

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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September 22, 2011
Start: 10:05 am
Recess: 12:15 pm

HELD AT: Hearing Room - 16th Floor
 250 Broadway

B E F O R E:

Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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Helen D. Foster
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CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Good morning, I'm Gale Brewer and in the very fabulous Council Member Annabel Palma's absence, I am chairing this Committee, I know she'll be back very soon. This particular topic is something that is a follow-up to the last hearing we had, and the incredible staff, particularly Jennifer Gomez, who is counsel to the Committee, Crystal Coston, who is the finance analyst, and Liz Hoffman, who is the policy analyst, and of course Megan Lynch and her amazing staff as the staff of Council Member Annabel Palma. So we're here to talk specifically about several introductions that are a follow-up to the last hearing we had on this topic of young people and public assistance. So as I indicated, I am Gale Brewer, and I am filling in for the great Annabel Palma, and I would like to welcome Commissioner Doar, Commissioner of HRA, and all of the individuals who care so deeply about this issue, and I mentioned the wonderful staff members. What we're talking about today are three bills that are follow-up to the last hearing, Intro 648 is a potential local law that would require HRA to display all information relating to

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2 youth and young adults who apply for public
3 assistance on the agency's; Intro 649 is a local
4 law that would require HRA to create a youth and
5 young adult applicant plan, and to designate an
6 individual responsible for creating and
7 implementing that plan; Intro 657 is a local law
8 that would require HRA to provide to the Council a
9 quarterly report regarding youths' and young
10 adults' access to public assistance. These three
11 pieces of legislation come out of a General
12 Welfare Committee oversight hearing held last
13 June, as I mentioned earlier, where we examined
14 the barriers that youth and young adults face in
15 accessing public assistance. At that hearing we
16 learned about challenges that existed in the
17 application process, such as the long wait times
18 at the HRA job centers, HRA's failure to provide
19 complete or accurate information about
20 eligibility, or to adequately assess the
21 individual needs of applicants in some cases, and
22 I know that people in the room will help figure
23 out what some of these challenges are, and I look
24 forward to hearing from them again. These
25 challenges affect anyone applying for public

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2 assistance regardless of age. However, we heard
3 from advocates that youth and young adults face a
4 unique set of challenges when applying for public
5 assistance, and there is a need to create
6 legislation that would improve not only their
7 ability to assess this assistance, but also to be
8 aware of their rights to obtain education,
9 training and employment. Here are some examples.
10 Anyone has the right to apply for public
11 assistance, regardless of age, but some staff seem
12 unaware of this policy, since the Committee has
13 heard repeatedly that HRA sometimes turns youth
14 and young adult applicants away simply because of
15 their age. Additionally, Federal and state law
16 clearly recognize the importance of education for
17 youth, for young people, who receive public
18 assistance, but the Committee has heard reports
19 that HRA often does not connect youth to the
20 educational services they need or they desire.
21 However, since HRA does not track data by age, we
22 do not know how many youth and young adults are
23 negatively affected by these practices, or how
24 many of them are able to navigate the system.
25 Legislation being considered at today's hearing

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2 seeks to create a system that is more successful
3 at insuring that youth and young adults understand
4 their rights, including the right to participate
5 in education or training programs to satisfy the
6 work requirements. Intro 648, this legislation
7 would require all information relating to youth
8 and young adults to be available on HRA's website
9 so that the youth and young adults are aware of
10 their rights when they visit an HRA job center.
11 Intro 649 legislation would also insure that HRA
12 develops a plan to better serve youth and young
13 adults by creating youth-specific assessment
14 tools, designing programs specifically for youth
15 and making staff aware of these policies. Intro
16 657, finally, since HRA does not currently track
17 applicant data by age, the legislation would
18 require HRA to collect and report data related to
19 youth in order to provide the Council with a
20 better understanding, and the public, a better
21 understanding of the needs of young applicants.
22 We look forward to continuing to work with HRA to
23 insure that our city is offering an effective
24 safety net to those who need it the most,
25 including youth and young adults applying for this

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2 vital assistance. And now we welcome Commissioner
3 Doar's testimony. I'd like to indicate that
4 Council Member Brad Lander has joined us from
5 Brooklyn. Commissioner.

6 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Good morning,
7 Council Member Brewer and members of the General
8 Welfare Committee, as you know I am Commissioner
9 Robert Doar of the Human Resources Administration.
10 With me today is Katy Gaul, Deputy Commissioner of
11 Employment for HRA's Family Independence Agency,
12 and Lisa Fitzpatrick, Deputy Commissioner for FIA
13 Operations. Thank you for the opportunity to
14 discuss Introductory numbers 648, 649 and 657.
15 Like the Council, I share your interest in making
16 sure that the young adults in New York City are
17 afforded the opportunities necessary to succeed in
18 life and become responsible adults.

19 Unfortunately, rather than encouraging HRA to
20 better link these young adults to established
21 programs in the city, these bills would suggest
22 replacing them with cash assistance. HRA
23 administers the Temporary Assistance for Needy
24 Families program under the supervision and
25 governance from both state and Federal

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2 governments. The TANF statute is clear, it is not
3 intended for households without children, although
4 in New York single adults are served with the
5 Safety Net Assistance program. As we mentioned in
6 our June testimony before the Committee, Federal
7 statute and state regulations are require that as
8 a condition of cash assistance eligibility, an
9 unmarried pregnant or parenting minor under 18
10 years of age must reside with a parent, legal
11 guardian or adult relative, unless the minor meets
12 a living arrangement exemption, which would allow
13 for receipt of cash welfare when it is unsafe for
14 a minor to live with a parent. It is clear the
15 program is intended to encourage youth to remain
16 attached to a responsible adult while part of the
17 welfare system. Also the TANF program does not
18 utilize the terms "youth" or "young adult", as
19 identified in these proposals, and instead refers
20 to "minor child" or "adult", with a minor child
21 being defined as anyone under 18, or under 19 if
22 in secondary school or the equivalent. Beyond
23 that age, they are considered adults. Overall we
24 have significant concerns about the underlying
25 assumption in these bills that a specialized

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2 approach should be created in the welfare system
3 for young adults under the age of 25. In the 15
4 years of administering the TANF program, we have
5 not received Federal or state guidance calling for
6 a differential approach to serving young adults,
7 or even youth, as head of households in the TANF
8 program. Not only HRA, but also the Department of
9 Small Business Services, has shown success in
10 placing youth and young adults in employment
11 without a specialized approach, with 30% of their
12 job placements for individuals under 25 years of
13 age at the Workforce One career centers.

14 Similarly, our Back to Work program offers over a
15 dozen services for all clients to find and keep a
16 job. These services are based on established
17 workforce practices such as resume building, job
18 search interviewing preparation, they're designed
19 to take into consideration employment barriers
20 regardless of age. Youth, like all clients, are
21 asked not only about their work experience, but
22 also about their skills and employment goals.

23 Similar to youth, there are several groups of
24 clients who might not have a robust work history,
25 such as those who were formerly homemakers or

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2 those released from residential settings. In all
3 cases the Back to Work program looks at the
4 client's interests and strengths. One of the
5 strengths of our Back to Work program is that it
6 helps young people who might lack a strong resume
7 develop the skills which can enable them to obtain
8 a first job. Due to the fact that HRA has
9 utilized these techniques towards the placement of
10 over 50,000 people in jobs in 2011 thus far, with
11 almost 11,000 under the age of 25, the need for a
12 youth-specific employment program at HRA has not
13 in our judgment been proven. We also are very
14 concerned about the unintended consequences of
15 encouraging school-age youth to apply for and take
16 advantage of cash assistance. We want to make
17 sure they receive the benefits they are eligible
18 for, but it should not be encouraged as a goal for
19 such a young population. As you know, the TANF
20 program has a lifetime maximum time limit of five
21 years, with many states using an even shorter
22 timeframe. A minor parent could therefore exhaust
23 the ability to participate in the TANF program
24 later on in their life. A reliance on cash
25 assistance is also contrary to the

1 administration's goal of family reunification and
2 self-sufficiencies for these disconnected youth.
3 I'd like to take some time to provide additional
4 feedback specific to each of the bills. As you
5 know, Intro 648 requires HRA to display on its
6 website all information relating to how high-
7 school-age youth and those between the ages of 20
8 and 25 can access public assistance, including
9 state and local statute, copies of state
10 regulations, state and city policy directives and
11 memorandums. This bill would create an
12 inconsistency between its definition of youth and
13 the way the state and Federal governments define
14 minor child and adult for TANF purposes. Although
15 we want our policies to be clearly understood and
16 available to potential applicants, we believe
17 requiring HRA to publicize the few exemptions in
18 Federal and state law that specify the narrow
19 rules for youth participation in TANF program as
20 the head of a household is a wrong approach,
21 however well-intentioned. Also, each and every
22 one of our policy documents for the cash
23 assistance and safety net programs affect or
24 concern all adults regardless of age. Posting the

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2 totality of information on the website would be a
3 major undertaking. Translating state statutes
4 into plain English would require significant
5 resources and oversteps our role with our state
6 oversight agency, which is responsible for
7 interpreting statutes. To post a public document
8 of our own interpretation of a statute could be
9 inappropriate. Although the legislative text of
10 Intro 649 is unclear on whether it requires the
11 creation of specific employment programs for
12 applicants and recipients under the age of 25, it
13 is clear that the intent is that there should be
14 such, a youth/young adult approach. The bill
15 suggests that this approach involve not only
16 specialized welfare employment programs, but also
17 training and education programs, as well as
18 specialized assessment tools. It also calls for
19 establishing youth liaisons at each job center.
20 Beyond the broader concerns over conflicts with
21 programs already existing in state and Federal
22 oversight, and other issues already mentioned, we
23 find the creation of youth liaisons in every job
24 center problematic. This designation would
25 require the hiring of specialized staff and

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2 corresponding supervisors to manage and evaluate
3 their performance. It is unclear what additional
4 skill sets are imagined for these liaisons, it
5 would also be difficult to manage an operation
6 where these liaisons are identified to meet with
7 all applicants under the age of 25. Our
8 experience is that with the press of business, it
9 is at times difficult in the centers to direct
10 applicants to a specific liaison in a timely
11 manner. This could lead to additional waiting
12 time for such applicants. If we were to create
13 these new positions, the cost of such liaisons and
14 their supervisors would be in the range of one and
15 a half to 1.7 million dollars annually. We also
16 disagree with the proposal to create different
17 assessment tools within the application and
18 investigation process for applicants under the age
19 of 25. The application, including the
20 investigation process, is part of the eligibility
21 process, and therefore setting up different
22 assessment standards would create unacceptable
23 disparities in the eligibility process. Within
24 the present intake process there are already a
25 host of questions that address persons with

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2 minimal to no employment history, and limited
3 educational backgrounds, as well as other barriers
4 which are common to all applicants, regardless of
5 age. We do not believe that HRA should be viewed
6 as the one stop for youth educational training and
7 employment resources. There are multiple
8 agencies, notably DYCD and the Department of
9 Education, that are well-suited to address the
10 well-intentioned purposes of these bills to help
11 identify available resources in the city that
12 support the education and training needs of youth.
13 Intro 657 requires HRA to quarterly report over
14 200 data elements to the City Council related to
15 minor children and adults under the age of 25
16 years. This information includes both applicant
17 and recipient data on case heads and members of
18 the household related to education and employment
19 outcomes and past history. We presently have a
20 very rich reporting structure for the state and
21 Federal government, and also post on our website
22 an abundance of data on all the activities the
23 recipients participate in with the program. We
24 believe strongly in the importance of data as a
25 tool for administering and measuring our programs,

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2 however, we have significant and substantial
3 concerns about this proposal. In addition to
4 system barriers and financial issues, which I will
5 review shortly, the proposal's call to define a
6 successful youth/young adult based solely on
7 receipt of public assistance is a disservice to
8 youth and an inappropriate message to all New
9 Yorkers. It also runs counter to the progress
10 made over the last fifteen years to encourage
11 success through concurrent combination of
12 employment and training. This proposal would
13 require us to report someone who we assist in
14 securing full-time employment while in the
15 application stage as unsuccessful. There are many
16 systems issues with this bill, primarily because
17 our program relies on multiple systems and the
18 primary one is the welfare management system,
19 under the jurisdiction and control of the State
20 Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, and
21 not HRA. Although there are several data elements
22 for which we regularly report, and in the same
23 format suggested by the proposal, the majority of
24 the more than 200 data elements proposed are not
25 presently captured at all, while other elements

