

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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November 30, 2011  
Start: 10:00 a.m.  
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HELD AT: Committee Room, 14th Fl.  
250 Broadway

B E F O R E: JAMES G. VAN BRAMER  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Leroy G. Comrie,  
Jr.

Elizabeth S. Crowley  
Inez E. Dickens  
Jessica S. Lappin  
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.

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

Linda Johnson  
CEO  
Brooklyn Public Library

Tom Galante  
CEO  
Queens Public Library

Anthony Marx  
CEO  
New York Public Library

Matt Brune  
Executive Deputy Commissioner  
Human Resources Administration

Carl Myricks  
Program Administrator, Family Services Division  
Department of Homeless Services

Dale Joseph  
Assistant Commissioner  
Office of Community Partnerships and Advocacy  
Administration for Children's Services

Andrew Miller  
Assistant Commissioner for External Relations  
Department of Youth and Community Development

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Are we  
3 ready? Oh, we are. Good morning, everyone. My  
4 name is Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, Chair of  
5 the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and  
6 International Intergroup Relations. And this  
7 Committee Hearing is in session. I want to first  
8 recognize that I am joined by Council Member Leroy  
9 Comrie, to my left, also from Queens, and a huge  
10 library champion. And we're going to hear from  
11 our three terrific library systems in a moment,  
12 and from several of our city agencies to speak to  
13 the issue at hand, which is intro 711, which I  
14 have introduced, and this is the first hearing for  
15 this very important bill, which would expand the  
16 Library Card Act, which we call it, also known as  
17 Local Law 8 of 2010, where we successfully worked  
18 with the Department of Education to make sure that  
19 applications for library cards were distributed to  
20 new students enrolling in the system. And I am of  
21 the firm believe, as I'm sure everybody else is  
22 here, that libraries are the great equalizer, and  
23 a library card is really the pass that all  
24 children, regardless of a station or status have  
25 to a better life. And I thought about this along

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2 with my staff, because I know that there are lots  
3 of kids who are entering the shelter system.  
4 Those shelters are throughout the city, and I  
5 certainly know of several in Queens, and I also  
6 know that libraries are very close to some of  
7 those shelters. And it got me to thinking that  
8 obviously some of these families and children are  
9 really in crisis and one of the best places that  
10 they could go to is their local public library.  
11 And just this past Sunday, 60 Minutes did a  
12 terrific piece on homelessness in America and they  
13 profiled a family, a widower and his two teenage  
14 children who live in a truck, and they went with  
15 the kids to the library, which they go to every  
16 day after school because it is the only place  
17 where they can access a computer and there are  
18 lights and there is heat and air conditioning,  
19 there are staff who can help them. And for those  
20 two children that were profiled on 60 Minutes this  
21 Sunday, the library is literally a lifeline. And  
22 that is a family that was very much in crisis, but  
23 the one place that was an oasis for those kids was  
24 their local public library. And we know that that  
25 is the case here in New York City as well. But

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2 just as we endeavored last year with Local Law 8  
3 to make sure that every child at least is given  
4 the opportunity and encouraged to get a library  
5 card, we wanted to take it a step further and  
6 include pre-kindergarteners in DOE and also speak  
7 with ACS, DHS, DYCD and HRA to talk about the ways  
8 in which those agencies could help us to make sure  
9 that all of the children that they interact with--  
10 you know, when appropriate--are provided library  
11 card applications and therefore access to the  
12 amazing resources and programs at our public  
13 libraries, which are all free, which is so  
14 incredibly important at a time when poverty,  
15 homelessness and hunger are all increasing. The  
16 needs are increasing, families in need are  
17 increasing. And our libraries, which offer these  
18 amazing programs and services are completely free  
19 and open to all. And the power of having a  
20 library card and using the local public library  
21 cannot be overstated. So, that's the intent of  
22 the intro. And our hope today is to hear from the  
23 three public library systems and then the city  
24 agencies. And it is the first hearing, so  
25 obviously we know that there is probably broad

1  
2 support for this initiative. There may be some  
3 concerns, but we want to start this conversation  
4 and see how we can all work together to make sure  
5 that every child in this city, and certainly every  
6 child who is interacting with our city agencies,  
7 is encouraged to get a library card and use their  
8 local public library. So, with that I wanted to  
9 call up the three CEOs of our great public library  
10 systems. Linda Johnson, CEO of the Brooklyn  
11 Public Library; Tony Marx, CEO of the New York  
12 Public Library, and Tom Galante, the CEO of the  
13 Queens Library. And after the three library  
14 directors we'll hear from the four city agencies.  
15 And with that I will call on Linda Johnson to  
16 begin testimony on behalf of the Brooklyn Public  
17 Library.

18 LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you,  
19 Councilman. We're for it. Good morning. My name  
20 is Linda Johnson, and I'm the President and Chief  
21 Executive Officer of Brooklyn Public Library. And  
22 thank you, Councilman Van Bramer, for inviting us  
23 to testify about how New York City Agencies can  
24 assist in the distribution of information about  
25 how to obtain a library card. And thank you also

1  
2 to the Council as a whole for the continued  
3 support that we've received so that we can in fact  
4 provide the services that really are the lifeline  
5 to man, man, too many actually, citizens of our  
6 city.

7           Libraries play an essential role in  
8 our democracy; they foster creative thinking,  
9 intellectual growth, cultural understanding and  
10 professional development, and it's imperative that  
11 young people have access to neighborhood libraries  
12 not only to enrich their own lives, but also to  
13 ensure that we better the future of our society.  
14 For many people, a library card is one of their  
15 first forms of official identification and is a  
16 symbol of membership in our communities. A  
17 library card is a tool for instilling  
18 responsibility in young people, and for teaching  
19 children about the importance of sharing resources  
20 with others. Obtaining a library card is often a  
21 person's first step towards meeting neighbors at a  
22 local brand and becoming more engaged in a  
23 community.

24           Using a library card also  
25 introduces people to the wider world through books,

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2 music, videos and other materials. Brooklyn  
3 Public Library offers internet enabled computers  
4 in all 60 of our locations, and having a library  
5 card is necessary to register for our computer  
6 sessions. The library is one of the first  
7 cultural and educational institutions to engage  
8 children. We urge parents to apply for library  
9 cards for their children early in their children's  
10 lives. Offering library cards to youth as well as  
11 age appropriate programming, books and materials,  
12 is vital to our work to promote young children's  
13 early literacy development, and support each  
14 parent's role as his or her child's first teacher.

15                   One of the library's highest  
16 priorities is serving Brooklyn's youth. We  
17 enthusiastically support amending the Library Card  
18 Act to require city agencies to distribute  
19 information about obtaining library cards. The  
20 agencies included in the amendment, which you know  
21 all well, too well, can really make a difference  
22 in our effort to reach as many children as  
23 possible. We applaud expanding the Library Card  
24 Act to young persons under the age of 24--I'm  
25 sorry. Provided all of the agencies involved



1  
2 provide essential services to many young people,  
3 including these agencies in the Act will make it  
4 easier for us to reach the youth that we serve  
5 with our programs and resources. We applaud  
6 extending the Library Card Act to young persons  
7 under the age of 24 and distributing library card  
8 applications to students entering pre-  
9 kindergarten. These amendments should result in  
10 more young Brooklynites making use of our  
11 resources.

12 Brooklyn Public Library is  
13 committed to conducting outreach to assist Youth  
14 to apply for library cards. The library works to  
15 build strong relationships with teachers, school  
16 librarians and principals in our borough's school  
17 system. We encourage teachers to arrange class  
18 visits at our libraries so students can attend our  
19 programs, obtain library cards, and learn more  
20 about the library's resources. In Fiscal Year  
21 2011, the library hosted over 2,000 class visits  
22 for school-aged children and young adults,  
23 reaching an estimated 70,000 youth.

24 Brooklyn Public Library staff visit  
25 schools and back to school fairs and speak in

1  
2 classrooms, school libraries and auditoriums about  
3 the many materials, programs and services  
4 available at the library. We regularly set up  
5 information tables and distribute library cards at  
6 neighborhood street fairs, in city parks, and at  
7 many community events, such as the annual summer  
8 fair on Coney Island's boardwalk, Bellevue  
9 Hospital's library day in June, the Brooklyn  
10 Children's Museum's Back to School Day in  
11 September, the Brooklyn Book Festival, the After  
12 School Corporation College Fair, the Department of  
13 Youth and Community Development College Fair, the  
14 annual NAACP Back to School Stay in School event  
15 at Borough Hall, and at open school nights at  
16 numerous elementary, middle and high schools, ever  
17 fall and spring.

18 In FY 2011, our staff conducted  
19 more than 350 outreach sessions outside of  
20 Brooklyn Public Library facilities for school-age  
21 children and young adults, reaching an estimated  
22 30,000 youth.

23 Brooklyn Public Library plays a  
24 critical role in the development of students and  
25 other young Brooklynites. We offer a wide array

1  
2 of free programs tailored to enrich their lives.  
3 Although a library card is not necessary to  
4 participate in many of our services, having one is  
5 often a precursor for young people entering our  
6 buildings and learning about the resources we  
7 offer. With greater access to library cards, we  
8 believe more youth will be aware of our services.

9           And I am pleased to highlight for  
10 you, if you'd like, some of the services and  
11 programs that we do provide to young people, but I  
12 suspect that at this point you're fully aware of  
13 them, and they're in the printed testimony that  
14 you will be receiving.

15           From the work that we do with  
16 children and children with special needs to  
17 programs that we provide to teach children about  
18 technology and to keep them engaged and employed  
19 in internships in our system, we provide many  
20 important services for youth. There are more than  
21 200,000 school-age children and teens with active  
22 Brooklyn Public Library cards, but there are many  
23 more young people who could benefit from the  
24 wealth of resources that the public library  
25 offers. The Library is pleased to collaborate

1  
2 with the Department of Education, with the New  
3 York Public Library, with the Queens Library and  
4 various agencies, to produce and distribute  
5 information and library card applications. We  
6 would like as many young Brooklynites as possible  
7 to take advantage of the programs and the services  
8 that we offer. So, thank you again for providing  
9 us with the opportunity to testify. And when  
10 you're ready I have as much time as you'd like for  
11 questions.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
13 very much, Linda. We've been joined by Inez  
14 Dickens from Manhattan. Thank you very much,  
15 Councilwoman. And we will next to Tony Marx of  
16 the New York Public Library.

17 ANTHONY MARKS: Thank you, Mr.  
18 Chairman. I'm Tony Marks, president of the New  
19 York Public Library. The Library, the New York  
20 Public Library provides library services to the  
21 boroughs of Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island, as  
22 well as the research library function to the  
23 entire city and beyond. I want to begin again by  
24 thanking Speaker Quinn as well as Committee  
25 Chairman Jimmy Van Bramer and Vincent Gentile and

1  
2 all the members of the Committee, Congressmen  
3 Comrie and Dickens for your great support of  
4 libraries.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

6 Congressman Comrie? You just got a big promotion  
7 there.

8 ANTHONY MARKS: Whoops.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Very nice.

10 ANTHONY MARKS: Council Member, I  
11 apologize. I'm still new to this, Mr. Chairman.  
12 I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify  
13 today regarding number 711, which would require  
14 Departments of Homeless Services, Youth and  
15 Community Development, as well as the Human  
16 Resources Administration, Administration for  
17 Children's Services to distribute information on  
18 obtaining a library card for all young people in  
19 the City.

