looking for work, so that he can  
6 rent his own apartment so that he can exit the  
7 shelter. And, so, he would rather that the attention  
8 be on helping him do that as opposed to being laser  
9 focused on evicting him every 30 days. Gracias.

10 JOHAN VELASQUEZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

11 JOSE PEREZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

13 JOSE PEREZ: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

15 So, you know, basically, I think the gentlemen  
16 just expressed ,you know, a need for better food.  
17 He's very appreciative for the food that is being  
18 given, because it is better than none. But, it isn't  
19 ,you know, enough. Sometimes they get a little pack  
20 of cereal, a piece of bread, and it is just ,you  
21 know, nutritionally it's not the best meal for grown  
22 people. And, so, you know, again, while he is  
23 appreciative, they could do better by that. He is  
24 also requesting... emphasizing the need for more  
25 social services, so that people are in the shelters

1  
2 helpin to redirect them and helping them start  
3 planning that life goal to self-sufficiency, because  
4 that component is missing. Gracias.

5 PANEL: Gracias

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Can you make sure that your  
7 mic is on, ma'am?

8 ANN FAWCETT AMBIA: My name is Anne Fawcett Ambia,  
9 I am a retired public interest attorney, and I'm a  
10 member of an organization in Bay Ridge that has been  
11 going out to Floyd Bennett Field at least once a week  
12 since December.

13 As you probably know, Floyd Bennett Field is four  
14 miles in either direction from anything, and there is  
15 no subways there - just the bus that runs down  
16 Flatbush Avenue.

17 In the beginning, in December, we were bringing  
18 shoes and jackets, because people didn't have them.  
19 We've been asked for blankets and medicines, because  
20 of the children being sick, so we've been bringing  
21 Children's Tylenol and things like that. People are  
22 really cold in the tents, and so that's the blankets  
23 - and then when the evictions started, we were asked  
24 for suitcases.

1  
2 But, I want to talk about... and we're... our  
3 access to being able to bring things there is being  
4 severely restricted, which I can tell you more about  
5 if you want to know.

6 But, one of the things I haven't heard anybody  
7 talk about yet is mail. I've met people from the  
8 Muslim Community Network, who were doing work in the  
9 Bronx, who told me that people in the places that  
10 they're going to are having the same problem. In  
11 Floyd Bennett Field, the mail comes in a huge box,  
12 and it's dumped on a table. People cannot find their  
13 mail. I've talked to five women on February 10th,  
14 who told me... Well, their car ID cards that they  
15 have to show when they go through the gate, will  
16 register when somethings been mailed. So, they told  
17 me that they were informed that on January 25th,  
18 their IDNYC cards had been mailed, and on February  
19 10th, they had not received them. And they can't...  
20 the mail isn't sorted. It's in huge piles, so they  
21 don't know if it's been stolen by someone else. One  
22 person told me she thought (TIMER CHIMES) some of the  
23 guards were involved in bribery schemes for being  
24 able to get your mail. But, when you add...



1  
2 did, and I never got a call back. And then the one  
3 place that I did get through, after calling three  
4 times and it being busy, told me that they only have  
5 a few countries where they represent people in.

6 But, as an attorney I did political asylum cases  
7 in the 90's, and it's a very specialized field. You  
8 cannot go into a hearing and meet an attorney 30  
9 minutes before your hearing and have them able to  
10 represent you adequately. Because, you have to have  
11 proof, you know, when you're talking about being  
12 persecuted as a member of a protected group...  
13 allegedly under US law, you have to be able to  
14 establish evidence of one kind or another from the  
15 region that you're from. And one of the women I've  
16 talked to walked to the border from Ecuador. Her  
17 husband died in the Darién Gap. She is Shuar. She's  
18 from a jungle region in Ecuador that has had a lot of  
19 problems with oil and mining extraction that have  
20 polluted the land, and people are being killed if  
21 they protest about the water being polluted. Those  
22 companies are no longer American. They're  
23 nationalized under the Ecuadorian government, but  
24 nothing has changed in terms of what they're going  
25 through. She had two little children, and that leads

1  
2 me to another issue, which I've heard from many  
3 people...