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2 are captured but categorized and coded
3 differently. The elements presently collected
4 also vary with regards to our confidence in their
5 validity, as we are unable to verify every self-
6 reported data element. This information is
7 collected for the purpose of developing
8 appropriate employment plans rather than for
9 public data reporting purposes. For example, a
10 large portion of this bill requires outcome data
11 on applicants that speaks to their education and
12 employment history prior to application. HRA
13 tracks applicants as they move through the
14 process, but not in the aggregate way required by
15 the bill. Also WMS files are continually updated,
16 so it does not retain history specific to their
17 financial or employment situation when they
18 applied if it has since changed. In addition,
19 some of the information collected is scanned into
20 a file for recordkeeping, for example, prior pay
21 stubs, but is not accessible for the purposes of
22 running data reports. The bill calls for
23 reporting on youth who are part of a household
24 where there is an adult case set. Limited data is
25 also not available on the engagement status for

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2 members of a household who are not adults in the
3 case. Similarly, employment plans are not
4 developed for youth who are on the case under the
5 age of 18 and who are not the head of the
6 household. So it would not be possible to look at
7 the prior work history or employment preferences
8 for this group. The bill uses definitions and
9 terms that contradict statute and specific rules
10 of the program. For example, the definition of a
11 household and who is considered an applicant are
12 inconsistent. It also lists a series of education
13 outcomes that are not mutually exclusive and would
14 create confusion. Further, there is no
15 distinction in the bill between someone in the
16 "did not graduate high school" category who is a
17 dropout, and someone still enrolled in high school
18 but who has not yet graduated. In addition, one
19 data element is for those who meet work
20 participation based on full-time participation in
21 post-secondary education, even though the state
22 does not allow post-secondary education to count
23 as full-time participation. Similarly, the bill
24 assumes that education and training and employment
25 activities are mutually exclusive, while most of

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2 our recipients are enrolled in a combination. As
3 mentioned earlier, we are also constrained by the
4 fact that a significant amount of reprogramming
5 and the creation of new data elements and reports
6 would be required from the state. Any
7 modifications to WMS would require not only state
8 approval, but would require the state to actually
9 make the changes. Given the state has limited
10 available resources, and that WMS is the present
11 statewide system for multiple programs,
12 significant program changes frequently require
13 prioritization by the state among these programs.
14 This can result in a lengthy delay for any
15 individual project. It is very possible that the
16 state will not agree to utilize their limited
17 resources to update the system, especially to
18 capture additional indicators on topics such as
19 employment and education where there are already
20 indicators in place. Beyond state costs, HRA
21 would have to update its internal systems at an
22 estimated cost of \$2 million. HRA does not have
23 staff to devote to this task, and would need to
24 hire additional staff or further delay or
25 permanently sideline present projects. In

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2 addition to the significant cost associated with
3 these changes, running system reports in order to
4 generate a validated quarterly report on over 200
5 different indicators would require significant
6 resources. Also, as the level of indicators
7 suggested in the report will require altering the
8 application process at the point of worker
9 applicant interaction, additional training of
10 staff will be needed. HRA should not be viewed as
11 the one-stop for youth educational training and
12 employment resources. There are multiple agencies
13 that work collaboratively to address the well-
14 intentioned purposes of these bills to help
15 identify available resources in the city that
16 support the education and training needs of youth.
17 We have relationships with our colleagues in city
18 government on workforce and education issues
19 facing disconnected youth, and we are open to
20 building stronger collaborations and linkages with
21 them. At this time I would be happy to answer any
22 questions, and I'd like to ask Lisa and Katy to
23 join me at the table.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
25 much. I have a general question, and then more

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2 specific. There is this young men's initiative
3 that Council Member Lander and I and others got
4 briefed on, how do you fit into that? In other
5 words, you know, you stated, perhaps correctly
6 from your perspective, that NYC, DOE and others
7 are responsible equally, but to be honest with
8 you, I was at the entire briefing, and HRA's role
9 never came up, what if I'm wrong. The whole
10 notion of- -

11 COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing)

12 Well, we are very much a part of it, we are a
13 participant in the meetings, the ongoing
14 assessments of them with the Deputy Mayor and with
15 the Mayor. We believe it's an important issue
16 worth addressing in a collaborative and ... way
17 across city lines. HRA has a large role, and
18 probably I think one of the highest cost elements,
19 which is the Jobs Plus project, in our partnership
20 with NYCHA, we will be administering that as we
21 currently have oversight role over the current
22 Jobs Plus program, which provides training and
23 employment opportunity for people in public
24 housing. That's a large component of our
25 involvement. And we are involved in it through

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2 our child support enforcement and fatherhood
3 parenting program initiatives and efforts.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I was thinking
5 more about the young people we're talking about
6 today. In other words, obviously maybe through
7 the NYCHA Jobs Plus, but the issue is for the many
8 young people who could access your services and
9 who probably are ... would fit into young men's
10 initiative, people who would go talk to some of
11 your counselors, some of the young people I think
12 who are probably interviewed by the CSS report
13 would be candidates for the young men's
14 initiative, I would assume.

15 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, the young
16 men's initiative is a series of initiatives in
17 multiple city agencies, some of which involve HRA,
18 and we're actively involved in them and believe
19 that that is ... that that will have a ... bear good
20 outcomes as we go forward.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We- -

22 COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing)
23 But our day-to-day work with regard to applicants
24 for a safety net, individuals, single individuals
25 who seek public assistance, continues. A young

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2 individual who has no children in the household
3 can apply, and we can attach them to workforce
4 programs and Back To Work, and help them get
5 employment, provide assistance, provide food
6 stamps and public health insurance if they're
7 eligible. We do that every day and we do that for
8 thousands of New Yorkers.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. Can you
10 describe to me, because obviously the report I
11 think is a catalyst for bringing all these issues
12 to the forefront, but can you describe to me if a
13 young person as described in the report is having
14 domestic, major domestic issues at home, feels he
15 cannot stay at home, goes to public assistance,
16 what would be the ... he's 18 years old, 19 years
17 old, how would he get assistance, and what would
18 be his next steps vis-à-vis HRA? Because there is
19 of course this issue of education and work, and
20 the youth system, which is something that we're
21 very serious about, and then there's a question of
22 how, if at all, he should fit into the general
23 system or the adult system.

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Lisa, do you
25 want to talk about a safety net? I think it's a

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single individual applying for public assistance
who is- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
You need to state your name too, I think you know
that.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Hi, my name is
Lisa Fitzpatrick. The question is regarding a
single individual, no children, at least 18 years
of age or older. If that individual comes into a
job center to apply for assistance, they are
treated like any other adult- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
And then they have, if they would have domestic
issues at home, where they feel they can no longer
stay in their home, what kind of evaluation goes
on, etc., for that individual?

MS. FITZPATRICK: Anybody who comes
into the center, regardless of age, who claims an
issue with domestic violence, would be referred to
our domestic violence liaison for an evaluation.
If the individual can no longer stay at home,
there's no requirement for a single individual
without children to live in an adult-supervised
setting, so that individual could be referred to

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2 our homelessness diversion unit, to help them find
3 appropriate housing, or see if they can reside
4 with another family member or something. But the
5 requirement to live in an adult-supervised setting
6 is only for individuals under the age of 18 who
7 are pregnant or parenting minors.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. And
9 have you read this report and met with the authors
10 of the report? Has somebody at HRA spent a great
11 deal of time going through what some of the
12 concerns are and trying to address them?

13 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, we met
14 with the authors of the report, I met with David
15 Jones, I talk to David Jones frequently, he's a
16 member of our citizens' advisory committee. So
17 yes, we talked about it, we discussed it, we felt
18 that the data sources that the report used to
19 gather information, that they reached conclusions
20 on, were incomplete and not statistically solid,
21 and we feel that the conclusion that we should
22 create a different welfare program for people
23 under 25 is mistaken, and we told him that. Now,
24 I should say that I do draw a distinction between
25 issues concerning 18 and 19 year olds,

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2 particularly those who are in high school, and we
3 talked about that, and we think that's an issue
4 worth focusing on. But when you make it up ... when
5 you make that line all the way to 25, you're
6 getting into our general population, you're
7 actually finding a way to change the program for
8 almost a third of our caseload.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: What about to
10 21? I thought we were up to 21.

11 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, the bill
12 says 25.

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I know, but I
14 thought you agreed to 21 at one point, that there
15 could be a separate discussion.

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, I
17 certainly raised it about 19, I don't want to get
18 into an age ... I don't know that I agreed to 21. I
19 do believe that ... we're open to discussing the
20 issue of approaches, whether by ourselves and with
21 other agencies, for young people who are in high
22 school education, that's what we're mostly
23 concerned about.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, but if
25 you listen to the Mayor and you talk about the

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2 young men's initiative, we have a larger issue
3 that's not just with the high school students, and
4 in fact a lot of the school do go up to 21, if you
5 talk about the transition schools. So you're
6 talking, there are just many ways in which an 18
7 year old, 19 year old, 20, 21, is in the same
8 boat, so to speak.

9 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well- -

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)

11 Because we're all pushing to try to have more
12 young people participate in education, and not the
13 job as the first shot out of the box, so to speak.

14 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Again, there's
15 a distinction made between an individual who is
16 seeking and receiving ongoing cash assistance, and
17 someone who chooses not to seek and receive those
18 benefits. If someone seeks and receives those
19 benefits, our view is the rules of our program
20 which focus on work are more appropriate. I think
21 that ... and that really is the message that comes
22 from the Federal bill. So, you know, we are ... we
23 are not against helping people attain education,
24 but when they come into our world and seek ongoing
25 cash welfare, we have certain rules and

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requirements which we have to follow.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So what kind of evidence, you said there wasn't enough evidence, what kind of evidence would HRA need to find that you need to have the opportunity for additional education and be able to get assistance from public assistance? The reason I say this is, a lot of young people come in without a GED, without the educational opportunities. So how would it be possible for a young person to both get cash assistance and get all of the educational opportunities? I know you say many young people, from your testimony, can both work and go to school, some people do that. Not everybody can do that. So the question is, how do we make sure that that young person is able to reach his or her potential in the best possible way, and can your counselors make those kinds of determinations, or does that have to get bumped up? These are complicated young people.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: When I talked about the data gathering, I was talking about the way in which the report gathered information about young people's interaction with HRA, and I would

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2 be happy to have our data evaluation people write
3 you a letter about our problems with the way we- -

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
5 We'd rather meet.

6 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Okay, we'd be
7 happy to have us do that as well. When it comes
8 to HRA, the welfare agency's responsibility to see
9 that young people under the age of 25 are able to
10 take full advantage of every educational
11 opportunity, that may be a little bit beyond HRA's
12 focus of- -

13 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
14 So how do you collaborate with other siloed
15 agencies? What I call siloed agencies?

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, one would
17 be that ... one potential way would be that we for
18 young people under the age of 19 or 18 who are on
19 our case, if we had some information about their
20 school attendance, these are not case sets, that
21 would be an interesting thing to talk about.

22 Another- -

23 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
24 So you don't have that now, where it would be
25 available at the desktop of the caseworker working

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with that individual, obviously no.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: No, we do not.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Has anybody ever asked DOE for that? Asked and didn't get it, go ahead.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: The ... well, I think there was some discussion about it in previous years. We wanted to revisit that discussion. But again, we, when it comes to the work/education balance, the position that we take is that if you are a case head and you are a recipient, i.e., you're the head of the household, and you are a recipient of cash assistance, you needed to do a certain number of hours in work or work-like activity, and then another certain amount of hours is available for education. And we make that connection for ... we help make that connection for clients who apply for public assistance.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I mean there's where the philosophical difference is, because if it was work related to the school, as you know, I've had 25-30 foster care kids, I get all of this. But I have one now who works and goes to

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2 school, but he's kind of unique. So the question
3 is, how does one figure out what's best for that
4 individual? And that's where I think the
5 challenge is, because we want education first,
6 particularly for this group, and then to work, if
7 appropriate. But there's just ... I just find it a
8 little inconsistent when the whole city is focused
9 on this young men's initiative, and we still have
10 to figure out for this group of people, yes, they
11 can fit into some of those initiatives, but I
12 think that your group of young people should
13 actually be the one that the initiative should be
14 focusing on the most.

15 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, I think
16 this Mayor considered and the Mayor's people and
17 the City Hall, considered whether, in evaluating a
18 very, I think, significant effort to address more
19 attention to a population that deserves and needs
20 more attention, I think we considered whether in
21 doing so we needed to make changes to the way in
22 which our welfare program is set up, and we
23 decided that wouldn't work.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

25 COMMISSIONER DOAR: There was a

1
2 time when education and training was much more
3 heavily used by recipients of public assistance,
4 and it was not successful.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

6 Finally, the issue of the five year comes up a
7 lot. I know a lot of young people who are really
8 16, living with parents, the parents are quite
9 challenged, on SSI, young people are on disability
10 ... on public assistance, cash assistance, and
11 living in the home. The question is, how does
12 this five year kick in? Obviously there's a
13 philosophical belief that if you are educated,
14 then you'll never have to get cash assistance, and
15 so you won't have to have this ... if you have cash
16 assistance now, you get educated, you'll never be
17 on it again. That's one philosophical
18 perspective, and another is, as you might suggest
19 is, people should be working, they should get
20 educated, but they shouldn't end up with five
21 years at the beginning of their life cycle,
22 because they may not ... they may need it in the
23 future. So how does this, does every person who's
24 on cash assistance, no matter when, does the five
25 year apply, the five year cycle?