20 I'm going to now summarize, though  
21 you have a written version of my testimony. The  
22 New York Public Library supports this legislation  
23 and the overriding goal of putting library cards  
24 in the hands of New York City's youngest  
25 residents, which you have spoken so eloquently to,

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which Linda has, and which I know Tom will.

A library card, simply put, is a gateway for young people to have knowledge and scope of understanding the world. It provides them to have an independence. In doing so, allows our city's children to use a vast collection of our books, DVDs, CDs and online resources in a safe and welcoming environment at a time when that is too often too hard for our citizens to find. And all free of charge, as the Chairman has already mentioned.

Access to books is essential. It's essential for the skills that our young people need. It's essential for a functioning economy in which people are prepared for jobs. It's essential for a vibrant democracy in which people are informed, and I would say it is essential for a moral society in which we understand each other and live with each other with respect.

The library card is, as has been noted, the essential tool of access for our youth to those possibilities on which we all depend for our future. The New York Public Library continues to work to enhance our collections and programming

1  
2 and to make them accessible to children and  
3 families. We offer over 2 million items in our  
4 children and teens collection. Over the last 12  
5 months, the New York Public Library has hosted  
6 close to 30,000 programs, with over 600,000 young  
7 people attending these programs. And I should say  
8 we hope to do more.

9           There's been an increase in the  
10 programs and attendance already of 20% over the  
11 previous 12 months. In FY '11, close to 150,000  
12 students visited an NYPL website with their  
13 classes. 5,600 participated in school programs.  
14 We have teen centers in many of our libraries. In  
15 fact, we just opened our most recent one in  
16 Hamilton Grange in Harlem, a really--an amazing  
17 facility that we hope we'll be able to continue to  
18 build upon in that center and elsewhere.

19           Last year the Council passed Intro  
20 number 59, which required the Department of  
21 Education to distributed information on obtaining  
22 a library. And the NYPL also supported this  
23 legislation and was very pleased to see its  
24 adoption. As a result, since the implementation  
25 of that legislation, in August of 2010, over

1  
2 26,000 children and young adults have obtained new  
3 library cards. Over 22% of the library's active  
4 cardholders are children and teens. If I may, Mr.  
5 Chairman, let me highlight two instances of things  
6 that the New York Public Library, in collaboration  
7 or possible collaboration with our peers in  
8 Brooklyn and Queens have done on the same issue  
9 that you're after with this legislation.

10 As you know, we launched--now a  
11 couple of months ago--a program called New  
12 Chapters. Again, a path breaking collaboration  
13 between Queens, Brooklyn, and the New York Public  
14 Library systems. In that program we announced an  
15 amnesty for a period of time for all young people  
16 in New York who had accumulated fines, and as a  
17 result of those accumulated fines, were not able  
18 to come and use the library. I talked to patron  
19 who as kids, because of their fines, not only did  
20 they not borrow books from the library, they  
21 didn't even come into the library because they  
22 thought they were going to get arrested for their  
23 fines. We said to the youth, the city government  
24 said, the Council, the mayor, we said as a system  
25 we want you in the library and we want you



1  
2 reading. We want you to bring your books back,  
3 but we're going to waive those fines. We got  
4 private support to help us do that, shared by the  
5 three institutions. As a result of that,  
6 something--together with our summer reading  
7 programs--something like a quarter of a million, a  
8 quarter of a million students in this city who  
9 were blocked from using libraries are now using  
10 the libraries again. Really quite dramatic.

11 In addition, I want to highlight  
12 today a new program, a partnership between the New  
13 York Public Library and the Department of  
14 Education, that we call Biblio Commons. We  
15 started this as a pilot in 51 schools, Mr.  
16 Chairman. And it works simply this way.  
17 Previously in those schools that are fortunate  
18 enough to have libraries that are open and  
19 staffed--which is too small a percentage in my  
20 view--too often those libraries for reasonable  
21 budget problems, had old out of date library  
22 collections, maybe 10,000 books, old-fashioned  
23 card catalog. In those 51 schools, what the New  
24 York Public Library system has said, is we will  
25 provide you with computer--we will make your

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2 computers have access to our computers, and  
3 instead of the 10,000 out of date books in your  
4 collection in the room, the catalog that students,  
5 teachers and others in the school now have access  
6 to is the largest circulating library collection  
7 in the world, the New York Public Library System.  
8 And when a student wants books, they can ask us to  
9 deliver to those schools the books that they've  
10 requested. We've taken a system that was  
11 constrained for a lot of reasons and made it the  
12 largest possible system, the largest possible  
13 universe of information available to students.  
14 And, in keeping with the legislation proposed here  
15 today, we haven't just asked the students in those  
16 schools to apply for library cards, we've pre-  
17 printed library cards and given out 65,000 library  
18 cards to the students in those schools. We hope,  
19 we hope to be able to extend this program to every  
20 school in our three boroughs. We are talking with  
21 Queens and Brooklyn, because we believe  
22 collaboration is essential across the city to see  
23 whether we can expand this to a citywide program.  
24 All inspired by the same motivation that we're  
25 here to talk about today, which is how to get

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every young person in the city using the library.

In 2010, according to the US census, there were close to 1.8 million young people under the age of 18 in New York City. In the New York Public Library system, we have 217,000 of that group using a library card in the last 12 months. Incredibly that is 58,000 more or 35% of an increase compared to the same analysis just one year before. Something is working in your efforts and our efforts to get more students into the world of ideas and thinking. That said, Mr. Chairman, there are 850,000 youth in just our three boroughs--so by our calculations, only a quarter of them are in our system.

We are inspired by your efforts, by the City Council's collective efforts, by the City's efforts, by our peers' efforts in Brooklyn and Queens to get that number where it should be-- as close to 100% as we can possibly get. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Those are staggering numbers on all fronts, really. And really, you know, the driving force behind the bill I proposed last year and we were

1  
2 able to pass into law and this piece of  
3 legislation as well. It's great to know that the  
4 numbers are going up. And I certainly remember  
5 when I got my first library card at the Broadway  
6 branch in Astoria, Queens, and it's hard to  
7 believe that so many children do not have library  
8 cards, currently are not actively using their  
9 libraries. So with that, Tom Galante of the  
10 Queens Library.

11 TOM GALANTE: Good morning. Thank  
12 you and I just want to point out that we have  
13 great support from many people in government.  
14 Chris Quinn has been an unbelievable supporter of  
15 public libraries in this city, every year, year  
16 in, year out; Chairman Van Bramer; our Queens  
17 delegation chair, Leroy Comrie has stood strong  
18 behind libraries in Queens and citywide in a big  
19 push every year as we've dealt with potential  
20 large budget cuts, to preserve our service so that  
21 when we go out and get kids and get them a library  
22 card, they have a place to walk into. And that's  
23 so important throughout the city.

24 In Queens alone, you know, we've  
25 got every library still open five or six days a

1  
2 week. We have as a priority making sure that  
3 libraries are open Monday through Friday in every  
4 single community. So, when kids get out of school  
5 they have a place to go. So if they have that  
6 library card, they've got a place that's open,  
7 that they can borrow books and get access to  
8 resources. And we have tutors that work with  
9 every one of these kids in every library in an  
10 organized program for homework assistance. So, I  
11 just want to thank you all for your great support  
12 in allowing us to be able to try and expand the  
13 use of the existing access that we have. You know,  
14 the sponsors of this legislation, Council Members  
15 Van Bramer and Reuben Wills, both from Queens, for  
16 the opportunity to testify today.

17                   This legislation is another  
18 innovative way that the City and libraries can  
19 work together to avail all New Yorkers of the  
20 unparalleled resources of the public library.  
21 Every child must have access to information to  
22 learn and grow. A library card is a key that  
23 opens the gate to the world of information for  
24 them for free for every child and anything we can  
25 do to promote that access, that effort, is

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something that's very, very important for us to do.

When we're able to pattern children into lifelong learners by visiting the libraries and using the libraries to enrich their lives, we also set them on a path of independence, of adult economic independence or just independence as a child or as youth and being able to learn and grow. So, we welcome the opportunity to support this legislation. It's very valuable. It's a great extension of the existing support that we've already received in this area.

We currently have about 256,000 library cardholders under the age of 18. That number continues to grow. In the last two fiscal years we put library cards in the hands of over 55,000 new young patrons. Yet there's still, as Tony mentioned and Linda mentioned, there's so much more to be done. The most recent census figures show for Queens we have 462,000 kids under the age of 18 and we still have 200,000 more to go in Queens. We're at, about, I guess 60% who have a card at this point for us. We have a long way to go.

1  
2                   Library cards do indeed unlock  
3 doors to a world of intellectual, cultural and  
4 academic riches at the library. In Queens and  
5 throughout this city and this country, these cards  
6 are a golden ticket for students of every age to  
7 access robust programs and services for youth.  
8 These services go way beyond the stacks and the  
9 books that we have. They dovetail with their  
10 academic goals and enrich their overall experience  
11 to.

12                   We have access to over 6 million  
13 items, including popular youth materials and  
14 academic materials to support their education,  
15 access to 1,400 public computers, which are very  
16 important for kids to get on to do their homework,  
17 and do their assignments. At the same time they  
18 become literate in how to use technology. We also  
19 have technology training that we do. We also use  
20 kids to train adults on how to use computers. So  
21 we provide a lot of jobs for teens. We're the  
22 largest employer of teens in the borough. They do  
23 a lot of work to help those who are older as well.  
24 And also we use teens to be our tutors for the  
25 youngest kids in our programs, all funded through

1  
2 some grants we receive, which kind of gives us a  
3 double barrel shotgun there, where you have kids  
4 who are basically learning, getting their first  
5 job. We put them through a program on how to be a  
6 good employee and how to show up for work and do  
7 the right things and how to serve people and  
8 provide customer service. At the same time  
9 they're sitting down at a table showing a seven-  
10 year-old how to solve a, you know, a science  
11 problem or a math problem; and they can do it  
12 better than adults usually, these kids.

13 So our youth enrichment programs  
14 are real valuable too. We have youth counselors  
15 that have Masters degrees in social services that  
16 work with kids in a number of our libraries.  
17 That's a very important component in our overall  
18 program. We opened up our Children's Library  
19 Discover Center just some months ago, which  
20 provides STEM, Science, Technology, Engineering,  
21 and Math specialty skills for kids, as well as  
22 just an overall childhood development type  
23 programs that we offer there. We also, as I know  
24 my counterparts are doing, you know, libraries  
25 traditionally are always built--and we all deal



1  
2 with, you know, facilities that have been built  
3 many years ago, that had a children's room and an  
4 adult room, but no place for teens. And teens  
5 need their own space. And we've gone through--for  
6 the last six years we've been renovating  
7 libraries. We've renovated 38 now throughout,  
8 creating separate teen spaces that have  
9 collections and resources and activities. Our  
10 Central Library will be opening up a new teen  
11 center. That's in Leroy's district. And that  
12 teen center will be opening up about a year right  
13 now, we're in a phased renovation at Central,  
14 where it will have interactive gaming--it has all  
15 kinds of things. Call it the milk and the cookies  
16 to draw the kids in. And then once we get them in  
17 we'll be pushing books on them. So, that's a big  
18 part of what we do, is trying to bring them in.  
19 And the Library Card Act is a great way to  
20 undoubtedly increase the number of kids that are  
21 going to be able to come in and borrow.