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: We need to move on to the next  
5 person, but...

6 ANN FAWCETT AMBIA: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: But, I want to thank for that,  
8 because I think you are absolutely right. And it is  
9 something that didn't come up, the mail issue, it's  
10 strictly important, because people are getting very  
11 important notifications that's being lost in the  
12 transition. So, thank you for highlighting that, and  
13 thank you for your donations and ability to get in  
14 and out of the shelters to bring in goods to the  
15 families who need them.

16 ANN FAWCETT AMBIA: Well, we are not being allowed  
17 in anymore... (CROSS-TALK)

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: We should definitely talk  
19 about that, thank you.

20 Yes, go ahead?

21 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello, my name is Leon  
22 Johnson, and I am for the state of the 30-60 day  
23 rule. What I believe about the mayor, what he's  
24 trying to do is ridiculous. He wants to stuff,  
25 because the money. But, he's just mad because Biden



1  
2 is not paying him back and he's out of the  
3 (INAUDIBLE) the Biden reelection campaign for the  
4 mayor's team.

5 But, I want to say this right now about this  
6 stuff, uh, where was... I want to know why didn't  
7 Alexa Avilés, who is Immigration Chair, talk about  
8 what happened recently with illegal immigrant  
9 shelters. She's the Immigration Chair, she should  
10 have brought this up, because we have a couple  
11 migrants here right now, and I think they're going  
12 through this, too. I don't know, they probably are  
13 with illegal migrant shelters where you have to pay X  
14 amount of money in a donation to stay. We don't know  
15 how they are being been treated. We don't know  
16 how... if they've been abused, sexually abused, and I  
17 think the city council needs to bring about hearing  
18 about sexual abuses in the shelter system related to  
19 Migrant Committee in conjunction with Immigration  
20 Committee.

21 Now, what happened yesterday, it was a African  
22 immigrant who owns two businesses in Joann Ariola's  
23 district and Oswald Feliz's district; I didn't see  
24 these two here to say anything. They didn't come to  
25 do a walkthrough. They didn't come through at all.

1  
2 So, I don't think they really care about the  
3 migrants, other than you to say, like, deport, uhm,  
4 get rid of migrants. I think it's kind of stupid.  
5 They're already here, you can't do anything it.

6 But, I'm at this point right now, like, the  
7 mayor, what he's trying to do, is he trying to get  
8 republican support, he's trying to get conservative  
9 and moderate support for reelection, because he's  
10 scared of a potential primary probably from Scott  
11 (INAUDIBLE). And this is all it's about, he's trying  
12 appease the right, but he's trying to keep the  
13 republican support. I think he's kind of stupid, but  
14 it just... this the 30-60 rule need to stay. These  
15 people are here, there is nothing you can really do  
16 about it. You can say close the border all or you  
17 want, that's a different topic, but (TIMER CHIMES)  
18 they're already here. You can't do it about it. It is  
19 what it is so. I'm for the rule. Keep it, please,  
20 thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Appreciate it, thank you.

22 TOWAKI KOMATSU: You represent Harlem, right? So,  
23 basically, I have been in two shelters in Harlem. I  
24 was assaulted in one of them on February 15th, I took  
25 six punches to my head. DHS keeps transferring me to

1 shelters for mentally ill people. I don't have mental  
2 illness. I don't have a drug problem. I've never been  
3 convicted of any crime. So, the point is, you're the  
4 chairwoman of this committee, what can you do to stop  
5 DHS from transferring people to known dangerous  
6 shelters? After I was assaulted, I went to the  
7 hospital, and when I came back my assailant was still  
8 there. He was still there the next day.