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2 COMMISSIONER DOAR: The five year
3 applies to the use of Federal dollars to pay for
4 the system, that's what the prohibition is.

5 President Clinton and Congress, when they passed
6 welfare reform, said that there should be a five
7 year limit on Federally-funded cash assistance.

8 And in New York State the decision was made some
9 time ago that we would, for people who exhausted
10 that five year limitation on Federally-funded
11 assistance, we would create a program, or expand a
12 program, a safety net program to accommodate
13 those. So in effect, the five year limit does not
14 lead to the closing, the ending of assistance.

15 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right.

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: For a single ...
17 for a family, and for single adults as well,
18 right?

19 MS. FITZPATRICK: Right, so the
20 question regarding a child on a parent's TANF
21 case, that child's time on cash assistance is not
22 counted against the household time limit on cash
23 assistance.

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Right.

25 MS. FITZPATRICK: Federally-funded

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cash assistance.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: It's only for when you are the head of the household, and again, the idea was that we wanted to ... the Federal government wanted to send a message that said that long-term, multiple-year dependence on cash welfare was not in the best interests of families.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: What's the training for caseworkers who are dealing with young people? Say for instance, which is what you're stating, no extra person, no additional staff, no specific training, nobody drilled on young people. But what is ... how obviously your general theme is they're all treated the same, and so on. Young people need a different approach, what kind of training goes on to help that approach be more youth-specific?

COMMISSIONER DOAR: Lisa, if you want, you can start and I have something to say about it as well.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Well, the only- -

COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing)
Sorry.

MS. FITZPATRICK: The only rules

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2 that are different for young adults are those that
3 are under the age of 18 who are pregnant, or
4 parenting minors, unmarried pregnant or parenting
5 minors. All the other rules are pretty much the
6 same. We have special procedures that allow young
7 adults under the age of 20 to go to high school as
8 their primary work activity until their 20th
9 birthday. So our workers are trained on the
10 procedures related to pregnant and parenting on
11 minor ... minor parents, and the procedures
12 regarding the education training policy for young
13 adults under the age of 20. Those are the only
14 different rules in our process for those
15 individuals.

16 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yes, you were
17 going to say something?

18 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And the focus
19 is on the head of the household, not as ... at HRA
20 it's not focused - and this is long history -
21 focused on the children within the household.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: But do you
23 think that that kind of training should be
24 enhanced, like maybe having an advisory group of
25 people younger than David Jones - and I like David

1
2 Jones - who would in fact be more attuned to the
3 concerns of young people? In other words, is
4 there a different approach to the training issue?
5 Because young people don't necessarily mix well
6 with what you just described.

7 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I don't know- -

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
9 I don't know how else to say it, but I'm trying to
10 be polite.

11 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I have to think
12 about it and talk to our trainers and our case
13 workers and see what they think.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You do need
15 different kind of training.

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I said I want
17 to think about it.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: You do need a
19 different kind of training.

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Okay, thank
21 you, Council Member.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Council Member
23 Lander, and then I'll come back.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you,
25 Madam Chair, thank you, Commissioner, for being

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2 here. I'm ... I have to tell you, I'm struck by the
3 difference in approach, tone and conclusion
4 between your testimony today and Deputy
5 Commissioner Brune's testimony to us in June, at
6 which he really ... I mean, I guess you should get
7 the transcript, gave us a substantially different
8 take on this set of issues, so I'd like to explore
9 that a little bit. Now part of what he said to us
10 in June was that in partial response, he basically
11 said, read that report, we think there's actually
12 a lot of useful things in that report, we've met
13 with the office, we acknowledge there are some
14 places that we need to improve our procedures, and
15 we're going to be releasing an updated procedures
16 manual to all staff on policies regarding young
17 applicants from 16 to 21, I think he told us that
18 those procedures would be released in July. So I
19 guess for starters, have they been released?

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: No they have
21 not ... first of all, I wasn't at the previous
22 hearing, and I will look at the testimony and the
23 transcripts to see to the extent that the tone is
24 different.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I'm not

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looking to hang Mr. Deputy Commissioner Brune out to dry here.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: No, I will look back.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I thought it was very refreshing to have someone say we'd read a report, we've learned from it and we're working to improve what our agency is doing.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yeah, and I've done that in the past on many occasions, but in this case, in any case, with regard to the procedures, we are reviewing those one last time. There is some aspects about the draft that is still under review by our counsel and by our staff, and we're not ... we have not yet released those, but they are in draft.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So there will be ... I mean, they weren't ready in July, they're not ready now, but you are preparing new procedures for staff in relating to 16 to 21 year old applicants?

COMMISSIONER DOAR: They're, I think, if new means we're going to do things differently, it may be a greater clarity about

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2 what we wanted and expected to be done all along,
3 and maybe there's some new issues we brought to
4 attention, I don't know all the details of it, but
5 there are- -

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

7 (Interposing) I mean, part of what the report- -

8 COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing) ...
9 updated, better, more focused guidance coming out,
10 but it may be reiterating some of the things that
11 we've said here.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Well, part
13 of what the report said was that people were being
14 denied what they were obviously, clearly entitled
15 to, based on even what the things you've said
16 today, based on the rules. So I mean as a set ...
17 there is a set of issues about what the policies
18 should be, and whether we agree on them, a
19 substantial amount of what the report documents is
20 inappropriate denials based on the rules that you
21 agree you have, so- -

22 COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing)

23 We want to be sure that staff are clear about
24 making sure they don't make inappropriate denials.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So I'm

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2 disappointed that what we were told would be ready
3 in July isn't ready. I will look forward to
4 seeing it, because, you know, I do think it
5 speaks, at least to some extent, to what Council
6 Member Brewer just talked about. It doesn't go to
7 the level of training to work with young people,
8 but at the minimal level of clarifying what
9 procedures are supposed to be with young people,
10 it seems pretty basic, and if we believe in any
11 meaningful number of cases, and we can argue about
12 what's statistically significant, it would be a
13 lot easier to figure that out with the data
14 honestly, but if any meaningful number of cases
15 are being handled inappropriately, then taking
16 steps to make sure they're not would seem to me
17 just step one before we figured anything else out,
18 so I'll look forward to getting that, getting that
19 guidance, and to seeing when you have it ready.
20 So I guess in that ... I'll come back to education
21 and training in a minute, I mean, in that vein I
22 find it really striking that even providing clear
23 information on eligibility would be objected to by
24 the agency in the name ... with the idea that would
25 encourage application. I mean, the notion that it

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2 would be, it's a bad idea to enable applicants and
3 the public to know what the rules are, again,
4 leaving aside what we think they should be, that
5 you ... I mean, it's hard to read your testimony
6 only as other than saying, obfuscating on our
7 policies are making it difficult for people to
8 know whether they're eligible or not, it's part of
9 our strategy for discouraging people from
10 applying.

11 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, I think
12 that there is a way to clearly spell out what's
13 available to people and differentiate between age
14 on our website without doing exactly what the bill
15 as written requires us to do.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: That's a
17 constructive statement, and my hunch is- -

18 COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing) I
19 knew you'd like that, but that's not what the bill
20 says.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: The reason
22 we ask- -

23 COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing)
24 The bill- -

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

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2 (Interposing) The reason we have hearings is not
3 so that we put out a bill and you say the bill is
4 dumb, we object to it, the point of having hearing
5 is- -

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COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing)

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Well- -

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

9 (Interposing) ... to say, let's talk about how to
10 achieve a fair goal there with possible
11 modifications- -

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COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing)

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And we thought- -

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

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(Interposing) ... to the bill.

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COMMISSIONER DOAR: So I reacted to

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the bill as drafted, and so that's my- -

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

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(Interposing) And so do you have some suggestions

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for how the ... if the ... I think the goal of the

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legislation ... I mean, I don't want to speak for

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its chief sponsor, who is to my right, but I think

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the goal of the legislation is to help make it

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clear to applicants, both on the website and in

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the intake centers- -

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COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing) I

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am- -

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

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(Interposing) ... what the rules and procedures are.

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COMMISSIONER DOAR: I think we want

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to be sure- -

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

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(Interposing) And if we can learn how to do that.

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COMMISSIONER DOAR: ... that we say

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we can say without exposing us to litigation, and

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without making, giving people a false impression

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of how the program works. And so I acknowledge

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that there are things we could do on our website

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that would be ... provide greater clarity, but I

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think we have to be careful about it, and I think

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the way that the bill was specifically drafted, it

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asked us to do things that could have caused the

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city more trouble than it would have helped, and

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we are open to discussions about how to make that

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better.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So that, I

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mean, I would urge you to have conversations with

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Council Member Brewer. I mean, I think everyone

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would agree that we shouldn't expose the agency to

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2 litigation, and we shouldn't give false
3 impressions of what people are eligible for, but I
4 think we should, in as clear a language as we can,
5 give people information on what they are eligible
6 for, so they, together with you, can figure out
7 what's appropriate and what they should get, and
8 that's, I think, a useful and productive set of
9 feedback. I have to say that the testimony feels
10 like it's saying part of our strategy for
11 discouraging application is to make it hard for
12 people to know what the rules are, and I don't
13 think you mean that, but that's what I heard this
14 testimony to say.

15 MS. FITZPATRICK: Well, I think
16 what we're concerned about is recreating the
17 wheel. The state already has information in their
18 booklets, their three state booklets, and they
19 provide very clear concrete guidelines about what
20 the rules and responsibilities are- -

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
22 Can it be read in English?

23 MS. FITZPATRICK: Absolutely.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Plain English?

25 MS. FITZPATRICK: It's in ... the

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state developed this in plain English, it's based on their own very rules and regulations.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Can you tell us what it is so we can look and see whether we think it's in English.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We all have iPads, I hate to tell you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Okay, it's the three state booklets on the LDSS, 41, 48B as in boy.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Oh my gosh.

MS. FITZPATRICK: It's on the state's website, you can pull it up right now- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing) Can young people pull it up, and understand it?

MS. FITZPATRICK: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: On their iPads.

MS. FITZPATRICK: It's a very clear English, it's also available in different languages.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay- -

MS. FITZPATRICK: (Interposing) It has all the information, I went through it after I

1
2 read the proposal. It has all the information
3 that young adults read, to understand what the
4 rule and responsibilities are.

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, my guess
6 is, I have trouble with it, the young adults will
7 have trouble with it, and the caseworkers, I'm
8 just saying, that's why we need something in
9 clearer English, both for the website, which is
10 part of our legislation, and I would suggest in
11 general. Go ahead, Brad, I'm sorry.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay, so
13 I'm ... it sounds like there is at least some
14 openness to working together to provide clearer
15 information to applicants on what the rules are,
16 drawn from both state and Federal and city
17 guidance, in ways that will be in plainer language
18 and help people understand it without exposing you
19 guys to litigation or giving false impressions of
20 what people are eligible for. So that hopefully
21 is some progress. I want to talk about education
22 and training a little bit more, though, because
23 this is another area where I feel ... and I don't
24 have the Deputy Commissioner Brune's transcript in
25 front of me, but none of us want to see people

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2 have long-term dependence on public assistance,
3 all of us want to see people be able to move away
4 from cash assistance, get good jobs and support
5 their families. I think there is a lot of data to
6 suggest that especially for ... we can decide what
7 exact age, but for younger people who have not
8 graduated from high school, that either graduating
9 from high school through an alternative program or
10 getting a GED, working on their literacy skills,
11 is a much ... substantially increases the odds that
12 they will achieve that exact goal, and that
13 preventing them from finishing high school,
14 getting a GED, or improving their literacy by
15 requiring work activity at young ages, whether a
16 young age is 18, 19, 20, or 21, is counter-
17 productive, if the long-term ... if that's the long-
18 term goal. So my first question though is,
19 because I haven't heard the distinction that you
20 introduced today given before, which is that you
21 think there is something different about people
22 who seek cash assistance, I think you said that we
23 believe that people who seek cash assistance are
24 better served by work than by say a GED program.

25 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, first of

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all- -

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

(Interposing) Is there any evidence or data that would give us- -

COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing) ...

I want to just say- -

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

(Interposing) ... any reason to believe that's true?

COMMISSIONER DOAR: ... and Katy may want to add to it, but people below the age of 19, and we are comfortable with secondary education fulfilling their work requirement, and we've made that change. So that's to get to the high school diploma issue. And secondly, we also- -

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

(Interposing) And that's including 19, right? Below the age of 20? Okay.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: ... provide the, in our program, adequate opportunities for people to get the education and training necessary to get a GED along with work. But you can do both, and that is what we do, and Katy, do you want to talk about that for a second? And then I'll come back to it.