22                   Importantly, you know, the  
23 partnerships I see that could come out of this go-  
24 -as my counterparts mentioned--is wonderful for  
25 getting library cards in kids' hands. But I also

1  
2 think there's opportunity here to work with other  
3 city agencies for us all to be better in just  
4 accessing our services, whether it's our  
5 technology, like Tony is leading with the  
6 Department of Education. But each of these city  
7 agencies, for the Homeless Services,  
8 Administration for Children's Services, Youth and  
9 Community Development and HRA, we have a lot of  
10 common people that we touch every single day, and  
11 I think the more collaboration we do, the better  
12 for all of us, to make all of us stronger.

13           Everyone from every background has  
14 something to gain from using their public library.  
15 Nevertheless, there is a natural nexus between the  
16 resources the public libraries increasingly  
17 provide and those that these agencies provide, all  
18 in hopes of empowering families to beat the  
19 challenges that they face today, whether it's a  
20 language barrier, whether it's a housing problem,  
21 a need for public benefits or other domestic  
22 problems.

23           Let me just give you one quick  
24 example that comes to mind. At this moment, and  
25 this throws my staff off who write things for me,

1  
2 but we just got a great grant from the state,  
3 \$600,000 over two years to create another literacy  
4 zone down in the Rockaways. And we integrate all  
5 kinds of social services that are provided by  
6 other agencies into the experience at the library.  
7 So, someone walks in, then can sign up and get a  
8 caseworker assigned to them who actually sits down  
9 with them. Because we find that for people to be  
10 able to effectively use the library, a lot of time  
11 they need help in life just in general, in how to  
12 access services that are out there available to  
13 them that they're unaware of. So, by bringing  
14 that whole component together, so we actually have  
15 the welcome center for this at one of our  
16 libraries at Peninsula, but every library in the  
17 Rockaways is all part of this integrated program.  
18 So, it's something that I think is another example  
19 of how really, going out and getting other non-  
20 city funds, but also the integration with other  
21 existing agencies is something that makes us all  
22 stronger.

23 Let me jump a little bit for you  
24 since I sidebarred a little bit. But, I mean, in  
25 those areas, for example, we offer pre-GED

1  
2 classes. We have a tremendous amount of those  
3 programs. GED classes for kids, whether they're  
4 in school or not. Our ESOL is a very important  
5 program for at-risk youth. So, I just want to say  
6 in closing that we really look forward to working  
7 with the City Council and the city agencies that  
8 are involved in this legislation to see it  
9 through, to carry it out, to find a way to do it  
10 in a low-cost, no-cost method. Times are tough  
11 for everyone, but I think there's opportunity  
12 through this creativity and through this  
13 legislation for us to do that, and I'd welcome any  
14 questions that you may have. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.  
16 I wanted to ask all of you, because obviously the  
17 young people that come into the doors of our  
18 public libraries--not all the time, but  
19 oftentimes--are the young people who are being  
20 serviced by some of the agencies that are in  
21 question, right? They're not necessarily  
22 identifiable as such, but there's great overlap.  
23 We want it to be greater. So, a question for all  
24 of you is, maybe you could briefly highlight ways  
25 in which you are currently working with the four

1  
2 agencies in question, either programs and services  
3 that you have or ways in which you already  
4 collaborate and coordinate with the agencies in  
5 question.

6 TOM GALANTE: I'll start. With  
7 DYCD we have a number of different programs.  
8 We're on some task force and boards with them in  
9 fact, as it relates to services for youth. We've  
10 had that partnership for a number of years. They,  
11 you know, at the same time we receive grants  
12 through them as well, which we lost one of them  
13 recently that was a very important to us, one of  
14 our housing--at Ravenswood and Queensbridge  
15 Housing Projects. For ACS, I would say not as  
16 much interaction as I would like to see us have.  
17 And Department of Homeless Services is something  
18 that I think this legislation creates an  
19 opportunity for us to better integrate.

20 We find that as you mentioned  
21 earlier, people that are homeless find a way--the  
22 library is a place to just come in, sit down, get  
23 warm, use the bathroom and the basics. They're  
24 there. So they come to us. And the more that we  
25 could help them access existing city services

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2 through just information, I mean that's--part of  
3 our business is dispelling information--that's a  
4 big part of it. So that's something that we  
5 really could help with in a number of other ways,  
6 better than I think we do now. So, I would say of  
7 these agencies, I would say DYCD is the one that I  
8 would say we do have an ongoing relationship and  
9 lots of interaction and common work that we do  
10 together. The other agencies, to be honest, we  
11 don't have a lot of activity at this point and I  
12 think this is a great opportunity to do that, at  
13 least for Queens.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Tony or  
15 Linda?

16 ANTHONY MARKS: Okay. So, Mr.  
17 Chairman, we believe strongly in the notion of  
18 collaboration. There are efficiencies to be had.  
19 We can be more effective the more we work across  
20 the City, across agencies, with the government,  
21 public private partnerships, etc. We're certainly  
22 delighted to work with the agencies involved in  
23 this legislation. An example would be we're in  
24 discussion with the Young Men's Initiative that  
25 the City, together with some private donors, have

1  
2 launched to think about how we can work with  
3 agencies in the kinds of programs, for instance,  
4 that you heard from the Queens system that we also  
5 have in the New York Public Library system, and I  
6 know Brooklyn does--or our summer reading program,  
7 which is part of what produced a quarter million  
8 students back on the rolls if you will of access  
9 to the libraries.

10           Beyond that, I'll say we are in  
11 conversations, which we would like to be talking  
12 with you all about, about what else we can do. I  
13 think this is the name of the game at this point  
14 for all the obvious reasons. Two examples. One,  
15 as Tom was describing in Queens, how do we make  
16 sure that the library, without supplanting city  
17 agencies obviously, can help our citizens find the  
18 resources that they need from those agencies. How  
19 do we make sure that we have trained our staff  
20 enough so that when someone comes up to the desk  
21 and says not how do I check out this book, but how  
22 do I apply for X or Y services that the City  
23 provides, that we at least know where to direct  
24 them. Or, if they're online and trying to figure  
25 their way out from a form, how can we help you do

1  
2 that. I mean, those are all things that happen in  
3 the library now, and we probably need to do a  
4 better job of those. And then lastly, we are in  
5 fairly intensive conversations with the Department  
6 of Education, and we'll be talking with our  
7 colleagues in Brooklyn and Queens, about how to  
8 create more efficiencies and more effectiveness in  
9 the shared commitment to learning that the school  
10 system and the libraries have, and that are there  
11 areas of additional partnership that we can  
12 explore that are possible to explore, that will  
13 make sense for all the youth of this city.

14 LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you. First  
15 of all, I'd just like to echo that I think the  
16 beauty of this amendment and this legislation is  
17 the idea that we should all be making sure that  
18 our sister agencies understand the work that we  
19 can do to supplement the work that they're doing  
20 and vice versa. Obviously that's at the core of  
21 collaboration, but it's nice to have it  
22 institutionalized and formalized in a way so that  
23 we can do as much as we can without stepping on  
24 each other's toes, but certainly to work hand-in-  
25 hand to make sure that we leverage the resources



1  
2 that are being given to these particular agencies  
3 and to our own libraries to the full extent  
4 possible.

5                   Sometimes when I look at the  
6 services that we're providing, I wonder why we  
7 are--you know, how it is that over these years  
8 we've come to do certain things and not to do  
9 others. Of course some of it has to do with just  
10 exemplary staff who have taken things, you know,  
11 into their own hands because they identified a  
12 need in their particular community and it grew  
13 and, you know, mushroomed into something that made  
14 sense to do across the entire borough. One thing  
15 in particular where we work closely with ACS is  
16 called, a program called the Child's Place for  
17 Children with Special Needs. And what that is,  
18 basically, are centers where children regardless  
19 of learning styles--so children with learning  
20 disabilities and children who learn in more  
21 traditional ways--can come and play together. It  
22 creates spaces for parents who have challenging  
23 kids to bring those children to get the kind of  
24 help that they need, which is--often it's younger  
25 kids--but often need that is greater than a parent

1  
2 can provide on their own before children can get  
3 into special programs or into the school system.  
4 They're weekend programs that we do with ACS. And  
5 whenever I think about whether we should be  
6 continuing this work or not, the outcry from staff  
7 alone is so great that I sense that it's something  
8 that's really important to the community. So,  
9 that's one area where we're collaborating heavily.

10 With the other agencies they're  
11 involved not as much, but I think that this  
12 legislation is a first step in making sure that we  
13 do maximize the contact, the number of contacts  
14 that we have with the same individuals to make  
15 sure that we bring the full range of city services  
16 to everybody who is affected.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Chair Van  
18 Bramer, I'm sorry to have to interrupt. There are  
19 two committees that are sort of concurrently  
20 running, and I have to run downstairs for that  
21 one. But please add my name to Intro 711, so that  
22 I can also be on the--also be one of the members  
23 that are clearly in favor of getting the bill  
24 passed as quickly as possible. I applaud your  
25 concept and I look forward to working with all of

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you to see this happen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, Council Member, and I know Council Member Dickens has some questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And good morning and thank you for coming down to testify today on this Intro 711. First, I want to say thank you, Tony, and again welcome to the New York Public Libraries, and thank you for that phenomenal teen center, by the way in the Hamilton Grange. It is great. It is also a catalyst that can be served as an anti-gang--with all the problems that we're having in Harlem, that center is a catalyst to bring the young people in and off the streets. And so, it's something, Mr. Chair, that maybe we need to look at particularly during these times that we're having such a difficulty with the young people that they're unhappy for a myriad of reasons that I'm not going into, but maybe we could look at what could be done to create more of these teen centers in the future.

Question. For the four city agencies that are involved mostly with our

1  
2 families and young people, are there any protocols  
3 that the three library systems could write and  
4 implement that would serve as a networking system  
5 between you, the three systems, and the agencies  
6 so that the young people would be encouraged--it  
7 would be like a networking? And is there a cost  
8 factor to implementing such a networking system?  
9 I'm asking each of you. Would you start, Mark?

10 ANTHONY MARKS: I--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS:

12 [Interposing] Tony.

