

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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November 17, 2014  
Start: 10:14 a.m.  
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room  
14th Floor

B E F O R E: MARGARET S. CHIN  
Chairperson

CARLOS MENCHACA  
Chairperson

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Karen Koslowitz  
Deborah L. Rose  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Donna Corrado, Commissioner  
New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA)

Caryn Resnick, Deputy Commissioner  
New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA)

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Suki Terada Ports, Vice President  
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(JAA) and Co-Founder APICHA

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Council of People's Organization

Dr. Vasundhara Kalasapudi  
India Home



1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH  
2 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

5

2 [sound check]

3 [gavel]

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Good morning. I'm  
5 Council Margaret Chin the Chair of the Aging  
6 Committee. We are pleased to be joined today by  
7 Council Member Carlos Menchaca, Chair of the  
8 Immigration Committee, and members of our committee.  
9 I thank Chair Menchaca and the Immigration Committee  
10 for jointly holding this important hearing. We are  
11 also joined by my colleagues on the Aging Committee,  
12 Council Member Rose, Council Member Koslowitz, and  
13 Council Member Vallone. And welcome to all of you  
14 for being here, and I know that today is a little  
15 special. We have translations in Spanish and in  
16 Chinese. So welcome.

17 According to the most recent census,  
18 nearly half of New Yorkers, New York seniors identify  
19 themselves as foreign born. These seniors bring  
20 diverse experience and culture that makes New York a  
21 desirable global destination for people across the  
22 world. However, our immigrant seniors confront a  
23 number of challenges, which often makes it difficult  
24 for them to live comfortable and independent lives.  
25 The median income and average savings for immigrant

seniors is lower than the native-born population.

And immigrant seniors are often unable to qualify to receive supplemental income such as Social Security. One of the largest barriers for immigrant seniors is language.

Nearly 60% of them identify as Limited English Proficiency, LEP. Meaning that they either do not speak English, or cannot speak it well.

According to a study by the Center for Urban Future, 94% of Korean seniors, 92% of Chinese seniors, 67% of Mexican seniors, 65% of Cuban seniors, and 53% of Central American seniors indicate Limited English Proficiency. These seniors are often unable to access essential services because of the inability to communicate with service providers in agencies in their native language. Studies have indicated that difficulty with the English language often correlate to poverty, food insecurity, and lack of economic mobility. And this population is also more likely to be in need of public assistance.

In 2008, Mayor Michael Bloomberg issued Executive Order 120, which requires New York's direct social service agencies including the Department of Aging, DFTA, to provide translation and

interpretation services in the top six languages spoken by New Yorkers. DFTA was required to develop a language access policy and implementation plan for LEP persons, which was released in January of 2009. This plan was to be implemented within the following two-year period. The Committee looks forward to hearing from DFTA about how this plan was implemented, and how its practices are being carried out in the provision of service and information. While many DFTA services are provided in multiple languages, advocates have expressed concern about outreach to local immigrant communities in areas like meal service, and senior centers. Immigrant seniors have expressed a desire for greater outreach, about available services, and greater funding for culturally competent organizations who understand the unique aspect of each immigrant community.

We've heard earlier this year for example about Korean seniors in Flushing, Queens being kicked out of a local McDonald's where they congregate to socialize with each other. Although a deal was eventually reached, it is worth noting that a senior center was close by. And that some local seniors reported being unaware of its existence. Clearly,

the City must do more outreach to these populations so that they can access services available to them. It is imperative the population, the immigrant seniors who do not qualify or have access to public benefits receive focus and support from DFTA in easing the challenges of aging. Today, the Committee on Aging and the Committee on Immigration looks forward to hearing from DFTA on how it can make its services accessible to immigrant seniors. How culturally sensitive programs and services are developed, and how the agencies plan to address the growing number of immigrant seniors in New York City. I would like to ask Council Member Menchaca to give his opening remarks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Chair and [Speaking Spanish]. My name is Carlos Menchaca, and I'm the Chair of the Committee on Immigration. I would like to thank Council Member Margaret Chin for inviting me to co-chair this very, very special and important hearing. Today's hearing is extremely, extremely critical as it represents another step of the Immigration Committee and the Council more largely are taking to look for ways to identify and



meet the needs of various disenfranchised communities  
in our city.

In this hearing, we will examine the  
barriers uniquely tied to our immigrant seniors.  
Approximately 24% of our city's immigrant seniors  
live in poverty, largely as a result of linguistic  
and educational barriers. Many of these seniors need  
services and do not access them, often because they  
may not even know that they exist. This Council is  
committed to ensuring that seniors and other  
vulnerable populations thrive in our community. And  
to that end, has allocated over \$20 million in Fiscal  
Year 2015 for seniors-specific services. This  
includes \$1.5 million for the LGBTQ services for  
seniors and across all five boroughs and \$17 million  
for NYCHA community and senior centers.