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2 MS. GAUL: Hi, I'm Katy Gaul, and
3 I, I will let you know that we've got about 36% of
4 people under the age of 24 in our Team program,
5 the Team program, also the Tag program, is our
6 training assessment group. And so many people in
7 this age group are already through the systems
8 that we have taking advantage of an opportunity to
9 be in training while receiving cash assistance as
10 they're allowed. The key is to make sure that
11 they're still fulfilling the requirement, the 35
12 hours a week, and we do that by making sure that
13 there's a combination of a WEP, or job search, in
14 addition to training, if it's such needed.

15 COMMISSIONER DOAR: The thing I was
16 only trying to make, Council Member, was that HRA
17 is not the youth ... in charge of all youth issues
18 throughout the entire city. We are in charge of
19 the public assistance program, which provides in
20 some cases a cash benefit, in other cases food
21 stamps, in other cases public health insurance.
22 And with the giving of those benefits by state and
23 Federal policy and city policy for some time comes
24 a requirement that there are certain aspects of
25 personal responsibility, including work, be met.

1
2 That's all I was trying to say, and that's not
3 necessarily me alone, it's not the state alone,
4 it's not the Federal government alone, it's been
5 our policy for some time, and that's a distinction
6 between, say, SBS, which may meet somebody who
7 comes in there, is not funded by these other
8 funding streams, does not provide these
9 assistances, and can have a little different
10 approach because there isn't that underlying
11 structure of public assistance. That's all I was
12 saying, and I don't think that's too unreasonable.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Well, I
14 don't ... I, I mean, I guess what I'd say, if
15 someone gets a training voucher, an ITA from SBS,
16 then their training program is still being
17 supported with public dollars. So it seems to me
18 that it would be surprising to me if the data
19 showed that better long-term outcome, that there's
20 some meaningful difference between the folks who
21 are seeking cash assistance and the folks who are,
22 you know, across age groups, the folks who are
23 going to SBS, in terms of what will best help them
24 achieve the long-term outcomes of self-
25 sufficiency. And I believe, and again it would be

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2 a lot easier if we had the data to really figure
3 this out, that there are a set of people who
4 dropped out of high school, who didn't complete
5 high school, who are 20, 21, we can argue about
6 whether it's 22, 23, 24, who would do a lot better
7 in the long-term if what they could really do,
8 with expectations and real outcomes and real
9 attendance requirements, was finish high school in
10 an alternatives program, or get a GED and get the
11 training that would enable them to go on and
12 succeed, to do that more quickly than the work-
13 related programs allow, and in a more thoughtful
14 program that understands the particular issues
15 facing young people, and the particular issues
16 especially facing young parents, and that we would
17 be better off if we ... and one suggestion that I
18 made at the previous hearing was, what if we just
19 had a back-to-work vendor who specialized in young
20 people? We would put out an RFP that said
21 specifically here's what we're looking for, we
22 want to know that you have ... rather than give you
23 guys some ... I mean, I know that one of the bills
24 I'm the sponsor of says that you guys should have
25 some special liaisons, but I think I might rather

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2 have a back-to-work vendor that has demonstrable
3 and proven by data over time experience with this
4 set of young people and can help in a way that we
5 can see in the data, get them on a path to
6 independent self-sufficiency.

7 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Two answers,
8 just the first is there is a lot of data over
9 many, many years, most of which I think comes down
10 that the combination of work and education is the
11 appropriate route, and that is what our approach.
12 I really feel that the data over many years, and
13 we can re-litigate that again, but that's pretty ...
14 that's what I see today, and I'd be happy to show
15 all that to you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Have we cut
17 it for age? I guess that's part of the question
18 here. My gut is there would be a different- -

19 COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing)
20 Well- -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:
22 (Interposing) ... is there a difference for people
23 who are over 21, or for somebody who is 31?

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: What we see,
25 people who are on ... who are receiving public

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assistance. And then on the ... I'm trying to think what was the second thing.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I apologize.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: What was the second? Oh yes, we are about to put out a new RFP that envisions that the agency, looking at the situation, can identify particular populations that the vendors can treat differently and be rewarded differently for. So we do acknowledge that there may be circumstances where people who are facing particular burdens may need a different approach.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: What populations might that be?

COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, again, it's optional to the agency, returning from a correctional facility might be one. Yeah, someone who has been on cash assistance as a case head for longer than five years might be another, but those are just possibilities, there could be other categories as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I'll wrap up because now there's other colleagues here,

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2 which I apologize for interrupting you, we both
3 feel passionately about this, and it comes from a
4 place of wanting to do right by the young people
5 and people on public assistance in the city, and I
6 respect your ... so, the last thing I would just
7 say, though, is on this question of data, which is
8 both related to the bill that's on the table
9 today. I think it's a very reasonable hypothesis
10 that outcomes for people be different around what
11 the appropriate approach to the balance of
12 education and training would be if they're 21 and
13 didn't finish high school or if they're 31 and
14 didn't finish high school, and I think it would be
15 useful for providing the best possible
16 intervention to people to understand that better.
17 That's part of the intention of the third bill
18 that we're looking at here, and again, I'm hoping-
19 -

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing)

21 But the bill- -

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER:

23 (Interposing) It could go ... the data, I'm happy to
24 see data- -

25 COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing) ...

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2 it could go the other way. (crosstalk) ...
3 education and 21 year olds that have a lot of
4 education recently and it didn't work out and
5 wants to get right to work.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I ... my
7 hunch is the other way, but I'd be delighted to be
8 proven wrong by the data, but we don't have the
9 data, and I'm hoping that on that third bill the
10 answer is really something more like the first,
11 which is some of this data would be very difficult
12 for us to collect, but there's some pieces of this
13 data that it would be relatively easy for us to
14 collect, and we'd be glad to work with the Council
15 to get to a place where we can have better data on
16 some of this information caught by age, so that we
17 can work together to see what's really working
18 best for people over time. Thank you, Madam
19 Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
21 much. We've been joined by Council Member Helen
22 Foster from the Bronx, Council Member Jimmy Van
23 Bramer from Queens, Council Member Ruben Wills
24 from Queens, Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez from
25 Manhattan, and Council Member Maria Arroyo from

1
2 the Bronx. If they have ... if anybody has
3 questions, let me know. One question I have is,
4 if we are talking about young people in the 21, 22
5 to 24 range, and they do not have a GED or a high
6 school diploma, they want to apply for public
7 assistance, the Back To Work, would that include a
8 40 hour Back To Work assignment, or would it
9 include something that could also include an
10 education component that fits their needs?

11 MS. GAUL: Hi, what can happen in
12 the back, once you have the Back To Work
13 assignment, is concurrent activity, meaning that
14 you would be ... you do need to be engaged in a
15 worklike setting, like one would be at work for 35
16 hours a week, and so if you're training or
17 education is only 20 hours, for the remaining 15
18 hours you would need to be involved with a WEP
19 assignment or Back To Work, depending on the size
20 of your family, etc., so we would have a
21 concurrent, where you could go to fulfill the
22 requirement, while ... and get education while
23 you're also fulfilling the requirement to us in
24 Back To Work.

25 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And do you

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2 have data to show that that ... how many people are
3 in that kind of combination, and not in a larger
4 Back To Work of 35 or 40 hours a week, and having
5 to go maybe to classes? And one of the problems
6 is knowing young people, and everyone in this room
7 does, is when you have that kind of conversation
8 with them about having to maybe work someplace
9 that is not appropriate and go to school, they
10 need a different kind of approach. I don't know
11 how else to say it, than somebody who is more
12 mature and who has temporary ... has been working
13 and is temporarily unable to work, etc. This
14 young person often walks out the door, but go
15 ahead and tell me your answer.

16 MS. GAUL: Okay. Yes, we have, as
17 I said earlier, we have 36% of those that are in
18 our teen TAG groups- -

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
20 How many people is that?

21 MS. GAUL: So it's over 4,000.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and how
23 many people, do you have any idea how many people
24 are under 21 or under 24, generally under 24, in ...
25 who have applied or who have gotten public

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assistance? Any idea on that number?

MS. GAUL: I believe I do.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Four thousand out of what is I guess I'm asking.

MS. GAUL: Okay. Yes, for all of ... well, this is ... I do want to point out that for all the placements that we've gotten, we've gotten over, as the Commissioner said, over 11,000 placements for people between the ages of 16 to 24, so we really do believe that this strategy and the Back To Work vendors are doing a good job for this group. And I understand that you're pointing out what can be unique about this population, but we do find that the resume work, the kind of work that Back To Work does about getting someone that first job, is very effective. And we see that also in our sister agency at SBS, they placed 30% of young people, because young people are willing and interested and able to take these, some retail jobs, some service sector jobs, that are growing in this economy. So we do feel that this approach works.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And do you track this to be sure that they complete the

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educational component at the same time? Do you have outcomes on that? Since you can't get DOE records if you stood on your head and screamed?

COMMISSIONER DOAR: We know something about people who finish the GED- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
You've got to talk into the microphone, they get upset.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: I just stated we track about people who finish the GED training and then take the test, and how well they do, and they do- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
You have some data.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: We do, and they do very well, if they complete the course that we offer for GED.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The course is going to get harder next year.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: I know, we know that, but that's why we're gratified that for those who complete it and are ready to take the test, they do very well.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: So you can get

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at those statistics.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: We can give you the, on the past rate of people who take the GED.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I am ... Council Member Rodriguez has a question. I guess what we're saying is, there is a report, it wasn't as rosy, and there's still room for discussion and I think this population needs every bit of help the whole city can give them. Council Member Rodriguez?

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Gale, and I'm sorry that I'm late, but we were in my community with the (inaudible) drug and the DA (inaudible) dealing with about drug prevention in the armory in our community, and I think that for me there's a relation to how we lose so many teenagers in drugs, and one percent is one of those groups, youngsters who want to continue their education, they don't get the support, and again, as I said before, we cannot blame no one, this is a teamwork, and I think that you've been trying to do the best you can. However, my experience was working in the classroom, many students wanted to continue their

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2 education, they got their GED, they got into
3 college. Sometimes they were single mothers, that
4 they were asked on working 35 and 40 hours and- -

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
6 Council Member, just to get ... what's your
7 question, I guess is my question to you? When you
8 get there, but I'm just saying, because we have
9 time constraints. But go ahead, just what your
10 question is.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Do you
12 have the data on what percentage of the students
13 who get public assistance have to drop out because
14 they cannot deal working and going to school?

15 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, that's
16 actually a very interesting question, the extent
17 to which our approach leads people to say, "I'd
18 rather just work and get education I can on my
19 own, if I'm going to seek education, and I'm not
20 going to come back to cash assistance". And I
21 don't have data handily on that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Does the
23 agency have the data?

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, that has
25 to do with the long-term, over many, many years,

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2 the diversion effect of the way we set up our
3 program. And that's a big question, that's a
4 question that we all could look at, and it's worth
5 looking at. I don't have it handy for me, but
6 that's a larger question than how we handle people
7 who do come into our system and take advantage of
8 our program.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Do you
10 have the flexibility of giving a waiver, or do you
11 have to follow (mic cut out)?

12 COMMISSIONER DOAR: The- -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ:
14 (Interposing) ... 35 or 40 hours in order to get
15 benefits?

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: We have a
17 general requirement of 35 hours of engagement,
18 which must be met in a combination of work and
19 education.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But it
21 is only New York?

22 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Sometimes we
23 allow some fuller-time education for people under
24 20, so we do exercise that flexibility. But as a
25 general rule for people older than 20, we need

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education-only is not something we encourage for them.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But do you, do you have that flexibility, or is that mandated by the state?

COMMISSIONER DOAR: Some of it is state and Federal and some of it is our own choice, there's a little bit of both. It's not entirely mandated, but it would be hard to meet our participation requirements, I think, if we didn't have the work requirement.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: I just encourage that especially this administration in the last two years that they have left, that they leave that legacy of allowing a student who wants to continue to pursue their higher education only to focus on the studies. I got public assistance when I was at City College for a period of time, and I got the public assistance and I was only focusing on my school work. And I imagine how difficult it is for someone, many single mothers, to work 35 and 40 hours in order to get public assistance, and then to take care of the child, and also those homework and school assignments

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that they have to do.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: It's usually not a full 35 hours work requirement if you're in education, number one, and number two, Councilman, I congratulate you on your ability to do that, and that's a tremendous testament to your fortitude, but in the past, when there was full-time education, including college education, and public assistance, it didn't turn out that people got their education or went to work, and that's something that the Congress and the state wanted to address by setting up the policies that we currently have.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. At the prior hearings, and I think we talked about it a little bit today, HRA testified that you don't track information based on age or education. We talked a little bit about it today that there is some of that. So we want to know if you see the value in collecting, tracking and disseminating this information, but again, based on age or education. And it sounds like you have some of this information more than you might have thought. So I'm wondering if you can think to do more of

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that in the future, or what your thoughts are.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yes, we can think to do more of that in the future, and look at our current systems and what we can produce from them, absolutely. But when we looked at the bill on data reporting, the breadth was so tremendous that it goes beyond what we think is- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing) Because you have, I think, the highest level of education, you must ask people for something like that. You must ask some, you know, what- -

COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing) Well, there's also, as you know, we gather information on applicant status, and then we might get more detailed information when someone becomes an actual recipient, and your bill doesn't really differentiate that much with regard to that. And that's a problem, that's a problem- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing) But the data form now asks what that might help us determine either age or education? What, so what are some of the questions that are now on the form that ask, that would help us get some of this data?