13 ANTHONY MARKS: Sorry, that's fine.

14 I don't know the answer to the question, I  
15 confess, but I will find out. Because I do  
16 believe the driver to the question is one that  
17 we're all in accord with, which is, you know, how  
18 do we work together, these three systems, as well  
19 as together with our partners in the city  
20 agencies, to do what we're all setting out to do?  
21 And I really do believe that in cooperation rather  
22 than in turf fighting, if I may use that phrase,  
23 we will find ways to serve our public more  
24 effectively, and I think we're committed to that.  
25 So, I'm open, we're open, to all suggestions to

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2 how we can achieve that for ourselves across these  
3 three systems, as well as in working with the  
4 agencies in taking the guidance from the City  
5 Council and from the government of, you know, the  
6 government as a whole of the City of New York, to  
7 how to do that even more effectively.

8

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Linda, in  
9 doing something like that, would it be a cost  
10 factor, do you think? And if so, what would be  
11 the impact?

12

LINDA JOHNSON: Well, I have a  
13 sense that there must be a way. And I have a  
14 sense, just sitting here thinking about it since  
15 you asked the question, I don't have a good  
16 response, but there must be a way for us to  
17 formalize some of the objectives that we have to  
18 make sure that it's not haphazard. I mean, I  
19 think for example as I sit here thinking about it,  
20 we do a lot of work with the homeless without  
21 actually doing it in a formal way. We become a  
22 natural destination for people who are living on  
23 the street. We recognize them--in fact, you know,  
24 relationships develop within the branches between  
25 staff and homeless people who visit regularly.

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2 But there probably is some way that we can do a  
3 better job, if we were more conscious of how it  
4 works and if we could build it into the work that  
5 we do. So, my guess is that kind of work could be  
6 done at relatively low cost. Of course, whenever  
7 you start to build and money starts to enter the  
8 fray, you know, it's a question of priorities and,  
9 you know, it's something that needs to be looked  
10 at beyond just a particular library system or even  
11 the three library systems, but rather how money is  
12 allocated throughout the agencies and the  
13 libraries cumulatively, to figure out who should  
14 be doing what.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Now, Tom,  
16 you had mentioned that you're going to be opening  
17 shortly a teen center in my colleague, Council  
18 Member Comrie's District. How many teen centers  
19 are there in the Queens system?

20 TOM GALANTE: We have--oh boy. At  
21 least 30. I mean, we have--I'll give you an  
22 example. Down in the Rockaways--this is a great  
23 example of how to, I think, for in our case how to  
24 serve teens. In the Rockaways, the Borough  
25 President had funded a brand new library, 18,000

1  
2 square feet. But we know that it will take time  
3 to design and built it. We had an influx of, this  
4 is in Far Rockaway--and there's a lot of gang  
5 activity and so forth there too, right? We had  
6 every day after school 200 or 300 teens, good  
7 kids, coming into the library for a place to go.  
8 There wasn't enough space and it became so jammed  
9 up with kids trying to access, like, eight  
10 computers, it wasn't productive. So what we did,  
11 about four to five years ago, we found a rental  
12 location a block away--relatively small, it's  
13 about 3,800 square feet--outfitted it with 50  
14 computers. We have a sound recording studio in  
15 there that we got through a state grant, so they  
16 actually can do sound and poetry. And we use that  
17 as, like, the hook to get them to sign up for pre-  
18 GED classes that we offer. Okay? So, that's a  
19 way. So there's a separate place that we have.  
20 And we put up about \$100,000 in rental money to  
21 rent this space, but since then we've been able to  
22 bring in federal and state grants to more or less  
23 cover the entire operation of it.

24 Then in about 30 libraries that  
25 we've done complete renovations, we've got teen

1  
2 spaces. It will be an area that's assigned to  
3 them. There might be four seats or ten seats and  
4 so forth, but a separate space to go, which is  
5 really important for them. Then we have places  
6 like Flushing, where we took a staff workroom,  
7 eliminated a large staff workroom, bigger than  
8 this room here, and made it just a teen space that  
9 has stuff just for teens. And it even has, like,  
10 when you go along the wall it has, like, booths  
11 where they can sit down and do homework in booths.  
12 So the whole environment is teen friendly and it's  
13 a fun kind of place that way.

14           And the one that I mentioned about  
15 Central Library in Leroy's district is really more  
16 of a large teen center. It's going to be the size  
17 of six of these rooms, seven of these rooms. So,  
18 it's a large, large, space at Central that we view  
19 as a borough-wide place. It's going to have its  
20 own separate entrance so that we could then have  
21 karaoke or whatever those events would be to bring  
22 kids in late at night, where Central might be  
23 closed, but the teens can come in and be there  
24 until 1:00 in the morning as a place to come, come  
25 to the library.



1  
2           So, the thing I want to kind of  
3 point out is that what I think is so great about  
4 using--this legislation as way to start moving  
5 something forward. I mean, we're all in tough  
6 times, right? We're dealing with city funding  
7 cuts and revenues are down and all that. And to  
8 be able to try and find ways to do more with the  
9 less that we have is very important. I think that  
10 my answer to your question on what do we do with  
11 these agencies, I think you get the Commissioners  
12 in the room for us all to share what we do. I  
13 don't think they understand all the things that we  
14 do that help support their goals. So, just  
15 getting the information to that level of each of  
16 these agencies, for them to then sit down and for  
17 us to brainstorm out how can we take the things  
18 that we're doing and help support them in the  
19 things that they're doing. I just think a couple  
20 hours with the right people in the room.

21           What happens all too often, it's my  
22 staff trying to push up, and we know that that's  
23 not the easiest way to get things done in any  
24 organization. So, I think a great start with  
25 that--and we know with the DOE, Tony is having

1  
2 regular meetings with Dennis Walcott. Dennis'  
3 wife is a member of one of our friends groups in  
4 Cambria Heights and they're very involved. So, we  
5 know we have somebody at DOE who really gets what  
6 public libraries are about. I'm sure that's the  
7 case with these other agencies, but we've never  
8 really sat down and had a powwow to kind of just  
9 talk out, so they really understand all we do for  
10 the homeless right now, for example. We provide a  
11 lot of services for the homeless, and I think we  
12 could also be a great information point to the  
13 homeless in that way too.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: All right.  
15 Well, thank you so much. And maybe that's  
16 something that this committee can assist in  
17 bringing the agencies and the library systems  
18 together.

19 TOM GALANTE: Like Tony said, not a  
20 turf thing. You know, right? Because nobody  
21 wants that. We're not looking to do their job  
22 and, you know, vice versa. But I think there's a  
23 lot of common work that we could do together to  
24 support each other.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: All right.

1

2 Thank you so much and thank you to all three of  
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you,  
5 Councilwoman. And I think you're correct that  
6 these teen centers that are popping up in your  
7 district and in the Rockaways in Council Member  
8 Comrie's district, and I might add I just  
9 allocated significant capital funding for a teen  
10 center in the Woodside Library, which Tom  
11 neglected to mention, but--

12 TOM GALANTE: [Interposing] Jimmy,  
13 I can't get it all in, you know.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.  
15 That's all right, Tom. And so, I think there are  
16 models there for service to teens, which is such  
17 an incredibly important population. I want to  
18 recognize that we've been joined by Councilwoman  
19 Elizabeth Crowley, and our finance chair, Domenic  
20 Recchia, who have both joined us. And I wanted to  
21 also say that obviously one of the questions that  
22 I want to ask the agencies too is the question we  
23 directed to you. But to what extent are they  
24 aware of and do they track the usage of those who  
25 are in their charge of the public libraries.

1  
2 Because we all know that there are significant  
3 numbers of families and children who are in the  
4 various systems who are using the public library.  
5 Part of the intent of this legislation is to  
6 increase that number. But it's quite possible  
7 that no one is quite aware of just how much cross  
8 pollination there is and to the extent that we can  
9 know that and concretize these relationships, all  
10 the better. So, I think more collaboration  
11 between the agencies and the libraries is one of  
12 the goals. And I know because I ran into  
13 Commissioner Richter, who is a constituent of  
14 mine, at ACS, he mentioned this legislation and  
15 was aware of it. And I was very pleased about  
16 that when the Commissioner and I were talking in  
17 the district recently. So, that is all very much  
18 on the table here. Are there any more questions  
19 for our three library systems before we hear from  
20 the city agencies? Seeing none, I will thank all  
21 for your testimony and for your support of Intro  
22 711. And with that, we will call up--I believe  
23 it's Matt Brune from HRA, DSS. Carl Myricks, from  
24 DHS, Dale Joseph from ACS, and Andrew Miller from  
25 DYCD. So why don't we start with--is it Ms.

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Joseph?

DALE JOSEPH: Yes, it is.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And we'll move to your right, after that.

DALE JOSEPH: Okay. Good morning, Chair Van Bramer and Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations. I'm Dale Joseph, Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Community Partnerships and Advocacy at ACS. And on behalf of ACS Commissioner, Ron Richter, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning regarding the New York City Council's legislation regarding distribution of library card access materials to children and youth served by ACS.

As you know, ACS serves children and youth in many different divisions and programs, including Child Care, protective and preventive services, foster care, detention, and adoption subsidies. Through all of these different services, ACS reaches approximately 245,000 children and youth annually. ACS places a premium on education and reading, from preschool

1  
2 children in Child Care and Head Start, to children  
3 in foster care and youth in detention. We have  
4 numerous programs aimed at promoting education as  
5 the key to the future in those we serve, and  
6 reading is obviously a key part of that learning  
7 experience, which we value highly. So, I'd like  
8 to share with you three examples of where we have  
9 worked with the public library systems to promote  
10 reading and learning.

11           So, first in terms of reading and  
12 learning in our detention services, ACS's Division  
13 of Youth and Family Justice currently promotes  
14 reading and library use among youth in detention.  
15 As we have previously testified before this  
16 Committee, the Department of Education through its  
17 Passages Academy, the city's three public library  
18 s systems, and the non-profit Literacy For  
19 Incarcerated Teens, all support and promote  
20 reading and literacy for youth at Crossroads  
21 Juvenile Center in Brooklyn, and our Horizons  
22 Juvenile Center in the Bronx. This past winter,  
23 we collaborated with DOE to bring library services  
24 to our secured facility dormitories after school  
25 hours. Two DOE librarians visit the dorms so that

1  
2 one can check in books and check out books, while  
3 the other is visiting youth and discussing books;  
4 so it's an interactive process. Our librarians  
5 report a brisk business, and our principal proudly  
6 reports seeing youth reading all around the  
7 building and even in the gym. We are pleased to  
8 note that DOE is currently remodeling the library  
9 at Horizons Juvenile Center, and received a  
10 \$250,000 grant to begin remodeling at Crossroads  
11 Juvenile Center. And both of those initiatives  
12 are funded by a borough president's funding.

13 We're also promoting the New York  
14 City Library System for our youth, as we recognize  
15 what an important resource community libraries  
16 will be to our youth once they leave detention.  
17 This fall we partnered with the library system to  
18 hold our first library fair for residents at our  
19 secure and non-secure facilities. The New York,  
20 Brooklyn, and Queens public library systems  
21 collaborated with programming staff to create  
22 workshops, provide books to residents and inform  
23 them of all the services the library provides. So  
24 we've been very involved and have been  
25 collaborating very closely. And we are pleased to

1  
2 have been able to arrange it so that any accounts  
3 with outstanding balances that youth may have had  
4 prior to the fair were forgiven by the New York  
5 City Library System, which was mentioned earlier.