But allocating funds is just one part of  
helping our senior immigrants. They must also be  
able to access services so that they can live  
dignified lives. City agencies like the Department  
for the Aging are tasked with providing many of the  
services needed by seniors. But other agencies also  
serve as a vital resource for this community. For  
many immigrants, but more for seniors, some of these

services are crucial and accessibility to them in their own language is vital to this thriving city. Understanding this dilemma has been part of the underlying forces behind various Council initiatives, including the Municipal Identification Card Program.

On April 30, 2014, we held a hearing on this program, and time and time again, we heard from witnesses about the importance of feeling like a legitimate member of our community especially for immigrants and seniors who are often marginalized.

This Muni ID Card is meant to do three things specifically: Make them feel part of the community; to integrate them into our city; and improve their access to various services the city has to offer. It's a simple concept and ensuring that the program is implemented correctly throughout will allow us to better meet the needs of our immigrant seniors.

The Administration understand that in order to promote the immigration of immigrants into our community, we need to continue make government services available in languages spoken by the community in New York City in all the many languages spoken. And as Chair Chin mentioned, Executive Order 120 was implemented in 2008 to ensure the provision

of language access services at agencies like DFTA.  
And as part of this order, the Mayor's Office of  
Immigrant Affairs was tasked with assisting agencies  
so that they can fully comply with this executive  
order. And ensure the successful integration of  
immigrants into our city.

Today, we look forward to hearing from  
DFTA on how the agency is working with the city's  
immigrant seniors and other agencies like the Mayor's  
Office of Immigrant Affairs to ensure that the needs  
of immigrants are met. We also look forward to  
hearing from our advocates on their interactions with  
the agencies, and how they can be improved. And we  
will take those ideas and we will take them further,  
and really understand how we can develop those  
programs and gaps that we will see and hear today.  
Thank you, Chairwoman Chin, and the staff of the  
Committee on Aging on facilitating this hearing.  
Thank you always to my staff and the Committee staff  
on Immigration Catalina Cruz, Jennifer Montalvo. And  
I know Ivan Manuello [sic] is here, too, for their  
work. And also at today's hearing there will be  
translation services. And I think everyone is set

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH  
2 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

12

3 with that. So thank you so much, and I will hand it  
4 back over to our Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, Chair  
6 Menchaca. It is a pleasure chairing the meeting with  
7 you, and thank you to Committee staff and Eric  
8 Bernstein our Counsel and James Subudhi, our  
9 Legislative Policy Analyst. And we invite up from  
10 the Administration, Commissioner Corrado, Caryn  
11 Resnick, Assistant Commissioner. And also Assistant  
12 Commissioner Israel Rosario, Jr. from the Mayor's  
13 Office of Immigrant Affairs. So before we start, I'd  
14 like to have the Committee Counsel administer the  
15 oath.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Raise your right  
17 hand, please. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
18 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your  
19 testimony before this committee, and to respond  
20 honestly to Council Member questions?

21 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: I do. Thank you.  
22 Good morning Chairpersons Chin and Menchaca, members  
23 of Council, constituents, advocates, and colleagues.  
24 I am Donna Corrado, the Commissioner of New York City  
25 Department for the Aging, and I will provide an  
overview of immigrant seniors in New York City, and

how they can access senior services. A recent report by the Center for an Urban Future provides sobering information regarding the challenges and circumstances faced by our older immigrants in this city. The report states that in the next two decades, the number of city residents 65 and older will be increased by 35% going from approximately 998,000 to 1.3 million in 2030.

While some initial steps have been taken to plan for this profound demographic shift, we must pay heed to an especially vulnerable subset of the city's senior population. Those who were born in a foreign country, and continue to reside here as documented as documented and undocumented immigrants. The report illustrates the various dimensions of this issue. For example, with 463,000 older immigrants over the age of 65, New York has by far the largest foreign-born senior population of any city in the United States. Immigrants currently make up 46% of the city's total senior population, and might become the clear majority in as little as five years. Nearly two-thirds of immigrant residents age 65 and older have Limited English Proficiency.

Nearly 130,000 immigrant seniors in the city, or 24% of the total, are living in poverty. This is compared to 15% of seniors who were native born. Older immigrants comprise 46% of all seniors in New York, but 65% of all seniors living in poverty, as I mentioned. Immigrants receive far fewer benefits from traditional entitlement programs. For example, 31% of immigrant seniors in New York City are not receiving Social Security benefits as compared to 16% of seniors overall. The data does not take into account the number of undocumented seniors that go uncounted each year. So this number surely is larger than what I specified.