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COMMISSIONER DOAR: For a
recipient?

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Yes.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: Do you want?

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Just
generally.

MS. FITZPATRICK: We have very
general questions, not at the level of specificity
that's in the bill. But one of the questions is
whether or not they completed a high school
diploma, so we have the question about the high
school diploma, we have questions ... what we have
is tracking from the Department of Education that
shows whether or not a minor is in school or
discharged from school. That information is
provided to us. Unfortunately, it doesn't give us
any more detailed information because they count
discharged as even high school graduates. So in
order for us to get information about whether or
not someone has graduated from high school is a
self-declaration from the client. So the
questions that are on the application are all
declarative statements from the client, it's not
that we are verifying this information from the

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Department of Education.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: It would be helpful for DOE to know some of these numbers too, would be my guess. But I'll leave that for another hearing. How does HRA determine basic literacy level? In other words, if you've got somebody who is going to be applying for a job and under your scenario also has to, wants to go to school, also applying for a job, how do you figure out the best for that individual? Now you can say the same for somebody who is 31, but since we're focusing on the young people, and since I believe strongly that they are a special situation in terms of body language and working with them, how do you make those determinations?

MS. GAUL: Sure, well, the Back To Work vendor can work specifically with the individuals as they, as youth as they do, and again- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
We're worried about them not working well enough with youth, just so you know.

MS. GAUL: I know, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

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2 MS. GAUL: I got that, but I think
3 that, to answer your first part of how we do the
4 assessment, we look at, we do the tape test for
5 all of our clients, 31 or 21, and we judge their
6 literacy levels based on that, as well as the
7 self-declarations that Deputy Commissioner
8 Fitzpatrick just mentioned, and then we offer an
9 array of services, again, people can choose to go
10 to a CBO, they can choose to go to CUNY, as long
11 as they fulfill those 35 hours of work requirement
12 with us. So they have a variety of different
13 options at that point, and then we do find that we
14 are able to connect some young people and older
15 people to that first job, that entry-level job
16 that gets them on the path where they can go to
17 work and bring home a paycheck while they're also
18 pursuing further education.

19 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, and do
20 you do any kind of an evaluation, or you don't
21 have the funds for that, for this age group? You
22 may not know who they are, but is there some kind
23 of evaluation to see if working 35 hours a week
24 and going to school ends up getting the degree
25 that they need? Is there any way to know at the

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other end if this ... as the Commissioner indicates, that he knows that this, that the other doesn't work, so I'm wondering, how do we know that education and going to school does work?

COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, there from DRC the studies on the combination of work and education.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: In New York City or in- -

COMMISSIONER DOAR: (Interposing) They've looked at it all across the country.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: All over. Okay, I'm only interested in New York City.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: It ... there is, I mean, we will happily write you about the studies on that issue.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Well, we can look at them, and DRC also.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: And so we're fairly comfortable that the data shows over a long period of time that the combination works.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: And it's 35 total, 20 work and 15 education, that is what is

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required.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, I'm just ... we know how we feel. Are there any other questions from my colleagues? Thank you ... yes, Maria, go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Good morning, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER DOAR: Good morning, how are you?

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Everyone. Thank you all for being here. The ... we're talking about youth under 25 who are seeking benefits. There's a growing population in that age group that are not necessarily high school dropouts, they're actually college graduates who, because of the circumstances and the economy are not able to find work, a whole host of individuals. The ... and many that I have spoken to are seeking to pursue higher post-graduate education, so if you have a 22 year old who is a college graduate, hasn't been able to find work, comes to HRA for assistance, how do they meet the requirement of work and education?

COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, as you

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2 know, we provide multiple forms of assistance, so
3 if they are eligible for public health insurance,
4 we provide that, and there is no work requirement.
5 If they are eligible for food stamps, we provide
6 that, and there's no ... there's some work
7 requirement, depending on their household
8 circumstances. And then if they apply for cash,
9 the rules that I've described apply, that higher
10 education, graduate education, we need to see a
11 combination of work as well as the educational
12 opportunity.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Now, if the
14 combination of education and work exceeds the 35
15 hours, do you have a full-time college student, a
16 full-time student who is also working part-time?

17 COMMISSIONER DOAR: We need a pay
18 stub, we need some work activity, we need- -

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO:
20 (Interposing) Some.

21 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yes, we need,
22 there's got to be that, and that is- -

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO:
24 (Interposing) But they exceed the 35 hours between
25 work and school.

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2 COMMISSIONER DOAR: It's a minimum
3 work requirement.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Minimum,
5 okay.

6 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And then, and
7 again, you know, there are lots of people in their
8 lives who combined work and college education.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: A lot of us
10 in this Council also.

11 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And I need to
12 be clear about something, Council Member, which I
13 misspoke about. Graduate education, or four-year
14 education, is not part, cannot meet the education
15 component of the requirement.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Really?
17 Okay, so I guess we'll be having a hearing in the
18 future about the college graduates that are out of
19 work. Okay, thank you, Madam Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
21 much for your testimony. Our next panel is Brooke
22 Richie, Lazar Treschan and Louise Feld. I'm not
23 going to use the clock, but you guys aren't going
24 to talk forever either. Go right ahead, thank you
25 for all your work.

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MR. TRESCHAN: And thank you, my name is Lazar Treschan, I'm the Director of Youth Policy at the Community Service Society of New York, and I want to thank the stand-in Chair, the Chair and all the members of the Committee for their great work. You know, three months ago exactly we were here to raise some of these issues and it's just, you know, a great example of public leadership to see the Council tackle these issues so substantively, concretely and in such a quick period of time, which speaks to your leadership and the great work of your- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
We haven't gotten anywhere yet.

MR. TRESCHAN: Sorry. So I'm not going to read my testimony, you have it written, we've talked about these issues before. I'm just going to quickly deal with a couple of issues we just heard spoken about, and maybe fill in some gaps that we didn't hear. The issue that the Commissioner raised around, you know, the over age 18 being considered an adult, you know, is a challenging one and you raised that. The Mayor's Young Male Initiative, you know, in the speech the

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2 Mayor gave, you know, he continually talked about
3 the importance of this transitional period, age 16
4 to 24, yet HRA does not believe that that
5 transitional ... that there is a transitional period
6 once you hit age 18, and that's just hard to
7 reconcile. There was a really interesting report
8 by a brain scientist for the Kinsey Foundation
9 last week, called the "Adolescent Brain", which
10 came out, which talked about that new brain
11 research has shown that the brain does not develop
12 cognitively and psychosocially really until at
13 least age 25, and for those people who have not
14 developed due to difficult transitional
15 circumstances, that 20 to 24 period really
16 biologically is a really intensely important
17 period for interventions and, you know, again I'd
18 be happy to talk, or continue to debate that
19 research with HRA. You know, the idea that a
20 resume and job searching and Back To Work work for
21 everyone, you know, it's just hard for me to
22 reconcile someone who's never had a job going to a
23 program called Back To Work, when they've never
24 been to work in the first place, and they don't
25 have a high school diploma. It's just tough to

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2 reconcile. You know, I don't think it was a slip,
3 but the fact that the Deputy Commissioner misnamed
4 the TAG program twice when she stated it, calling
5 it a TEAM program or something, first, which
6 that's not what it's called, you know, I think
7 does speak to the fact that the TAG program, you
8 know, if ... you know, I think calling it
9 underwhelming would be an overstatement in that,
10 you know, we spoke a hundred young people and none
11 of them had been in the program whatsoever, none
12 of them were doing this mixed education and work
13 requirement that HRA talked about. And again, you
14 know, this idea HRA should not be a youth one-
15 stop, you know, there are no youth one-stops in
16 the city. Right now HRA is a stop, it is an end
17 for a young person when it could be a start, and
18 we just want to encourage them, they don't have to
19 be the everything for young people in the city,
20 but just a way to get back on track. And some ...
21 let's try to make it some kind of a start. You
22 know, the quote from Commissioner Doar, "We're not
23 against education, just for people in our world",
24 you know, that sounds like it's, you know, the
25 people who go to HRA for public assistance are by

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2 definition the poorest people in New York, and
3 that's saying that the poorest people in New York
4 do not deserve education, you know. Would we feel
5 the same way about, you know, our children, about
6 the Commissioner's children, about everyone else's
7 children who's not on public assistance, as we do
8 for the poorest people, and that to me is just
9 sort of a perverse paradox. The comments about
10 the MDRC studies, which I am happy to debate, are
11 unfounded and I'd be happy to talk about those.
12 Getting someone who does not have a high school
13 diploma, a high school or equivalent diploma, is a
14 net fiscal benefit to New York City of \$325,000.
15 People who do not have a high school diploma cost
16 New York City about \$190,000 over the course of
17 their lifetimes in public benefits, but once you
18 get them to a diploma or a GED, they are a net
19 public benefit of \$135,000, so that's a \$325,000
20 swing. It is in our interest more than anything
21 to get people in poverty basic skills, literacy,
22 numeracy and education, and all we're asking is
23 that HRA use this carrot of public assistance and
24 the work requirement to do that. Thank you.

25 MS. RICHIE: Good morning, my name

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2 is Brooke Richie, I am the Executive Director of
3 the Resilience Advocacy Project here in New York
4 City. I want to echo Lazar's thanks to the
5 Council, to stand-in Chair Gale Brewer, we've been
6 working really closely with you and Council and
7 Committee staff on these issues, and it's really
8 exciting to be back here again and still pushing
9 and still shedding light. So I am also not going
10 to read my testimony, you have it written, and
11 we've been talking for months about it, but I am
12 going to highlight just a couple of things about
13 the specific bills that respond to a bit of what
14 Commissioner Doar and his team said. So first I
15 want to sort of highlight the overall just
16 assessment of these bills as trying to encourage
17 cash assistance, and Council Member Lander
18 responded better than I ever could, but I wanted
19 to highlight one aspect that Doar mentioned, which
20 is HRA and TANF is really intending to keep youth
21 connected to some adult in their lives and that's
22 sort of what he talked about, and he feels like
23 these bills are working against that. I think
24 that, you know, that's wonderful, I think kids
25 ideally should be connected to an adult that cares

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2 about them. I think part of the challenge with
3 the populations of young people, particularly
4 those who are heads of their own households under
5 the age of 21, who arrive at a job center, is that
6 the reality is these are not those kids, in a lot
7 of circumstances. They are simply not, and so
8 ignoring that reality doesn't change it, ignoring
9 the fact that there are over 60,000 homeless
10 teenagers, and those are just the ones that the
11 Department of Education can track; there are over
12 35,000 teen parents, and those are just the ones
13 that we happen to have birth records that we can
14 trace back to them; 200,000 disconnected youth,
15 ignoring those young people and the fact that they
16 are in much more acute states of crises than sort
17 of their adult counterparts in the cash assistance
18 system doesn't make it not so. So I want to
19 really emphasize that, and I think that the
20 Council sees that, and these bills are
21 highlighting that. The second thing that I wanted
22 to say was about the database. 657, you know, I
23 talked about it in testimony in June and last year
24 also at a general oversight hearing, about the
25 critical importance of data in holding HRA

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2 accountable. The corollary of data is outcomes,
3 and that came up in a lot of what Commissioner
4 Doar and Ms. Fitzpatrick and Ms. Gaul talked
5 about. There were a number of questions that the
6 Council asked that they simply didn't have answers
7 to, outcome questions, where are the young people
8 that they're serving going? And I think before we
9 get to what the specific data bill should say, and
10 it was really great to hear Doar say, I was
11 pleasantly surprised, you know, that there's some
12 data that they track, and they're willing to work,
13 before we get to the details, I think we need to
14 take a step back and ask the question, what do we
15 want for the youth of this city. Some of that was
16 addressed really well in the Mayor's remarks on
17 his Young Man's Initiative, and I think we can
18 take a lead from that in answering the question
19 where do we want these young people to go, and
20 that's how we back into the data that we need to
21 track, so that we can see if they're actually
22 getting there. I think this bill is a wonderful
23 place to start, and I'm very excited to work, to
24 continue to work with the Council on what the
25 details should be and the terminology and some of