10 I have a fair hearing today against DHS assigned  
11 to OTDA. There was supposed to be an earlier fair  
12 hearing on February 20th, the problem is OTDA sent me  
13 the scheduling notice one day after the fair hearing  
14 was supposed to occur. I talked to Miss Park, who  
15 lied to your face while she testified today. I asked  
16 her today, uh, how come I didn't get the evidence  
17 packet for today's hearing? She totally ignored me. I  
18 testified to you previously about that specific  
19 issue. I also testified to you previously about the  
20 fact that HRA or DHS won't let me in their doors to  
21 exam draft versions of proposed contracts. There was  
22 one this week involving Legal Aid. So, don't you  
23 think if I am going to have a fair hearing today, it  
24 would be helpful if I knew what that contract would  
25 entail to find out when I was in the Bronx housing

1 court, why a Legal Aid attorney told the judge,  
2 "Sorry, but we are not going to represent him,  
3 because this isn't our day to do that." So, the  
4 point is, you're funding all of these organizations,  
5 but at the end of the day, there is no oversight. You  
6 talked about x-ray machines, the shelter at 55 West  
7 110th Street by Central Park, you walk in the door,  
8 they didn't check my bag. So, I sarcastically asked  
9 them, "How many guns do you think I could fit in that  
10 medium-sized duffel bag? Uh, how many knives?" They  
11 did that on three or four occasions. So, you have  
12 video security cameras installed in the lobby, if you  
13 issue a subpoena against BRC, the operator of that  
14 shelter, you can get the video. (TIMER CHIMES) So,  
15 again, I'm not going to waste your time.... this  
16 testimony... Your team recently asked to intervene in  
17 a case, Judge Frank is the assigned judge to that  
18 case. He also the same judge assigned to my case  
19 against HRA. So, I am going to ask Judge Frank, since  
20 when I come here to testify to you, I leave here, and  
21 then I get six punches to my head, only because  
22 people like you - basically the position you guys  
23 take towards me is, to hell with you.  
24  
25

1  
2           AMEYA BIRADAVOLU: Sorry, I am kind of hot and  
3 cold and the same time, so bear with me. My name is  
4 Ameya Biradavolu I'm a licensed social worker, and I  
5 managed one of the first shelters, if not the first  
6 shelter for asylum seekers in New York City in Harlem  
7 from 2019 to 2023 - but this shelter was there since  
8 2011.

9           I just want to say I was pretty disgusted with  
10 the Mayor's Office and their inability to recognize  
11 all of the service providers, mostly Black and brown,  
12 that have been here doing this work for years.

13           When I started managing the shelter, I was 25, so  
14 I don't really take excuses from other service  
15 providers putting out you know problematic policies  
16 and saying this is under the guise of care - it's not  
17 - as someone who's actually done that work on the  
18 ground, and trained other social workers to do that  
19 work on the ground.

20           I have first-hand experience on how to provide  
21 trauma informed care to asylum seekers through  
22 progressive shelter policies. I did this through the  
23 Trump administration's change and policies, through  
24 COVID, and through the Mayor's emergency crisis.  
25 Seventy-five percent of my clients received

1 permanent housing after year in New York City, and  
2 for the past eight months, I've been working  
3 alongside Malikah, mostly on a volunteer basis, to  
4 support over 850 asylum seekers with I.D., health  
5 insurance, food assistance, clothing assistance, and  
6 legal support. I've also been working as a volunteer  
7 with legal providers to set up pro se clinics this  
8 spring in lieu of the city's services.  
9

10 I am testifying again to pass the amendment to  
11 this bill. I'm especially concerned, because the day  
12 after New Year's, so this January 2nd, people were  
13 woken up out of their bed and told to leave with  
14 nowhere to go a few days before one of the coldest  
15 blizzards of the year.

16 I personally received phone calls from service  
17 providers, and this is the first winter in five years  
18 that I haven't been able to provide housing. So, it  
19 was especially heartbreaking being the one place  
20 where people Googled me from across... from other  
21 countries, press googled me from everywhere (TIMER  
22 CHIMES) and were able to find me, but the Mayor's  
23 office wasn't.

24 Clients have told me that they've experienced  
25 nights sleeping on the street in blizzard conditions,

1  
2 struggle to find food, and some people have been  
3 going through trash. If provided stays, they were  
4 provided one night emergency spaces were 3 to 400  
5 people are crammed into her room, mostly filled with  
6 pews, no beds, no pillows, and limited heat. Most of  
7 these places do not adhere to the building and safety  
8 regulations that any other shelter or nonprofit would  
9 need to operate and receive funding.