6 DYFJ, which is our Division of  
7 Youth and Family Justice, their staff created a  
8 New York City Library Directory, and each resident  
9 was issued library cards for all three branches.  
10 This effort we plan to continue with all new  
11 residents being given the opportunity at intake to  
12 apply for all three library cards.

13 And the second example is using the  
14 library system as an educational resource. In the  
15 past, ACS has also invited representatives of the  
16 public library systems to present at one of the  
17 monthly education forums for foster care agency  
18 education specialists and child protective  
19 specialists who work within our Division of Child  
20 Protection. The Education Matters e-bulletin,  
21 which was distributed following the forum, which  
22 has a much wider distribution and audience than  
23 the event itself, included a summary of the  
24 presentation and helpful links and attachments.

25 In addition, we have posted



1  
2 information about supports available through the  
3 libraries on the banners that we rotate through  
4 the education resources web page of our internet  
5 website. So anyone can access that.

6 And finally, the last example is  
7 we've made some efforts to promote literacy in our  
8 Head Start programs. So, in September, our Head  
9 Start programs kicked off our Dads, Take Your  
10 Children to School effort. And through this  
11 effort we targeted eight programs that were given  
12 packets of information and activities that they  
13 could use with their children to engage them in  
14 reading and other literacy activities, including  
15 library visits and library reading groups. At a  
16 recent Head Start conference we presented a  
17 workshop on engaging fathers in children's reading  
18 activities. All participants were given literacy  
19 packets provided by Scholastic Books. In  
20 addition, we're working with the Imagination  
21 Library to register families for their programs  
22 through our Child Care and Head Start programs.

23 ACS supports the Council's efforts  
24 to provide young people served by our agency, as  
25 well as other city agencies, with valuable

1  
2 information on accessing the three public library  
3 systems, as well as obtaining a library card. We  
4 agree with the intent and support the legislation  
5 and will make our best efforts to realize the goal  
6 of the legislation. We are, however, concerned  
7 about the potential costs and logistical  
8 difficulties of reaching all of the children, all  
9 245,000 children that our agency serves, in order  
10 to provide this information.

11           The legislation requires that we  
12 develop either written or electronic materials for  
13 distribution. And given that the families we  
14 serve often do not have internet access or email  
15 addresses, it would be difficult to ensure that  
16 every child received information electronically.  
17 With regard to written materials, we estimate that  
18 it would cost about \$800,000 for our agency to  
19 develop materials and mail information to every  
20 child that we serve in care, in Child Care,  
21 protective and preventive services, foster care,  
22 detention, and those receiving adoption subsidies.

23           Given the fiscal challenges that  
24 all City agencies have faced over several years,  
25 of the past several years, a mandate to produce

1  
2 and distribute these materials would mean a  
3 reduction in the services that we currently  
4 provide to those we serve, and or the elimination  
5 of staff positions. So, finally I'd like to add  
6 that the population of children that we serve is  
7 largely attending school through the Department of  
8 Education, therefore we think that the requirement  
9 for ACS to distribute materials would be  
10 duplicative of the library information that's  
11 currently being distributed to children in  
12 schools. However, we would gladly partner with  
13 the public library systems to distribute materials  
14 that they produce in print on how to access  
15 library services, and to post that information,  
16 with links, prominently on our website. ACS has  
17 successfully partnered with other city agencies to  
18 distribute and disseminate information that is  
19 helpful to those that we jointly serve, including  
20 public awareness campaigns where we've posted and  
21 been a point of distribution for materials in our  
22 offices and centers.

23 We would like to reiterate once  
24 again that ACS supports the intent of the City  
25 Council's legislation in this area, this very

1  
2 important area. We believe in the importance of  
3 children reading at an early age, remaining  
4 engaged in reading throughout their childhood and  
5 adolescence, and having easy access to the City's  
6 public libraries. And we will work with the  
7 Council to continue to promote these goals and to  
8 find a workable means of ensuring that children  
9 and youth receive information on how to capitalize  
10 on the important resources available through our  
11 public library systems.

12 So, in closing, I'd like to thank  
13 you for your time in speaking on this important  
14 topic, and we'll be happy to answer any questions  
15 at the end.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.  
17 Normally I would go through all the agencies  
18 first, but I suspect the other agencies may have  
19 similar testimony. I just wanted to start by  
20 asking you some specific questions, because  
21 obviously no one is looking to provide you with  
22 burdensome or costly regulations. But, you know,  
23 we were able to accomplish this with the  
24 Department of Education last year at little or no  
25 cost for a far larger number of young people. And

1  
2 \$800,000 is a lot of money, because you would have  
3 to A, produce the materials, and then you would  
4 have to mail them. But the materials already  
5 exist in the sense that the libraries already  
6 produce library card applications in the hundreds  
7 of thousands. I've seen them myself, as a former  
8 library employee. I've seen the reams and reams  
9 of them that they all produce every year. And  
10 with the DOE solution they already had a packet  
11 that goes out to young people, and they simply  
12 inserted that into the packet of information that  
13 is already distributed to young people as they  
14 enter the system.

15           So, I guess a couple of questions.  
16 Is there any way to work out a DOE type solution  
17 with ACS, where you are already producing packets  
18 or informational brochures and bulletins that  
19 young people are coming into and their parents,  
20 obviously, or guardians, are given, provided, have  
21 access to, that you could include a library  
22 application in, just as DOE did? Because DOE is  
23 not, as you know, producing a new document. They  
24 are not mailing a new document; they are simply  
25 including the application in a preexisting

1  
2 document that then is given to the families as  
3 they enter the system, and as they register for  
4 school. So, I think, you know, were you not to  
5 mail it and were you not to have to produce a new  
6 written material, my guess is your \$800,000 cost  
7 would go down significantly. And then do you  
8 produce a publication brochure packet that goes to  
9 those who enter your various systems, either some  
10 or all, that a similar solution could be worked  
11 out so that it's at little or no cost to ACS, but  
12 yet the information is still provided?

13           DALE JOSEPH: I think that's a very  
14 good question, and we would have to look at all of  
15 our different populations, because, as you know,  
16 we serve a lot of young people in different ways.  
17 And where I think there are opportunities for us  
18 to insert materials, if we do intake for example  
19 for certain populations, inserting a brochure  
20 would not be a hardship for us, clearly. I think  
21 we would have to look carefully though at what  
22 those populations were in terms of what existing  
23 materials we have and what processes we currently  
24 use, so it would really depend on the system. For  
25 detention, obviously, it's a very straightforward

1  
2 way, because it's sort of a population that's  
3 there, they're there for some time and so we have  
4 interaction with them. It might be a little bit  
5 hard to do that with Child Protection, where we're  
6 doing an investigation, and so to engage a parent  
7 on how to get a library card when you may be  
8 removing their child, obviously is not the most  
9 appropriate way to convey the information.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

11 DALE JOSEPH: So we'd have to  
12 really look at the population and see what makes  
13 the most sense, but we would definitely be happy  
14 to look at all options to do that.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
16 for that willingness to look at when and where  
17 this is appropriate, obviously, and how we can  
18 best accomplish this. Because we all, I think,  
19 support this in principle, and the Department of  
20 Education had similar concerns when this first  
21 came up last year, and we were able to come up  
22 with this fantastic solution, and I know Council  
23 Member Weprin, who has children in the public  
24 school system came to me one day and say, you  
25 know, I got the library card application in the

1  
2 system, and rarely do you see a law that's passed  
3 where you can actually see it. And he said, I saw  
4 it, because, you know, my child came home with the  
5 packet and there was the library card application  
6 that we passed. So I think we can try and look  
7 for a similar workaround.

8           You know, you mentioned the  
9 literacy packets that are provided by Scholastic  
10 Books. Obviously that's an outside entity that's  
11 producing those, but I wonder if also within that  
12 packet that is already produced, we might be able  
13 to include a library card application. Obviously  
14 we'd have to work with Scholastic and yourselves  
15 would have to enter into that agreement, but  
16 perhaps that is a possible route of entry as well.

17           DALE JOSEPH: Yeah, I think we  
18 would definitely explore that. We would look into  
19 that and be happy to discuss that further.

20           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's  
21 great. And we're writing all these things down as  
22 well. And you said towards the end of your  
23 testimony that obviously you have points of  
24 distribution for materials at the various offices  
25 and centers. Obviously you must have some posters



1  
2 and things up in the various intake centers and  
3 things of that nature. Do you currently have  
4 posters that promote library card application?  
5 And do you have any--I don't know if you call them  
6 racks, or anything like that, where there are  
7 library card applications? Obviously you would  
8 not be charged with producing them, you would  
9 simply be using existing applications that the  
10 three systems have. But that is also another  
11 point of distribution and dissemination, that if  
12 you're not currently engaged in could be.

13           DALE JOSEPH: You know, I don't  
14 know of all of the areas that we currently have  
15 the applications available. But again, that is  
16 something that we could explore through our Child  
17 Care, Head Start centers perhaps, through our  
18 Borough Offices. We would definitely look into  
19 that. But I don't think we currently have that  
20 information available.

21           CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay. So,  
22 I appreciate your testimony and I think you  
23 understand where I'm pointing out, I think, lots  
24 of different ways that we can accomplish some very  
25 good things here to increase the collaboration and

1  
2 really access. I mean what we're talking about  
3 here is access to library cards, access to  
4 libraries. You all are doing, you know, very,  
5 very important and challenging work, and the  
6 libraries can make the lives of these young  
7 people, you know, better, and more hopeful. And  
8 there are lots of different points of entry and  
9 lots of different points of contact in a myriad of  
10 ways that your agency does it. And we can, I  
11 believe, work together to find the most  
12 appropriate and low and no cost ways of making  
13 these materials available in meaningful ways. And  
14 I think that I've highlighted several potential  
15 and possibilities that I would appreciate your  
16 looking into. And obviously the staff of the  
17 Council and your team will continue to talk about  
18 this legislation as we move through. But I think-  
19 -I appreciate your willingness and Commissioner  
20 Richter's willingness to take a look at this and  
21 find a solution that we can actually go forward  
22 with this legislation.

23 DALE JOSEPH: Great. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

25 CARL MYRICKS: Good morning,

1  
2 Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Cultural  
3 Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup  
4 Relations Committee. I'm Carl Myricks. I'm a  
5 program administrator for Family Services Division  
6 at the New York City Department of Homeless  
7 Services. On behalf of Commissioner Seth Diamond,  
8 thank you for the opportunity to testify before  
9 you this morning regarding the expansion of the  
10 library card legislation.

11 For those of you not familiar with  
12 our system, DHS is responsible for providing  
13 prevention and shelter services for families and  
14 individuals throughout the five boroughs. Every  
15 night the agency, together with our non-profit  
16 contractors, serve about 40,000 clients at over  
17 200 shelters citywide. For the purpose of this  
18 legislation and the city's targeted demographic,  
19 in Fiscal Year 2011, just under 30,000 youth  
20 between the ages of zero and 23 entered DHS family  
21 shelters. In addition, DHS also provide shelter  
22 services to 3,517 single adults between the ages  
23 of 18 and 23 in the same timeframe. We currently  
24 operate 144 shelters for families with children,  
25 59 shelters for single adults, and 13 shelters for

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adult families. Those are families without any children under the age of 21.