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2 the things that HRA responded to. I also wanted
3 to talk briefly about bill #649, the plan. So I
4 think that there are two parts of that that are
5 particularly exciting. One is the youth-specific
6 assessment tool, and it didn't come up in their
7 testimony, but I wanted to highlight the
8 particular importance of that part of the bill,
9 given HRA's new Back To Work contracts, or not so
10 new any more, the Back To Work contracts that sort
11 of were issued. Within the newly-envisioned Back
12 To Work, not only has access to education been
13 dramatically circumscribed, the number of hours
14 that people over the age of 19 can spend in
15 education is a blended approach that HRA seems to
16 be so proud of, if you actually look at the Back
17 To Work RFP and contracts does not exist, that's
18 the first problem. The second is, these Back To
19 Work vendors are being asked to assess the
20 educational needs of teenagers, and they are not
21 qualified to do that. They are qualified to do
22 many things, the vendors ... this is not at all
23 anti-vendors, but there are specific people who
24 have training, there are organizations that spend
25 decades building expertise about things like

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2 adolescent brain development and working with
3 young people in crisis, and how do you talk to a
4 teen parent or a homeless young person in balance,
5 and these are things that Back To Work vendors are
6 simply not trained to do. So I think that bill
7 649 in requiring HRA to actually do some thinking
8 about, and articulate how they will address that,
9 through things like youth-specific assessment
10 tools and a youth liaison that has the expertise,
11 is extremely powerful, and again we look forward
12 to working with you on the devil in the details.
13 The last point I'd like to make is about the
14 website. So, you know, I was really taken aback
15 by the initial response to that bill. I think
16 it's the easiest lift of the three, and was
17 heartened to hear Doar sort of backtrack a little
18 and say that there's some to work on. A couple of
19 things that I wanted to highlight there, the first
20 is that I've been doing work with young people
21 around education and training and public benefits
22 for almost ten years as an attorney, and I have a
23 hard time with the state booklets, the LDSS
24 booklets, as they call them, are multiple-pages
25 long, they are on this weird paper, the print is

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2 really little. I mean, you've seen them, they are
3 not as easy to understand as HRA may think. And a
4 number of the conversations that I have with young
5 people, and quite frankly, with advocates, is
6 about, you know, I'm just going to put these
7 booklets aside, could you just tell me what they
8 say. So I think that the website, the first point
9 I want to make about the website is, it's a great
10 opportunity, not just to collect information in
11 youth-friendly terms for young people, but for the
12 myriad of adults that those young people interact
13 with. There are advocates, there are doctors and
14 teachers and social workers, that come in contact
15 with young people every day, and I think they're
16 important partners in thinking about what that
17 website should contain. These are the young
18 people ... these are the people that young people go
19 to when they can't find a lawyer, when they're in
20 their after-school program and have questions, and
21 so using that website as a centralized place to
22 provide easy-to-understand for those conduits, for
23 those everyday advocates is I think very
24 important. And then the last part about the
25 website that I wanted to highlight is sort of ... is

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2 about TAG, and I too was intrigued to hear about a
3 new program called TEAM, only to discover that it
4 is TAG. So I was actually part of the legal team
5 that helped get TAG established as part of the
6 Davila litigation, and we were very excited about
7 sort of having a centralized group that
8 specialized in education and training. What we've
9 seen over the last say eight years is that TAG has
10 really been marginalized within the agency. If
11 you recall from the last hearing, Ms. Fitzpatrick
12 actually gave us a very detailed walkthrough of
13 everything that happens when a young person enters
14 a job center from the time they get to education,
15 and TAG did not come up once. That's a problem.
16 So the fact that there are 36% of people in TAG,
17 having a website or a central place that sheds
18 light on all of these things that keep coming up
19 sort of randomly in hearings that does not get ... I
20 can't even find, is a second and really important
21 part of the role that that kind of information can
22 play. I think, you know, they'd have to post TAG
23 information, it would be great to see it. So
24 those, I just wanted to highlight some of that.
25 You'll see more specific recommendations in my

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2 written testimony, and again I want to say on
3 behalf of my own organization and that of all of
4 the advocates that you've been working with, we're
5 really excited to sort of flesh out the details of
6 these bills with you, we have information and data
7 that we can provide. Thank you so much.

8 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
9 much.

10 MS. FELD: So good morning, my name
11 is Louise Feld and I'm the Policy Associate for
12 Food and Economic Security at Citizen's Committee
13 for Children, CCC is a multi-issue child advocacy
14 organization dedicated to insuring that every
15 child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.
16 Thank you, acting Chair Brewer and the rest of the
17 General Welfare Committee, as well as my
18 colleagues, for this hearing today. I have
19 submitted written testimony and I will summarize
20 it, in part because you have it, and also because
21 I share so many of the opinions- -

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
23 All three of you in my book get not only are you
24 great policy analysts and contributors to the City
25 of New York, but you should testify ... everyone

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2 should take your example for testimony into the
3 future. Thank you.

4 MS. FELD: That's a lot to live up
5 to right now. But Brooke really shared a lot of
6 great statistics, I do want to add one from this
7 morning's census bureau release, which is that now
8 26% of young people in New York City between the
9 ages of 16 and 24, so that's about over 200,000
10 young people in New York City, are living at the
11 Federal poverty level. That is a substantial
12 amount of our young people. And as Brooke said,
13 and so I will try and keep it short, so many of
14 these people are in absolute crisis, and some of
15 them, not all of them, some of them are turning to
16 HRA because they do not have family support, they
17 do not have community support, and they need help,
18 not just with cash assistance, but also with
19 educational and employment opportunities. And
20 therefore CCC strongly supports the legislation
21 proposed here today, although we do have a few
22 recommendations, which are summarized in our
23 testimony, to strengthen it, because HRA is, as
24 Lazar said, really uniquely positioned to help
25 these young people, and connect them with the

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2 agencies and the services that they need, and
3 these bills really provide an opportunity to do
4 so. So very briefly, on the web-based, the web-
5 based bill that was raised, we think this is
6 wonderful, because I too have a law degree and
7 practice law for years prior to coming to CCC, and
8 I can tell you that I have difficulty
9 understanding some of the information, both
10 available on the web and also in the handbook,
11 about eligibility and rights for public assistance
12 applicants. What is great about making it plain
13 language for a lot of these kids who we know do
14 not necessarily have high school diplomas or
15 GED's, and therefore might struggle with literacy,
16 is that they will be able to understand both their
17 rights and to what they are entitled. What we do
18 suggest is perhaps making this also available in
19 hard copy, given that we are dealing with very-
20 low-income communities and low-income applicants,
21 they might not have consistent web access, so they
22 need to be able to walk into an office and know to
23 what they are entitled without having been able to
24 research it previously to their deciding to come
25 in and apply. We also think that the materials

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2 should be made available not just in plain
3 language English, but also in other languages, not
4 just because the applicants might have English as
5 their second language, but as Brooke stated, they
6 might be turning to people for support, for help,
7 for whom English is not their first language. And
8 so this is really important information. We do
9 also support the creation of a youth and young
10 applicant plan, we think that this is incredibly
11 important, because of the unique needs which we
12 have heard about in many hearings on the issue of
13 low-income young people, especially related to
14 education and employment. We do think that the
15 plan should be flexible, should permit HRA, with
16 the assistance of experts in the field, to develop
17 a plan that ... you know, and figure out what sort
18 of staffing and capacity and support they are able
19 and need to provide to these young people, but a
20 plan is really key, not just because there needs
21 to be clarity for the young people who are coming
22 in, but also because we know the HRA staff needs
23 clarity on what these young people are entitled
24 to, and also because the staff needs clarity on
25 how they should deal with these young people.

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2 We've heard a lot about that already today, so I
3 will not belabor the point. Finally, on the issue
4 of the collection of data about youth, we at CCC,
5 as you know, love data, and so we definitely
6 support this. We do not think that the way the
7 bill is written most of the data that is requested
8 is too onerous for HRA. If you look at the
9 Mayor's management report, the most recent one
10 from 2011 released, you'll see that for all PA
11 applicants, there are a lot of things that they
12 collect that this bill is calling for, right?
13 Things like engagement in whether ... excuse me,
14 whether a PA applicant ... thank you very much,
15 Councilwoman. But you'll see when you turn to the
16 HRA section in there that they are already
17 collecting data on things like whether people are
18 engaged in employment, or educational or
19 vocational training programs. Can they not
20 utilize that data and drill down to the youth
21 component of that data? It seems that it wouldn't
22 be as onerous as it has been made out to be by the
23 Commissioner. What we do suggest, however, is
24 maybe developing a smaller cohort for some of the
25 things that, yes, in all reality might be more

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2 difficult to track in the long term. Yes, there
3 are PA applicants in this age who were denied
4 eligibility, and so their outcomes down the road
5 for education or employment might not be easy to
6 track, because they're no longer in contact with
7 HRA. But maybe a system can be developed ahead of
8 time to get a cohort that can be studied and
9 tracked over the long term, because the outcomes,
10 as Brooke said, are so incredibly important to
11 making sure that we continue to assess and the
12 city continues to serve in the best way possible
13 this particular population. So in sum, the
14 enactment of these bills will really further
15 uniquely position HRA to help young people not
16 just access temporary cash assistance, but really
17 set them up for future success and the future
18 self-sufficiency that the Commissioner states that
19 he wants them to achieve. So given the sobering
20 number of young people that are entering adulthood
21 at this point on frighteningly unstable financial
22 ground, these bills are incredibly important, and
23 therefore CCC supports them and looks forward to
24 working their colleagues in the Council to
25 strengthen them and enact them.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
3 much. There were a couple of quick questions.
4 One is on the DOE statistics and I thought it was
5 interesting that they have not gotten them. Was
6 that something that came up in any of your
7 interviews, either with HRA staff or young people,
8 about how they were communicated about vis-à-vis
9 their education system? In other words, young
10 people will say, I don't have a GED, they might
11 say where they went to high school, did you have
12 any sense that HRA accessed, or tried to access,
13 that information from DOE?

14 MR. TRESCHAN: Again, we spoke to a
15 hundred young people and none of them reported any
16 experiences where ... they did say that in the ... you
17 know, we asked specifically both yes or no, and
18 then open-ended questions of every young person we
19 spoke to, and a bunch of them did say they asked
20 me whether or not I got my high school diploma,
21 but it seemed like regardless of how they answered
22 that question, they were put in the Back To Work
23 program. The one thing that I do want to warn
24 against is that when we did meet with the
25 Commissioner, there's an issue of head of

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2 household versus not head of household, and we
3 don't ... what we don't want to have happen is,
4 young people who are not heads of households, we
5 don't want necessarily their high school
6 attendance to be used as a stick for their
7 parents' benefits, and you know, that has been
8 thrown out sort of subtly as a threat I think
9 today, and in previous conversations. So, you
10 know, young people can either be ... we're concerned
11 with pretty much the heads of households, young
12 people who are, yeah, who are not on ... who are on
13 their own cases, and we don't want people, parents
14 whose kid may or may not be attending for whatever
15 reason high school, to be used as a reason to take
16 the parents off of public assistance that they
17 might deserve. So we want to be very careful
18 about that.

19 MS. RICHIE: One thing I'll add
20 about the DOE HRA link, is that - and this goes
21 back to the sort of collecting of all of the
22 statutes and everything - there's a lot of
23 confusion among job center workers about what the
24 education rules say for high school-aged kids. I
25 don't know if that trickles down from the top, I

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2 don't know why it's confusing, but there's ... it's
3 just the feedback we get from the young people we
4 work with is really that either the questions
5 aren't asked, or the answers that the young people
6 give about their track record in school, the
7 caseworker doesn't really know what to do with it.
8 So I think at the ground level there's a lot of
9 confusion.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: We've been
11 joined by Council Member Steve Levin and Council
12 Member Foster, who says I walk around with a lot
13 of paper, and she's right, wants to ask a
14 question. But I always have it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: No, you do,
16 you're ... and you move well with all of it.
17 Question, in my questioning over the years, I have
18 come to the conclusion that the Commissioner does
19 not embrace education as the mechanism of moving
20 into an area of success, which as I pointed out to
21 him, we can reinvest money to re-educate Wall
22 Street or others, where the majority are white men
23 and women, but when it comes educating black and
24 Latinos, all of a sudden, work is the best
25 approach. And to ... I don't know how you build a

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2 resume for a child. If at 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, how
3 ... what are you going to write? Like, what's going
4 to be down there? So have you ... and I'm asking
5 because I look at you three as like the frontline
6 in terms of dealing with young people, has there
7 been any statistics, numbers, data, that actually
8 shows that, number one, education as opposed to
9 work is the approach, and number two, have we ...
10 has there been any research or just questions
11 asked about those kids that have dropped out or
12 don't have their GED, I would be very interested
13 to find out how much maybe due to undiagnosed
14 learning disabilities that DOE does not keep
15 certain numbers, because they don't want to show
16 how many kids are actually being pushed out of
17 public schools due to that exact fact, that we've
18 allowed kids to matriculate with undiagnosed
19 learning disabilities, and when they get to a
20 certain point, they can't cope any more?