10       When I applied for House of Worship Funding, we  
11 were told that we'd have to spend hundreds of  
12 thousand dollars on a space that was fully renovated  
13 - over millions of dollars in renovations - a church  
14 - and we had the funding held in bureaucratic  
15 systems.

16       My one-to-two staff team did not have the  
17 capacity to continue with our private funding and  
18 remain and keep our shelter open. The only other  
19 alternative without the city shelters is sleeping on  
20 the street, where, even for me this winter, dressed  
21 in snow gear, I can't imagine spending more the five  
22 to 10 minutes out on the street, let alone someone's  
23 who has faced persecution and death threats - about  
24 three times within the course of a year. As someone  
25 who sheltered people from the cold, it breaks my

1 heart that many people experience their first winter  
2 on the streets, without winter clothes, and freezing  
3 temperatures.  
4

5 To file for asylum, you must fear persecution for  
6 your life and be on US soil at the time of filing the  
7 document [I-589]. Unlike refugees, asylum seekers are  
8 still being processed in the country and are  
9 therefore ineligible for most programs. They're not  
10 given refugee relocation assistance, which is a  
11 federal budget line since the 1980's that provides  
12 temporary stipends to resettle in the US. They also  
13 barred from SNAP, Medicaid, Social Security and other  
14 programs until the I-589 is received by the federal  
15 government; put on 180-day clock, and then a work  
16 authorization application is filed, and then  
17 processed and mailed back.

18 During those eight months, asylum seekers don't  
19 just wait in poverty, they wait in extreme poverty,  
20 and are reliant on mutual aid and shelters to fill  
21 this gap of services.

22 I'm confused why shelter limits don't take into  
23 consideration immigration policies that we know our  
24 clients are navigating. We know it takes 180 days for  
25 work authorization to process, and we know migration



1 happens during warm months, and shelter, needs are  
2 most important during winter.  
3

4 An asylum seeker without work authorization is  
5 5.6 times more likely to suffer from hunger. For most  
6 asylum seekers, they're experiencing their first  
7 winter without any winter clothes and without access  
8 to comprehensive healthcare. Just this year, over  
9 80,000 migrants have arrived in New York City, and  
10 almost 95% have not been informed that they have to  
11 file an I-589 form, which leaves asylum seekers in  
12 extreme poverty for longer stretches of time. Not  
13 only have people fled dire situations in their home  
14 country, but now they're also dealing with  
15 deportation and now housing insecurity in a new  
16 country where they fear further lives once again.

17 I'm confused as to why funding to service  
18 providers is continuously restricted when New York  
19 City this year has \$117 billion budget- which is more  
20 than most countries have. I don't understand why  
21 individuals have to fill the gaps that the city  
22 services should be managing. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: (APPLAUSE) Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel for  
25 your testimony.

1  
2 If we have inadvertently missed anyone who would  
3 like to testify in person, please visit the  
4 sergeants' table and complete a witness slip now.

5 And if we have inadvertently missed anyone who  
6 would like to testify virtually, please use the Zoom  
7 Raise Hand Function.

8 Seeing that there is no one else, I want to note  
9 that written testimonial, which will be reviewed in  
10 full by the committee staff, may be submitted to the  
11 record up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing  
12 by emailing it to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

13 Deputy Speaker Ayala, we have concluded public  
14 testimony for this hearing.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I want to take a  
16 moment to thank all of the individuals who came in to  
17 testify today. Obviously, we have a very broken  
18 system, and there remains a lot of work to be done.  
19 But, I think that ,you know, if anything positive  
20 came out of today, it was the realization that there  
21 are so many generous and kindhearted New Yorkers that  
22 will step in in times of need - and in times when  
23 government is lacking in their responsibilities.

24 (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE) With that, this hearing  
25 is adjourned. [GAVEL SOUND] [GAVELING OUT

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 March 24, 2024