When families apply for services at our centralized intake center in the Bronx, they are met with a host of city resources including representatives from the Human Resources Administration, ACS and the Department of Education. Additionally, each DHS family shelter has an assigned Department of Education family assistant worker and content expert who identify and support the educational needs of students while in shelter.

The Agency and contracted shelter staff routinely provide residency letters to assist any client, regardless of age, in obtaining a library card. We also make daily referrals to libraries for clients to become familiar with computers and the internet, to explore library classes, events and tours, to connect with homework help and after school fun, and of course to aid parents in employment searches. As we do with other city and state agencies, we also welcome any library literature or posters from each of the library systems to be displayed in a

1 recreational or after school space at our  
2 shelters. Homeless services would like to work  
3 with the Committee on this legislation to build on  
4 the successes of its partnership with DOE. While  
5 we have concerns about some aspects of the  
6 measure, including the additional cost associated  
7 with production and dissemination of material and  
8 our overall ability to reach all clients under age  
9 24 years old, we are very much open to further  
10 discussion with the Committee. DHS would like to  
11 preserve the intent of this measure and find ways  
12 to best connect homeless clients to the library  
13 systems, without burdening our staff or our not  
14 for profit providers. To the best of our ability,  
15 DHS will make library information and applications  
16 available to youth residing in our shelters.  
17 After all, public libraries offer a place for  
18 youth to learn and become inspired. We are happy  
19 to collaborate to increase awareness and help our  
20 youth discover the magic that libraries have to  
21 offer. Thank you.

22  
23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
24 very much. And if I may, I just want to follow  
25 up. So, when intake happens, and those agencies

1  
2 are present, are there any brochures, pamphlets,  
3 materials, that are distributed to folks there?  
4 Are each of those agencies producing their own  
5 literature that they may hand out at that  
6 particular time? And obviously I'm asking to  
7 determine if we might be able to include library  
8 card applications within any of those standardized  
9 packets or materials or brochures and such that  
10 are distributed at that point of intake or  
11 contact.

12                   CARL MYRICKS: Okay. To be clear,  
13 there are two points of intake or contact. The  
14 first one for family systems is our centralized  
15 intake center in the Bronx. At that point, if  
16 there are library applications available, again,  
17 they could be disseminated at a different kiosk.

18                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And are  
19 library card applications currently distributed at  
20 any of those points of intake or contact?

21                   CARL MYRICKS: No, I don't think  
22 so.

23                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But they  
24 could be.

25                   CARL MYRICKS: They could be. It's

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possible.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, thank you for opening up that door of possibility. It would be a very good thing, I think. And you mentioned, obviously, the residency letters, which obviously I understand why that's important. And we're very appreciative that you do that, and the referrals. But I wonder if that's done when someone asks where is the nearest library and I want to, you know, go there or take my child to the library--and obviously that's the point where you would make the referral and provide the residency letter--but is that done when the question is not asked so we're doing it in a proactive way and we're making sure--you know, because I know for a fact in Queens, and I'm sure all over the city, that there are various shelters and transitional housing opportunities that are very close to local public libraries. And unless you know, because in many cases you're not from the neighborhood where you're currently being housed, that the library is actually around the corner. And I think that would be a great place to take the kids who, you know, instead of staying

1  
2 in the hotel room, you know, two blocks away have  
3 an opportunity to spend the entire afternoon in a  
4 terrific public library. And you understand what  
5 I'm getting at, that rather than just receiving  
6 the request and then doing wonderful things when  
7 the requests happen, to actually being proactive  
8 and letting all of those children and families who  
9 are staying at any particular shelter that you  
10 should go down the block, there's a whole lot of  
11 really good things waiting there, and these young  
12 people are really going to do great there.

13 CARL MYRICKS: Well, as the Queens  
14 representative from the library system said, they  
15 do see our clients there, and that's primarily why  
16 they see our clients, is because we are being  
17 proactive in making those referrals. Each of our  
18 shelters is required to have a resource folder  
19 available that identifies where things like the  
20 libraries are in that particular area. And in  
21 addition, we are also actively encouraging our  
22 families to seek employment via the internet. And  
23 in that vein we also refer our families to the  
24 libraries, because again, not all shelters have  
25 the same resources and not all families have



1

2 computers in order to do an internet job search.  
3 The library is a very viable place for most of our  
4 families.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And do you  
6 track in any way or measure in any way the number  
7 of folks who avail themselves, for example, of the  
8 libraries' job assistance materials or tools for  
9 the folks who are availing themselves of those  
10 opportunities?

11 CARL MYRICKS: Not formally. We do  
12 it in an informal way in that we require the  
13 families to present documentation of their job  
14 searches and oftentimes it is the internet  
15 signature, so to speak, that they do present. And  
16 of course on the header it will tell you, you  
17 know, where that came from, but not in a formal  
18 way. We don't track in a formal way.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay. But  
20 I thank you again for supporting the legislation  
21 and being open to all of us working out a way in  
22 which we can make these library cards--

23 CARL MYRICKS: [Interposing] May I  
24 just make one more point?

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

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CARL MYRICKS: I also saw that segment on 60 Minutes this weekend, and I need to assure you that none of our families are sleeping in trucks. Okay? All of our families have heat, have lights, and do have access to essential services. So, you know, and of course you know we have the greatest shelter system in the country, and I just want to make sure we're all aware of that.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I appreciate that and recognize all the great work that the Agency is doing and does do. And wherever folks are, in whatever stage they're at of not having housing or finding housing, we want to make sure that they have the same access that those two teenagers had, to find their library, despite the fact that that particular family was living in a truck.

CARL MYRICKS: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I thank you for that.

CARL MYRICKS: Great.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Now we'll hear from Matt Brune.

1  
2 MATT BRUNE: Okay. Good morning,  
3 Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Committee.  
4 I'm Matt Brune, Executive Deputy Commissioner at  
5 the Human Resource Administration.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Matt, hold  
7 on one second. I should recognize Council Member  
8 Danny Dromm, from Queens, has joined us.

9 MATT BRUNE: Certainly. HRA looks  
10 forward to working with the Committee and the  
11 library system to help disseminate information to  
12 New Yorkers. While we are supportive of Intro  
13 711's intentions to publicize and boost  
14 utilization of the public library system, the  
15 bill's language requiring participating agencies  
16 to produce and distribute such material is of some  
17 concern.

18 Every month HRA serves over 350,000  
19 cash assistance recipients, over 1.8 million food  
20 stamp recipients, and close to 3 million public  
21 health insurance and Medicaid recipients. Within  
22 these three programs, there are over 1.4 million  
23 recipients under the age of 25. Presently, we  
24 provide assistance to many children who are part  
25 of our various program caseloads, although the

1  
2 majority of caseloads--rather, the majority of  
3 case heads in these programs are adults. However,  
4 there are some instances where youth are  
5 considered the head of household and hence have  
6 their own case. In addition, we also serve  
7 approximately 300 families a month in our domestic  
8 violence shelters, over 45,000 persons in our  
9 HIV/AIDS Services Administration program, as well  
10 as many recipients in our Teen RAPP program,  
11 families and individuals through our emergency  
12 food assistance program administered by community  
13 organizations, and thousands of recipients in our  
14 Personal Care Services. With such an expansive  
15 recipient base, we are naturally concerned that  
16 this proposal as written does not specify which of  
17 our programs it would apply to and whether it  
18 encompasses case heads under 25 years of age, or  
19 also children who are on their parent's case. It  
20 also does not take into account where there could  
21 be an overlap in services and recipients, not only  
22 within HRA programs, but between city agency  
23 programs as well.

24 Many of our programs are state  
25 programs for which HRA administers for the local

1  
2 social services district. The materials included  
3 in the application packet, which can be expansive,  
4 are often dictated by state social services law.  
5 In fact, we regularly hear concerns over the  
6 volume of information provided to individuals at  
7 the application process, and we are always working  
8 to streamline materials whenever possible.

9 In addition, for two of our largest  
10 program areas, Medicaid and food stamps, the  
11 application process has moved away from face to  
12 face meetings towards a web-based and phone  
13 application. For those taking advantage of these  
14 electronic processes, materials would have to be  
15 mailed out.

16 Other participants receive our  
17 services through a community-based organization or  
18 vendor who would then have to take on the  
19 responsibility of distributing the materials.  
20 Also, as many recipients are eligible for multiple  
21 programs, we would need to create a system for  
22 tracking the distribution of this information  
23 across programs and possibly families, especially  
24 when mailings are involved.

25 The proposal requires HRA to

1 distributed a description of the library system,  
2 instructions and a library card application for  
3 the New York, Brooklyn and Queens public library  
4 systems to any person under the age of 24. As the  
5 method of distribution is unclear in the bill, we  
6 have attempted to identify a cost-based on mailing  
7 to our food stamp, Medicaid, cash assistance  
8 recipients that is unduplicated and based on an  
9 average family size of two children. For this  
10 estimate we do not include our other programs,  
11 which would then increase the estimate. With that  
12 in mind, the cost of mailing this information  
13 would be slightly over \$800,000. We are also  
14 concerned about this new expense, particularly  
15 given the likely duplication of efforts between  
16 city agencies.

17  
18           Although we are very supportive in  
19 assisting the library system to reach and become a  
20 valued resource for all New Yorkers, the cost and  
21 possibly administrative complexity of this  
22 proposal is of concern to our agency. HRA would  
23 be open to discussing alternative ways to  
24 distribute this information to our clients. In  
25 particular it might be advantageous to look

1  
2 towards electronic means of notification as more  
3 cost effective. For example, the information  
4 could be posted on the NYC.gov website, including  
5 new sites that focus on teens, the very population  
6 indeed that the legislation is targeting. We  
7 could also add information on the script that  
8 recipients hear when they call our info line  
9 regarding services. And additionally, the library  
10 system is welcome to provide HRA with pamphlets to  
11 distribute at our centers, and we look forward to  
12 discussing options with them. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you,  
14 I think. That was a lot less positive and hopeful  
15 than the other agencies that have testified. And  
16 as to specifications within the legislation as  
17 written now, obviously we could clear up and make  
18 much more specific about exactly who is being  
19 spoken to. And as you've already heard with the  
20 other two agencies and with the Department of  
21 Education, where we successfully have already  
22 instituted this law, there are ways in which we  
23 can do this. And I certainly would appreciate HRA  
24 being as open to working with us as the other  
25 agencies have testified. Again, you know, the

1  
2 \$800,000 figure, you know, is not something we  
3 entertain. The Department of Education, which  
4 serves over a million children in our city, was  
5 able to accomplish this at little or no cost, and  
6 that is what we are looking for here. And we can  
7 find it, just as we've already spoken to the other  
8 two agencies. There are ways to do it. When it  
9 makes sense, and when it works, when there is  
10 point of contact. Obviously no one wants  
11 materials to be mailed, and no one is asking you  
12 or your vendors to produce materials that would  
13 have to be printed and paid for by the agency.  
14 So, we know that those things are not going to  
15 take place. And, you know, we're sensitive to too  
16 much information being supplied, but clearly there  
17 are points of contact within all of these various  
18 and myriad services, where you do supply  
19 information. And maybe it would be helpful if  
20 your agency could identify where it makes the most  
21 sense. Maybe it's the RAPP program. Maybe it is  
22 HASA, maybe it's the domestic violence shelters.  
23 Maybe it's not food stamps, but maybe there is a  
24 way. You know, instead of just kind of saying no  
25 and there are all these problems with it, it might



1  
2 be helpful to say where it makes the most sense.  
3 And if there is duplication, certainly we don't  
4 want to be duplicative, but in my mind, if there  
5 are close to a million children in the City of New  
6 York who do not have library cards, if the worst  
7 thing that happened is they got reminded twice  
8 that you might be able to get a library card and  
9 your child and family might have access to all of  
10 these amazing tools, which--the whole point of the  
11 legislation is that the children and families who  
12 are, thank god, being served by your agencies, are  
13 very much in need and oftentimes in crisis. And  
14 that library card application, that library card  
15 and that visit to the library is helpful to them,  
16 to their families, to you all, and to the City of  
17 New York ultimately. So it is incumbent upon all  
18 of us to find ways, just as we did with the  
19 Department of Education last year, to make this  
20 happen and find ways to make it happen. So, you  
21 know, I'm hopeful that HRA will do that with us.