21 MS. RICHIE: So I'll start briefly.
22 So first about the data research, yes, there is
23 decades of research that talks about the
24 particular importance of education for young
25 people and poverty, and the role that that plays

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2 in increasing their whatever we're talking about,
3 sort of K through 12, GED or post-secondary, the
4 connection between that and future positive
5 outcomes, and then the converse, there's also
6 data, a little harder to find, but definitely
7 available, and we can share that, that shows what
8 happens, particularly to homeless young people and
9 teen parents, and young people who disconnect from
10 school and work very early, that's three
11 populations most likely to get cash assistance, or
12 apply for cash assistance, what happens when they
13 don't have education and the sort of perpetuation
14 of that cycle. So there is definitely data to
15 back up the importance of education. I think on
16 the DOE side, you know, what I'll say about that
17 with sort of relevance to this hearing is I think
18 part of that is an assessment issue. So when we
19 talk about sort of fleshing out what youth-
20 specific assessments perhaps should include, I
21 think that issue of why young people are having a
22 hard time with education maybe should be part of
23 that. In the disabilities advocacy community,
24 there's a lot of looking, and there actually is a
25 lot of state advocacy going on right now around

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2 better screening that would pick up learning
3 disabilities, so there are tools that have been
4 tested in states throughout the country that get
5 specifically at that issue, and I think, you know,
6 if HRA is open to identifying youth assessment
7 tools, there are best practices that they can look
8 at. There are also, third, best practices for
9 welfare programs in other states that specifically
10 test the theory that education is the best thing
11 for young people. Kentucky is a great state for
12 that, surprisingly, they're called the education
13 state. So there are examples that you can point
14 to that not only have this sort of research, but
15 bear that out.

16 MR. TRESCHAN: And just very
17 quickly, what's difficult for me is that, to your
18 point, we have the city doing this in most of the
19 other agencies, you know, the CEO and the DOE have
20 done a great job of creating programs that combine
21 education ... that actually combine, you know,
22 contextualized work opportunities within
23 reconnection programs for education, the transfer
24 schools of OIBC. You know, we have some great
25 providers here today, Michael (inaudible) from The

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2 Door, Courtney Hawkins from FECS, that run these
3 programs that are these, you know, blue ribbon,
4 you know, CEO mayoral programs that have won all
5 these awards nationally, but I think speaking to
6 your point, that, you know, why is that not good
7 enough then for people on public assistance? No,
8 people on public assistance need to be, and we're
9 at work, you say that they need to be in work,
10 they're actually not in work, they're in a program
11 called to Back to Work, which is not work, it is a
12 work program, I mean, it is a penalty for being on
13 cash assistance, you know. We spoke to, you know,
14 all these young people, we had LaShawn Thomas come
15 in here last time we were here, an 18 year old
16 single mom, who talked about, you know, they put
17 her in a room with people in their 30's and 40's
18 who had been laid off of work, and told her to
19 work on her resume and use the computers as she
20 needed. LaShawn has never had a job, and she
21 didn't really know what she was doing. And, you
22 know, she didn't have a high school diploma, when
23 she just wanted to be in a GED program, I mean,
24 that ... but because she's poor, she's not afforded
25 that opportunity, and that for me is the hardest

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part.

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Thank you.

If ... thank you, Council Member, for chairing this and bringing this together. I think it's a very important issue, and especially as we, the statistics and the numbers coming out today, the numbers dealing with how many Americans are living in poverty and at the poverty level, the long-term unemployment and under-employment, especially with people of color and going to Council Member Arroyo's comment about those with college degrees and some with college degrees and master's degrees, who still can't find jobs. I think it's very important that we flesh this out, because the notion, I look back, the notion of me having to look for a job or work on a resume before I went to college, had I dropped out of high school is, I mean, when I got out of college and was applying to law school, I didn't have much, because I went right, you know, back-to-back, so I think that this is something we need to explore, but my last, my soapbox moment, is that it's an attitude that heads from the top, and I think notwithstanding the Mayor putting money towards this male

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2 initiative, there has to be an attitude from the
3 top that the respect and the belief that everyone
4 can learn and is entitled to learn,
5 notwithstanding their color or the level of
6 economic success or lack thereof that one has, has
7 to stem from the top. And if I look at you as
8 less and treat you as less, then my expectations
9 of you will be less. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

11 Council Member Arroyo?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Thank you,
13 Madam Chair. Is there anything in the current
14 system that you can point to as an opportunity to
15 build on and make better? And I mean, if it's a
16 lot, we can have a sidebar conversation, but I'm
17 hopeful that they're doing some things right, and
18 if they are, what are they, and how do we make
19 that more across the board, and in particular for
20 this age group, because I don't know if there's
21 something magical that happens when you go from 24
22 to 25, but I don't think there is, and I dare say
23 that young people in general, I know my lights
24 didn't go on until I was about 33. So, and I
25 think that's pretty much across the board, so I'm

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2 concerned that we're focusing on an age group and
3 nothing magical happens when you turn ... when
4 you're 25, you're still unemployed, a high school
5 dropout, yada, yada, yada. So what works, and
6 help us figure out how we can help the
7 administration make what they do well better?

8 MR. TRESCHAN: Well, I think these
9 bills are a great first step. I think having them
10 think of people who are above 19 being allowed
11 into education is a second step. But, you know,
12 as Council Member Lander mentioned, you know, the
13 Back To Work program has \$54 million, you know,
14 and it goes out to a number of vendors. Say two
15 of those vendors only did youth-oriented
16 programming, it can mix education and work, we're
17 not against work, we want everyone to have
18 successful careers. But mixing them in a way that
19 is proven to, you know, have effective program
20 practices, like the organizations here that Doar
21 and FECS already do, that combine education and
22 meaningful formative work, like an internship,
23 rather than a resume-building program. So take
24 the Back To Work program, have some of those
25 vendors be designated youth and young adult

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2 vendors, and I think we'll all benefit from that,
3 and it wouldn't cost one more dollar.

4 MS. RICHIE: I'll add two things, I
5 guess I'll say this on the record. I'm not sure
6 much is working for this age population, so I'd
7 like to say there's something that's working that
8 we can build on. Instead, what I will say is, I
9 think that they have systems in place that we can
10 tweak to benefit this age group. So the two that
11 I'll highlight, and I think the biggest one is the
12 one that Lazar pointed to, but the second is, and
13 we talked about this in our joint report, "Missed
14 Opportunities", that there are agency, inter-
15 agency collaborations, there are other programs in
16 other agencies that are doing a really good job,
17 or that have a really good model, and if HRA
18 weren't as siloed, they could actually do a better
19 job of connecting young people to those programs,
20 and I think we do a pretty good job of sort of
21 showing what that could look like. So that's
22 something, those are things that already exist,
23 that's just a matter of tweaking, and then the
24 third is around this data piece. So a lot more of
25 the information that was drafted and was proposed

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2 in the bill is actually collected, and Doar hinted
3 at some of that, and we can talk sidebar after
4 this about what some of those specifics are, and I
5 highlight them in my testimony. But a great deal
6 of, you know, he said there are 200 things that
7 you asked for, but it's actually they're
8 categorized, and in most of those categories the
9 information is collected, either as part of the
10 application itself, or as part of a legally-
11 required assessment. So simply that's a model
12 that already exists, they already ask questions
13 that we want answers to. And actually I just
14 thought of a third, we talk about youth assessment
15 pools, they already have to, by law, conduct an
16 assessment that looks at preferences and work
17 experience, etc. Adding three or four questions
18 to an already existing assessment model is, I
19 won't go as far as to say the current assessment
20 system works, but it is a model that they are
21 legally required to adhere to, and we could
22 identify four or five questions that maybe address
23 learning stabilities or whatever we wanted to
24 address, and plug them in, and that's very easy to
25 do. So I think there are things we can build on

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2 in that way.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: My, I

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guess, question is more for the Chair than for the

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panel, but how much of the resistance about the

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data collection and demonstration legislation is ...

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well, the resistance to it is centered around the

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fact that they don't have the technology or how

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they're gathering the data is not in a ... maybe

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it's on paper and not in some system that can help

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them easily compile the data that's being

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requested, so I'm ... I know that, and I didn't hear

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the Commissioner's full testimony, but resistance

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to the data issue, why? Is it because they just

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don't have the wherewithal to put it on some kind

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of report and what would that require?

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CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Well, I think

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from discussions up to this meeting it was that

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there are possibilities for working with them,

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that's what he hinted in some of the questions.

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And so we will certainly do that. I don't think

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it's a technology issue, I think it's a different

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approach, and that has to be dealt with.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay.

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Thank you. And thank you all for the work. And

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this goes for everyone else in the audience, for the work you guys do.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very much. Our final panel is Kimberly Forte and Kathleen Kelleher from Legal Aid, Michael Williams from The Door, and Roxanne Henry from Hunter. And just think at the great model you heard at the previous panel. Whoever would like to start, go ahead.

MS. FORTE: Good morning, we want to thank the Council for having us here today, and having us all appearing on these issues, and for introducing these bills, and thank Chair Brewer today for hosting us and pressing these very important issues. Briefly, we want to, you know, we're- -

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: (Interposing)
You are?

MS. FORTE: Oh, I'm sorry, I'm Kimberly Forte from the Legal Aid Society, I'm here with Kathleen Kelleher as well. This was a joint preparation by our juvenile rights practice, as well as our civil practice at Legal Aid, as both sets of our agency see often the problems

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2 that not just HRA provides this population of
3 young people, but also ACS, DHS and DYCD does. So
4 I think it's a combination of multiple behaviors
5 on the part of these agencies that have led this
6 population to suffer in so many ways. So, you
7 know, we're here to say that we're pleased to see
8 the introduction of these bills and we look
9 forward to working with the City Council and their
10 staff on refining the bills to get a better result
11 for both the Council, the advocates who work with
12 these young people and the young people
13 themselves. For example, in Intro 657, it could
14 contain a request designed to extract the
15 information that will illustrate HRA's existing
16 capacity to give credit to youth and young people,
17 adult applicants who are already participating in
18 qualifying education and training programs without
19 unnecessarily bringing them back for HRA
20 appointments. You know, this puts a young person
21 in a position of having to choose between their
22 school and between HRA, and then puts them in a
23 position to not actually succeed in school in that
24 way. In addition to Introduction 649, it would be
25 great if the city agencies, all the city agencies

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2 that serve the young people, participate in a
3 youth plan, and really have influence in that. So
4 we have a city agency in ACS who has a wealth of
5 knowledge of adolescent development, and yet
6 that's not shared with the other agencies who also
7 have to serve this population of young people. As
8 indicated in our previous testimony at the prior
9 hearing, the Society feels strongly that anything
10 that HRA is doing for this population, ACS should
11 partner with. There are countless numbers of
12 young people who are coming out of foster care,
13 this economy has hit them extremely hard, they are
14 not able to obtain work, which is a requirement
15 for them to get housing, prevent them from going
16 into DHS, I mean, it's all connected for each of
17 these young people. And whatever posting on
18 websites or information that HRA puts out to the
19 public, their sister agencies should also do the
20 same. It should go to people who are affected or
21 served by DYCD, it should go out to young people
22 who are at ACS, so as they progress in their life
23 and leave certain agencies to be unfortunately
24 sometimes dependent on others, they should have
25 that knowledge very early on in their, you know,

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2 path to success. And finally, there are some
3 recommendations that we made that we would ask the
4 Council to consider, as they refine the bills as
5 they are now, and some of those I'd like to speak
6 of. So the Council can require HRA to issue a
7 comprehensive policy directive dedicated to
8 eligibility and other rules applying to teens and
9 young adults and requiring HRA to train and
10 monitor its staff on these rules. I'm not sure if
11 the policy that was due out in July or the
12 directives that were supposed to come out in July
13 will do this, but we think it's very important
14 that they make definitive statements and train
15 their workers and the people interfacing with the
16 young people on these issues. Regarding youth and
17 foster care, I spoke last time about the
18 presumptive eligibility letter that's available
19 only to a very finite population, so if a young
20 person is aging out of care only within 90 days
21 are they eligible to get a presumptive eligibility
22 letter, so that they can provide that to NYCHA in
23 order to secure an apartment. Unfortunately,
24 NYCHA doesn't fit that timing for the young
25 people, so if their apartment is available six

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2 months before they turn 21, they can't get the
3 presumptive eligibility letter and therefore they
4 lose their NYCHA apartment. So it's as though
5 these city agencies are sort of working against
6 each other in order to secure security for young
7 people. The Council can require HRA to closely
8 examine its call-in policies for teens and report
9 to the Council with a complete list of
10 appointments, to which youth between the ages of
11 16 and 21 may be called in during school hours,
12 where school attendance has been verified ... where
13 school attendance verification has not otherwise
14 been obtained, teens can sign waivers, so the
15 Department of Education can provide that
16 information to HRA, and for those young people who
17 seek to be interviewed in person, HRA should
18 designate after-school appointments for them, so
19 that young people don't have to miss school during
20 those times. Also the Council can require HRA to
21 revise its call-in notices sent to 18 year olds
22 being called in for finger imaging, to say
23 explicitly that such appointments are not
24 mandatory, and finally HRA can require ... can be
25 required to include language in its mandatory

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2 appointment notices informing teens and young
3 adults and their parents that they have the option
4 to bring a parent or a guardian with them to an
5 appointment, and the Council can also require it
6 to include rules on bringing a parent to
7 appointments, and for that support for young
8 people who obviously in going into this is a very
9 daunting experience for them, and are often
10 confused and scared and sometimes have language
11 issues, but they would rather have their family
12 with them to provide, and simply for the waits
13 alone, you know, when you have to sit at, you
14 know, centers and wait for the time that you're
15 trying to get services, that the support of family
16 can be very important to young people.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
18 much.