22 MATT BRUNE: And I thank you. I  
23 don't think you--and if you did, I apologize to  
24 the Committee--I don't think you heard no in the  
25 testimony I delivered. There's a support and

1  
2 willingness to work through the council and our  
3 partner agencies on what the most effective means  
4 of distribution might be. But I'd also be remiss,  
5 you know, as someone who is at HRA, you know,  
6 given the myriad of programs that we undertake  
7 each day, if I didn't point out some of the  
8 administrative complexities that we face in this.  
9 You know, additionally, there's multiple--all the  
10 folks sitting at this table--we all have multiple  
11 agency involvement with many of the clients, HRA  
12 and ACS work very close, HRA and ACS and DHS, you  
13 know, we all collaborate depending on what the  
14 case composition is. So I would hope ideally as  
15 an outcome of these ongoing discussions we would  
16 frame, reach some consensus on what's the most  
17 effective means of distribution.

18 I will say for HRA we have been  
19 increasingly migrating our systems online, because  
20 that's cost effective. It's a great audit trail  
21 and it just works for us, and it's just the  
22 environment that we're in. So, increasingly we're  
23 having fewer face-to-face contacts with our  
24 clients. So, you know, we think an effective  
25 means, and perhaps a more durable means of

1  
2 accomplishing the shared goal of getting out  
3 information on the library system is really an  
4 electronic message, whether it's on our NYC.gov,  
5 whether it's on Teen Link, whether it's through  
6 our info line--

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

8 [Interposing] I saw all those. I read that. I  
9 heard that. But in my mind, many of those are  
10 passive, more passive ways of getting information  
11 out, and we're looking for more proactive ways.  
12 And I certainly understand that all of you, and  
13 appreciate, that all of you work together and  
14 collaborate. I think one of the things that's  
15 emerged from the testimony of the library  
16 directors is that that collaboration that is so  
17 critical to serve these families does not include  
18 our library systems all too often. So, it's great  
19 that all of you are collaborating, too. You  
20 should. But what we're trying to do is to  
21 establish a way and to make certain that the  
22 library systems are part of that collaboration,  
23 because as we've discussed this morning, your  
24 populations are their populations; their  
25 populations are your populations. But you don't

1  
2 exactly know to what extent that's happening, and  
3 the library systems really can't identify unless  
4 folks self-identify, you know, that they are part  
5 of your populations, and that doesn't help  
6 anybody. So, I think it needs to be more than  
7 simply putting something on a website or on a  
8 phone line. You know, we could have a whole other  
9 debate about HRA moving away from direct contact  
10 with clients. And I understand some of your  
11 reasons for doing those things and what you do--I  
12 don't want to get into that. But where you have  
13 contact, we have to find ways of making sure that  
14 you are letting those who are appropriate at the  
15 moments that are appropriate to be done so, that  
16 this resource is there. And obviously we will all  
17 continue to work to make that happen, but I can  
18 tell you that, you know, myself and I'm guessing  
19 the 20 members of the New York City Council who  
20 have co-sponsored this legislation--and this is  
21 just the first hearing--you know, simply putting  
22 it on your website is not going to be enough.  
23 That's contrary to the intent of this legislation.  
24 And if the Department of Education can include a  
25 library card application in a brochure that it had

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2 already been distributing and continues to do that  
3 and does it without cost, surely there's a way for  
4 all of us to replicate that and work at out as  
5 well. Council Member Dromm, do you want to...?

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COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I just want  
7 to go back to the \$800,000 cost. What did you  
8 base that on? Is that based on postage or is that  
9 based on postage and paper reproduction? Or what  
10 is it based on?

11

MATT BRUNE: I believe it's both  
12 actually. It's based on an example of a family of  
13 three, two children, one adult in the household.  
14 And so it would be inclusive of postage and the  
15 labor involved--

16

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM:  
17 [Interposing] The postage and the labor.

18

MATT BRUNE: And the printing as  
19 well.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Of those  
21 clients that you mentioned, the ones who receive  
22 food stamps and Medicaid and cash assistance, do  
23 they all receive a physical mailing on a monthly  
24 basis?

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MATT BRUNE: I'm sorry.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: That's okay.

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MATT BRUNE: I apologize. Could

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you...?

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COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Of the

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people that you mentioned, food stamp, Medicaid

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and cash assistance recipients, do they get a

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mailing on a monthly basis?

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MATT BRUNE: They don't get a

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mailing. I mean, obviously when anyone comes in

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to apply for a city services there's an

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application kit. For instance, if you come in to

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apply for public assistance the application kit I

14

think is like 43 separate pieces of information.

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And we do hear a concern for people who are

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applying that there's an awful lot of information

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in there already. But in terms of if you're

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referring to like a monthly informational mailing,

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that's not something that's done currently. What

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clients do get--for instance if there's a change

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in their case, a change in their budget, they'll

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get a notice saying that you used to have four

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people in your family, now you have three, so this

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is what your new budget is. So, those are the

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kind of notices people are typically getting.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I'm just  
3 curious to know, of these clients, how many of  
4 them actually physically receive a check in the  
5 mail? Or do they all receive their payment  
6 electronically for the public assistance? I know  
7 with the food stamp cards it's probably renewed  
8 electronically, but is there at any point a moment  
9 where people receive something in the mail for  
10 that, or...?

11 MATT BRUNE: No, we're not putting  
12 checks in the mail anymore. It's through the  
13 electronic benefits transfer.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: All of them  
15 electronically.

16 MATT BRUNE: EBT, right.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And that's  
18 even true for the cash assistance?

19 MATT BRUNE: Uh-huh.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So that  
21 anybody who is receiving cash assistance has to  
22 have a bank account?

23 MATT BRUNE: Well, we have a  
24 contract with an outside vendor; they administer  
25 it. So it's effectively an ATM card. The account

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is set up for you.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I see.

MATT BRUNE: And you withdraw money as needed.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So then there's never an opportunity outside of that application process where you do something through the US mail?

MATT BRUNE: Not typically. We occasionally will do a mailing, but, you know, one of the things obviously we're focused on, particularly now, is the cost associated with it. You know, as we're talking there's one thing that occurs to me, and I assume this is still something that can be done, on EBT receipts, you can actually print messages, which might be an opportunity--

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM:

[Interposing] That's what I was thinking.

Sometimes when I've gotten to the checks and stuff there's an envelope-sized cardboard thing that's in there that says remember, you know, to apply for heat or, you know, etcetera, so forth and so on.



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MATT BRUNE: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And it refers you to either a website or actually gives you the information on the card. And I wonder if something couldn't be done similar to that.

MATT BRUNE: It's been done in the past on EBT receipts. I certainly would have to go back and talk to our MIS people to see what the current ability is. But that might be a way forward.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I mean, I think there's even a national library month, if I'm not mistaken, and it might be the time when, you know, a national library month, a reminder like that would be appropriate to, you know, draw people's attention to the website for the libraries. And I think with the libraries--I wasn't here for the testimony before--I was with something with the Mayor, actually, and I apologize for being late to the hearing--but you know, I'm assuming you can register for a library card by internet, right? You know, so something like that, maybe, which is less cost--you know, it costs less to do something like that, so. I would

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encourage you to do something like that as well.

Thank you.

MATT BRUNE: We'll look at that.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

I appreciate the ideas, because there are lots of different ways to accomplish this. And that is one idea in the spirit of cooperation, that I appreciate all of the agencies, you know, coming here to talk about. Obviously we're talking about little or no cost options. And, you know, we are not entertaining anything like what you suggested, nor would we ever ask the agencies to do that. Clearly the model is the Department of Education model, which has been wildly successful, as we heard the libraries testify earlier today about the--in particular, New York Public Library's stats on the increases in young people obtaining library cards in their system since this law was passed, the first law was passed. So, with that I think we will go to Andrew Miller and the DYCD.

ANDREW MILLER: Well, I think good afternoon, Chairman Van Bramer and members of the Committee. I'm Andrew Miller, Assistant

1  
2 Commissioner for External Relations for the  
3 Department of Youth and Community Development. On  
4 behalf of our commissioner, Jeanne B. Mullgrav,  
5 thank you for this opportunity to discuss the  
6 benefits of young people having a library card.  
7 And to highlight as you actually heard earlier  
8 from the library systems our agency's strong  
9 partnerships with them.

10 DYCD's core mission is to prepare  
11 young people for school, work, and to become  
12 lifetime learners. We believe that young people  
13 can further their academic skills while in our  
14 programs and also throughout their lifetimes by  
15 becoming regular library visitors, comfortable  
16 with accessing all of their services. As you  
17 know, DYCD supports reading, writing, GED prep,  
18 English language classes for people, young people  
19 and adults. And we're actually delighted to  
20 partner with the Mayor's Center for Economic  
21 Opportunities and the libraries in supporting nine  
22 young adult literacy programs, which actually work  
23 directly in library branches in high need areas,  
24 and these include Mott Haven, West Farms, and  
25 Bronx Library Center of The Bronx, Long Island

1  
2 City, Jamaica, South Jamaica, and Far Rockaway in  
3 Queens, and New Lots and Macon in Brooklyn. These  
4 programs provide intensive educational  
5 instructions to help disconnected youth ages 16 to  
6 24 with low reading and math skills.

7           In announcing the expansion of the  
8 program last month, Mayor Bloomberg thanked SONY  
9 for the donation of 1,500 e-readers, and the  
10 libraries, which will give the participants the  
11 gift of enjoying free library books at the click  
12 of a button. Our literacy programs also work in  
13 identifying and referring those with the lowest  
14 literacy levels to specialized programs actually  
15 offered by the public libraries. Studies have  
16 demonstrated the success of after school services  
17 on improved academic outcomes for young people.  
18 DYCD's after school programs work collaboratively  
19 with our schools and other community resources,  
20 including our libraries, to provide a mix of  
21 academic support, recreational activities and  
22 cultural experiences, which really complements  
23 what's learned in school hours. While all of our  
24 programs encourage young people to apply for a  
25 library card, there are a number of other ways of

1  
2 how our programs work creatively to connect young  
3 people with libraries, and I'd just like to share  
4 some of them with you.