19 MS. FORTE: And we're here to
20 answer any questions that you have.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

22 Next.

23 MS. HENRY: Hello.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Hi.

25 MS. HENRY: Thank you for having us

1 here, and listening to our thoughts and
2 recommendations, my name is Roxanne Henry, I am
3 the Legal Advocate of Welfare Rights Initiative
4 Hunter College, I'm also a senior and this is my
5 last semester at Hunter. On behalf of WRI,
6 Welfare Rights Initiative, we want to thank you,
7 we want to thank you for having us here and we're
8 pleased to help the Committee make real socially-
9 constructive changes to improve the lives of low-
10 income New Yorkers ... I'm sorry, low-income youth
11 and their families. As a quick background,
12 Welfare Rights Initiative is a grassroots student
13 leadership ... student leader activist organization
14 based at Hunter College to help students who are
15 receiving public assistance understand their
16 rights and stay in school.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Founded by
19 Council Member Ruth Messinger.

20 MS. HENRY: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: That's who
22 founded it, go ahead.

23 MS. HENRY: Thank you. I was
24 employed for ten years, I worked in sales in a
25 mid-entry level job, and when I lost my job, I had

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2 no health insurance and I was able to get
3 unemployment for a while, but eventually, because
4 of a health crisis, I had to apply for public
5 assistance. And when I went into the public
6 assistance center I was told literally that I
7 cannot go to school, because I knew school was the
8 only way that I wouldn't find myself in the
9 situation again. They told me I would have to pay
10 for child care out of my pocket ... out of the money
11 I get, which is over \$110 every two weeks, and
12 that I would have to go to school at night time.
13 So that's why I'm here and why I do what I do,
14 because I don't anybody else to have to go through
15 this. WRI has made young students on their
16 parents' budget and on their own or foster care
17 youth as well, who are being told they cannot go
18 to college. HRA often notifies them shortly after
19 graduating high school or when turning 18, and
20 tells them that they would have to participate in
21 the mandatory 35 hours work week, and the Federal
22 work study and internship does not count for that
23 requirement. And of course we all know this is
24 incorrect. Students report being hindered by HRA
25 appointments and work requirements because they

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2 have classes, internships and often work study.
3 For senior college students, those students going
4 to a four-year college, HRA workers have said that
5 they would have to do WEP, because four-year
6 college courses do not count. the work study
7 internship law states that work study and
8 internship counts towards the 35 hour work
9 requirement, no matter if you're in a two-year or
10 a four-year college or other educational training.
11 And even if your class hours do not count towards
12 the participation rate, and this is the best part,
13 HRA must make a reasonable effort to accommodate
14 your class schedule. Students find that workers
15 at the center are not informed, and students are
16 often given the wrong information. One WRI
17 student put it this way, "Since the moment I
18 turned 18, the HRA call-in process has placed so
19 many obstacles in my way to prevent me from going
20 to college. Pursuing a college degree is the only
21 way I can improve my financial situation, and it's
22 the only way I can accomplish my goals. Expanding
23 access to benefits for young adults is an
24 excellent idea, however, they will still have to
25 choose between their benefits and higher education

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2 as I did." Intro 648, 649 and 657 can help with
3 the needs of current and more accurate information
4 to youth, but it's going to take the
5 implementation to make it work. So WRI is here to
6 say that we are more than glad to help, you know,
7 the Council members with ongoing discussion. It's
8 going to have to be, one of the things we
9 recommend that would work would be a dialogue,
10 more of a dialogue discussion, so that we can talk
11 to Robert Doar and have a back and forth with him,
12 instead of just sort of listening to what he has
13 to say and not be able to offer any feedback, that
14 we find is really constructive. And another thing
15 is that Council Member Rodriguez said, if there
16 were some kind of data showing how many students
17 or young adults had left HRA, and they didn't have
18 the data, but like Brooke Richie said, we do have
19 data that shows that a countless amount of
20 students have dropped and been forced out of
21 school because of the adversities that they have
22 to face within HRA. Over 23,000 in the last eight
23 year have left CUNY, and those are not schools
24 that ... those are not non-CUNY schools, we have no
25 idea how many non-CUNY schools have students who

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2 have dropped out, also GED and ESL. So thank you
3 for your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
5 much, and we will make sure you get that dialogue.
6 Next.

7 MR. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon, I'm
8 Michael Williams, an attorney with The Door's
9 Legal Services Center, and I give my thanks as
10 well to the members, the Council members and the
11 Committee on General Welfare for giving me another
12 opportunity to testify on these very important
13 issues, and I would also state that I applaud and
14 support the intent behind all of the bills that
15 we're ... that are under discussion today. I wanted
16 to bring up just a few points in relation to a few
17 of the bills. I think bill #648 relating to
18 information being provided on the HRA website is a
19 fantastic idea. I was actually very surprised to
20 find that if you use the search box on the current
21 HRA website and enter 'minor', you get no results,
22 and if you enter 'emancipation', you get
23 information about emancipation related to child
24 support, but nothing related to 16 or 17 year
25 olds, for example, and their possible eligibility

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2 for public assistance benefits as a head of
3 household. And in this regard I contrast that
4 with, let's say, the New York State Department of
5 Motor Vehicles website, if I were a 17 year old
6 who wanted to know how to get a learner's permit
7 or if I were old enough to get a driver's license,
8 you enter 'minor' and pages of results come up,
9 and on the first page of results there's
10 information that leads you to the information that
11 you want to have, and so they have the information
12 on the website, even though the vast majority of
13 people accessing services from the New York State
14 DMV are not young people between the ages of 16
15 and 24, that information is on their website,
16 because they recognize that customers of that
17 agency, consumers and the public, want that
18 information and some of them are under-age and
19 people who are at lower ages are probably more
20 likely to think about, hey, am I old enough to be
21 eligible. And so they make that information
22 available on their website, and to address, I
23 think, some of the intimations from some of the
24 testimony that Commissioner Doar offered earlier
25 in the day, I don't think DMV does that because

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2 they either want to encourage or discourage young
3 people who are 16 or 19 or 24 years old from
4 getting driver's licenses, they just recognize
5 that that is something that people in these age
6 groups may want, and it's the job of that agency
7 to provide those services and make those services
8 available to young people as well, and that's why
9 they have the information on the website. And I
10 want to say in addition, just some of the
11 information suggested that would be required by
12 the bill, I think an effective means to
13 communicate the information would be some sort of
14 one web page that describes the potential
15 eligibility issues for young people within these
16 age groups, and as one example, I attached in the
17 back of my written testimony just a two-page
18 pamphlet that was prepared by the Children's Aid
19 Society, which talks about issues of 16 to 17 year
20 olds, 18 to 20 year olds, young people who are
21 pregnant, young women who are pregnant or
22 parenting, raises some of the work information,
23 all of this is just in a couple of pages, and it's
24 intended to be in as plain language as possible to
25 make it more accessible to young people who are

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2 seeking to access the services, and also people,
3 counselors and others, working with young people.
4 This type of pamphlet is not unique to the
5 Children's Aid Society, The Door's Legal Services
6 Center has a similar pamphlet, the Legal Aid
7 Society has similar information that's available,
8 and I think having that type of information in one
9 place on their HRA website would be very helpful
10 to the young people that I've worked with in the
11 past in terms of accessing that information, and
12 who are much more likely to go to a New York City
13 HRA website than a New York State Office of
14 Temporary and Disability Assistance website, for
15 example, if you're a New York City resident. And
16 I think also going to the testimony regarding HRA
17 not being a one-stop shop, I think if you had some
18 sort of lead-in, for example, there is a directory
19 of services listed on the current HRA website, if
20 there was just one link there that focused on
21 services available to young people, or services
22 available to minors and young adults, that would
23 lead to this one page that I envision, and then on
24 that you can have links to other specific
25 information, particularly about young people. But

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2 if you wanted to, you could also include links to
3 the website for DHS, DYCD, ACS, and though in the
4 real world it may be difficult for any of these
5 agencies to get together to be the one-stop shop
6 and provide services to young people, on the
7 wonders of the internet you can put that in one
8 place, and the young person who is going to HRA,
9 and again, more likely to go there than the DHS
10 website or the DYCD website or even the ACS
11 website, if they start from that one page, they'll
12 get links about the various city agencies that are
13 providing services targeted to young people and
14 their needs and the responsibilities, and be more
15 likely to hook into all of that information. I'm
16 fully supportive of the information related to
17 649, bill 649, in terms of the planning, and
18 definitely related to that the information that
19 would be required in 657, in terms of the data
20 collection it's absolutely vital, that if we're
21 going to take seriously, as for instance Young
22 Men's Initiative would suggest, the plight of
23 young people in these groups between 16 and 24
24 years old, if we're going to target services to
25 those age groups and want them to engage in

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2 society, we have to track what's going on. So
3 it's great to do plans, and there's lots of
4 emphasis in, for example, the Department of
5 Education context or the Police Department
6 context, with Comstat and things like that, on the
7 statistics and making decisions driven by
8 statistics, well, let's bring some of that energy
9 to this reality for the young people, the
10 thousands and thousands of young people, who are
11 in need of services and who are showing up at job
12 centers, food stamp centers and Medicaid offices
13 looking for help. One specific point that I want
14 to make sure that any bill would need to be aware
15 of, is that ... is how you measure the times that
16 young people are simply turned away at the point
17 of application. So even having a requirement that
18 HRA report success and lack of success, although I
19 think Commissioner Doar didn't like those terms
20 perhaps, in the particular context, but even
21 having that requirement, unless there are more
22 specific directions, it's going to be hard to
23 capture the young person who showed up at the
24 center and was never allowed to apply. And so
25 they can report, we did a certain ... we accepted a

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2 certain number of applications and these were the
3 outcomes on those applications, but how do you get
4 at the young person who showed up who was 19 years
5 old and was told, "Oh no, you need to be 21, we
6 can't help you, go away", and it's hard, and I
7 don't know in their present procedures that they
8 have a lot of ways to do that, maybe the cohort
9 approach as was suggested earlier by Ms. Feld in
10 her testimony, maybe there's some way you can
11 track just a specific center or particular times
12 all of the young people within the age range and
13 who are leaving the center to say, "Well, what
14 happened to you, were you allowed to apply, what's
15 happening with your application?" Maybe that's
16 the way to start to get at some of that
17 information. But I thank the Committee again for
18 all of the attention to these issues, and I'm
19 really gratified to see even between June and the
20 direction we're heading and where we're at now in
21 September, that I think things as reflected by the
22 bills are definitely moving in a very positive
23 direction.

24 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
25 much. Do we have some sense at CUNY how many

1
2 returning students there are, or people who are
3 members of your organization? You need to ...

4 MS. HENRY: Right now we are
5 assisting about 4,000 students at CUNY, we have a
6 sense that it's gone up a little bit in the last
7 year because of the recession, but it's around
8 6,000.

9 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: 6,000?

10 MS. HENRY: Uh huh.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I want
12 to ... unless you have any questions, Maria? Go
13 ahead.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: A general
15 question, is there someone from HRA in this room?
16 Oh, okay. That's it.

17 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I want to
18 thank you, because I go to a lot of hearings, and
19 cumulatively the quality of everyone's discussion
20 means two things, one, it's extremely well-
21 presented, and second, every single presenter is
22 able to summarize, which means that every single
23 presenter is incredibly knowledgeable about this
24 topic. And I will tell that doesn't often happen.
25 I think Council Member Arroyo will agree. So I

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want to thank you, and just, the staff is amazing,
Council Member Palma is very committed to this
issue, and I think it propels us to really make
sure that some of the suggestions that you made
today are ... come into reality. So thank you very
much. So with that, this hearing is concluded,
thank you very much.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Richard A. Ziats, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.



Signature _____

Date October 6, 2011