5 I think Council Member Dromm would  
6 be happy to hear that youth in the Beacon program  
7 located at PS 149 in Jackson Heights, that key  
8 youth are volunteering in the public library.  
9 Youth from PS 198 Beacon in upper Manhattan, youth  
10 are actually attending workshops regularly at the  
11 West 96th Street Library, where they receive  
12 homework assistance, borrow books, movies, musical  
13 recordings, and participate in other scheduled  
14 library activities. Youth from our Cornerstone  
15 Program in Soundview Community Center in the Bronx  
16 also regularly visit the library and they  
17 participate in fun and academic library  
18 activities. I know Domenic Recchia left, but he'd  
19 be glad to know that youth from the Cornerstone  
20 Program in Coney Island are engaged in educational  
21 interactive games that are structured and  
22 developed by the Coney Island Library staff. And  
23 finally the OST program in P 18 in West Brighton,  
24 Staten Island, are actually planning trips to the  
25 library for the upcoming school holiday break to

1  
2 get library cards for participants, pick up books,  
3 and participate in scheduled story time  
4 activities.

5 DYCD's Youth Employment programs  
6 help young people gain workplace experience and  
7 further their education. These programs also work  
8 closely with the library systems to encourage  
9 young people to obtain a library card and use  
10 library services. For example, our Out of School  
11 Youth and Young Adult Internship programs serve  
12 young adults who are not connected to school or  
13 work. They provide assistance in helping upgrade  
14 educational and occupational skills. Given the  
15 rich resources that the library has to offer to  
16 help enhance academic skills and internet access  
17 to help with projects and actually obtaining  
18 employment and producing resumes. Participants  
19 are strongly encouraged to apply for a library  
20 card.

21 As you know, the Summer Youth  
22 Employment Program provides summer employment  
23 opportunities for young people at a number of  
24 small businesses, summer camps, government  
25 agencies and libraries. This past summer actually

1  
2 129 youth worked at 44 branches, providing key  
3 support in a number of areas. We also know that  
4 libraries actually help young people who do not  
5 have internet access to apply for SYEP online.

6 Some other ways we work with the  
7 library includes our 43 neighborhood advisory  
8 boards meet quarterly in communities, and it's  
9 very difficult to find local space to hold these  
10 meetings, and we're actually most grateful to the  
11 libraries throughout the city, which really offers  
12 space to bring together the community and discuss  
13 the use of federal anti-poverty funding in our  
14 neighborhoods. The three libraries are also  
15 members of the Interagency Coordinating Council on  
16 Youth Services, of which our Commissioner is the  
17 Director. The libraries have been active on the  
18 ICC's workgroup focused on supporting LGBTQ youth,  
19 court involved youth, and helping youth access  
20 resources and information. Last year the Brooklyn  
21 Public Library's main branch also hosted the ICC's  
22 annual public hearing, where over 200 young  
23 people, representing a wide array of community  
24 based organizations across the city, attended.  
25 Actually the libraries highlighted the use of

1  
2 technology in reaching out to young people and the  
3 vast resources they offer to youth, and this  
4 includes homework assistance, summer reading  
5 programs, and a host of additional web-based  
6 services. And I think we were most grateful at  
7 the end of the hearing, that actually young people  
8 came, they used the library, and they signed up  
9 for library cards.

10 And just two weeks ago we were  
11 pleased that the Brooklyn Public Library joined us  
12 for our first ever job fair. They joined 30 other  
13 employers who had the opportunity to speak to 350  
14 young people about employment opportunities within  
15 their organizations.

16 And finally, DYCD's Youth Connect  
17 works closely with the libraries in promoting  
18 upcoming activities to our thousands of facebook  
19 and e-blast subscribers. DYCD's summer fun guide  
20 also features library events and activities.

21 Continuing to build on these  
22 efforts, we would be delighted to collaborate with  
23 the library systems to distribute materials  
24 developed and produced by them. This could be  
25 modeled similarly to how we actually currently do



1  
2 voter registration forms. Given the library's  
3 knowledge of their specific systems, this would  
4 provide quality control of the materials by  
5 ensuring that they are accurate and up to date.  
6 This will also decrease the burden to city  
7 agencies and to community based organizations,  
8 given budget cuts sustained during the past  
9 several years. We would be simply hard pressed to  
10 require our contract partners to be responsible  
11 for this initiative. Thank you once again for  
12 this opportunity to highlight our partnerships  
13 with the libraries. We look forward to working  
14 with the committee on this bill and we would be  
15 delighted to answer any questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
17 very much, Andrew. And clearly DYCD has  
18 institutionalized its collaborations with the  
19 library systems in many ways. And I know that  
20 when I served on my neighborhood advisory board we  
21 met at the library, and I was happy to help  
22 facilitate that. And now I get to appoint people  
23 to the neighborhood advisory boards.

24 ANDREW MILLER: You don't have any  
25 vacancies, do you?

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No, we filled it in 1. I think we filled it in 1.

ANDREW MILLER: Great. Joe Katcherman [phonetic] will be happy.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, as I believe we filled it. But let me know if we didn't fill it.

ANDREW MILLER: I will.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So your after school programs obviously, you know, that's a great opportunity. And while obviously those young people are in our public schools and therefore may have received the information, you know, as you heard in the testimony before, there are still far too many young people who could have a library card who don't have a library card. And it just seems a sin, you know, that it's free and it's available and everything is great. And still there are, I think in the New York Public Library, a quarter million young people who could but don't. So, and of course I think of PS 150 and the after school program there, which is so wildly successful, and so terrific. And Sunnyside Community Services is the provider, and as you

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know I fight every year to--

ANDREW MILLER: [Interposing] And we thank you for that.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: -- successfully restore that program to the budget. But, you know, it seems that there is a point of contact there, obviously, where you and the Council can work together to find a way where we are making sure that those kids, even if we're reminding, even if we are going back and saying we want to make sure that you have this opportunity, and I'm sure that DYCD would be open to finding the best way to make sure that that happens.

ANDREW MILLER: Absolutely. Actually, I asked most of our program folks about the best way to accomplish this, and they felt that if we receive materials from the libraries that we would actually provide that to our CBOs, because as you know, all of our programs are through contract, about giving it to them so that they could give it to the young people at intake.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: How do you do voter reg?

ANDREW MILLER: We're required to

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have voter registration cards at all of our facilities, including our CBOs, and we do that. So.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You're required by law?

ANDREW MILLER: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's interesting. Even though most of your participants are probably--

ANDREW MILLER: [Interposing] We also serve adults, so.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

ANDREW MILLER: And their parents.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right. So for example for the after school programs...?

ANDREW MILLER: Our CBOs should have voter registration cards on hand. And I know that actually there are some folks that come down to central headquarters and actually ask for a voter registration card, and we give it to them.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure, sure. And who bears that cost?

ANDREW MILLER: Well, it's really the Board of Elections gives us the card. We work

1  
2 very closely with the Voters Assistance Commission  
3 as well on that.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Very  
5 interesting. So you mentioned that you work  
6 closely with the library systems to encourage  
7 young people to obtain library cards, and  
8 obviously it's wonderful that some of those young  
9 folks get to work at the libraries, and having  
10 worked in a public library, I obviously worked  
11 with some of those folks. How do you do it now?

12 ANDREW MILLER: It's really,  
13 because when you think when you're a CBO out in  
14 the communities, it just makes sense. It's the  
15 perfect nexus that a CBO would want to work with  
16 the libraries and use those resources. So it's,  
17 in fact I was very pleased to learn anecdotally  
18 from the library systems, we have an RFP on the  
19 street for OST. And they are really being  
20 bombarded by CBOs that want to compete, and they  
21 actually want to have agreements with them. So  
22 it's clear there's a strong linkage between OST  
23 and the library systems, so.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I would  
25 imagine there's a great deal of competition for

1  
2 the OST RFP, which is terrific. Yeah, I mean DYCD  
3 clearly does an awful lot with our libraries, you  
4 know, and in some ways your population is a little  
5 bit more accessible, shall we say, or slightly  
6 easier to access and to get to these services. I  
7 see that you did a lot with the Brooklyn Public  
8 Library, and that's great. And I was wondering  
9 what kind of programs you have that are similar to  
10 that job fair that maybe you're doing with the  
11 Queens Library?

12                   ANDREW MILLER: Since it was so  
13 successful, we do plan on inviting more employers.  
14 That was something that we came up with, because  
15 we wanted--what can we do to help young people  
16 with teenage unemployment rate being at a record  
17 high, what more can we do. And we're actually  
18 looking forward to doing another job fair sometime  
19 in the spring, so we would be delighted to partner  
20 with the two other library systems on hiring young  
21 people.

22                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Jen Manley  
23 [phonetic] is nodding her head. I think it's  
24 already happening. We're all for that, which is  
25 great. So, unless there are any more questions.

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Do you have any? Council Member Dromm?

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Sure, thank you, Mr. Chair. The last sentence of the second to last paragraph, we simply would be hard pressed to require our contract partners to be responsible for a new initiative. Just explain that a little bit. Are you talking about CBOs?

ANDREW MILLER: CBOs, because as you know we've had, I think, 12 rounds of budget cuts, not to mention the state and federal cuts that they're suffering up. Meaning, we wouldn't want them to be responsible for producing and printing materials.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Right.

ANDREW MILLER: That would be the concern.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And let me just reiterate that no one is going to be responsible for printing and mailing the materials just as the Department of Education is not.

ANDREW MILLER: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: But you're open to having them distribute the material?

ANDREW MILLER: Yes.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Okay. Thank  
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, with  
5 that, I want to thank all of you for coming and  
6 the library systems. And I think as we all saw  
7 with the power of that 60 minutes piece and what  
8 we all have talked about here today, we as a city,  
9 as a Committee, as a Council, and you as the  
10 partnering agencies, have to do everything we can  
11 to increase access to library cards and library  
12 use. And we have taken down all of the notes in  
13 the relevant issues, and I feel confident that  
14 this is, as the first hearing, just as we did with  
15 the Library Card Act last year, we will work out a  
16 solution that is workable that makes library cards  
17 more accessible to young people, and particularly  
18 the young people who you all interact with, many  
19 of whom are in crisis and certainly in need of the  
20 services and programs that the libraries are  
21 providing free of service--free of charge. So, I  
22 thank you for your willingness to collaborate with  
23 us and look forward to continuing the dialog with  
24 your agencies and the libraries and making sure  
25 that our three public library systems are working

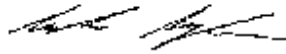


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hand in glove with all of your agencies, which they really should be doing every single day, because as I said, the young people that--and families--that are walking into the library are the same families that you all are working with. So thank you all very much. And with that, we are adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Erika Swyler, 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 12/27/11