DFTA understands that New York City's older population is ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse with broad and wide-ranging service needs. Our mission recognizes this diversity and the agency's responsibility to ensure equitable access and service provision to older persons of every ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural demographic. As part of our mission and in compliance with the Executive Order 120 in 2009, DFTA's Language Access Initiative ensures that seniors with Limited English Proficiency receive free

language and culturally appropriate assistances from our Direct Service Units. Such as the Senior Employment Services; Alzheimer's, Elder Abuse; and the Grandparent Resource Centers; and the Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Program.

DFTA also has access to telephonic interpretation through the language line, which provides seniors with the assistance they need in the languages they speak. In addition, our brochures such as the Benefits for Older New Yorkers, the Guide and our Emergency Go Bag Checklist; a Complete Guide to Healthcare Coverage for Older New Yorkers; as well as our Nutritional Guides are published in multiple languages including English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Korean. And in the case of all New York City agencies, the information that resides on the DFTA website can be translated into multiple languages.

DFTA's standards require that the Department funded senior centers employ at least one person fluent in languages spoken by over 30% of its participants. As a result, our centers and NORC providers provide services in a culturally competent

way such as staffing appropriately for language needs offering ethnic style meals and activities of interest for ethnic groups. As well as specific immigrant services such as ESL and citizenship classes and legal services. For example, and you may be hearing from these providers directly. JASA Brookdale in Queens hired several Russian-speaking staff members including the Assistant Director to meet the needs of the community. Rain Boston Road in the Bronx provides assistance to immigrant seniors when filling out applications for benefits. Crocker Senior Center in Brooklyn has an immigration program with experienced staff and a lawyer for its predominantly Polish population. And Manhattan's Vladeck Cares NORC offers Chinese and Spanish computer classes. HANAC NORC at Ravenswood Houses offers diabetes and nutrition classes in Spanish.

All of our centers server meals that only meet the City and State Nutritional Guidelines, but are culturally relevant to participants. Kosher meal programs are available at senior centers in all five boroughs. A number of senior centers in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens serve meals that are culturally appropriate to their Chinese immigrants. In



Flushing, Queens Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York provides Korean meals at the DFTA senior center that they operate. In the Bronx, several senior centers serve Spanish and Latin American fare as the preference of their constituents. Other senior centers offer Indian, Italian, Southern and Caribbean meals to meet their constituents' needs.

To meet the health and wellbeing of many older, frailer immigrants, home delivered meals offered through our Case Management Programs are reviewed in terms of nutritional standards as well as cultural relevance. More than 22% of meals delivered in this city are kosher. Clients living in Lower Manhattan and Flushing are offered Chinese meals. Clients in Green Point, Brooklyn are offered Polish meals, and clients residing in Bayside, Queens receive Korean meals as well as kosher meals. The agency's 2013 Home Delivered Meals Survey finds that an overwhelming majority of seniors, 89% reported their satisfaction with the quality of the meals delivered to their home. Notably, 92% of clients stated that their meals related to their culture or ethnic background.

In addition to food and security, DFTA is working to stem poverty faced by immigrant seniors by helping them sign up for benefits and entitlements. Immigrant seniors are less likely to access existing government services, and less likely to be aware of the services available to them due to certain issues. One of them being a mistrust for government, or because the information is just not available in their language. Or, because they mistakenly assumed that they just don't qualify. DFTA and our community partners are making great effort to create awareness of programs such as SNAP, which is the food stamps program. Which further assists the seniors with food and security, which SCRIE, Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption Program, which helps limit rent increases for seniors. Access-A-Ride, which provides transportation for the mobility impaired. And Home Energy Assistance Program, HEAP, which also helps low-income seniors pay their utility bills.

DFTA's Community Outreach Team can and has attended events that are targeting Spanish and Chinese speaking audiences, offering presentations on benefits and entitlements for the elderly. As well as DFTA's programs to other groups of immigrants.

With assistance for MOIA where translation services were provided, our Outreach Team has been able to offer presentations to immigrant groups from Bengali, French Creole, in Hindi and in Arabic. In addition, DFTA's HICAP Program provides multi-lingual access and information across the city's diverse populations.

When we talk about our immigrant seniors, we must also address the undocumented, who feel especially isolated because of the stigma associated with their status. This Administration's Municipal ID Program will help thousands of older immigrants access vital services. And DFTA has made a commitment to perform outreach and work with the immigrant officer to provide undocumented immigrants with Municipal ID Cards. Additional resources are being made available to support victims of elder abuse. The 2011 New York State Elder Abuse Prevalent Studies found that 9% of all New Yorkers age 60 and over were victims of an elder abuse event within a year of the study. In many cases, accounts of elder abuse go unreported and language barrier is certainly one of those reasons.

DFTA's current Elder Abuse RFP addresses this barrier by requiring that its providers establish strong linkages and subcontracts with community-based organizations that have special experience and knowledge in working with various cultural and community groups including immigrants vis-à-vis elder abuse and other issues. DFTA has also begun working with people of all backgrounds on various mental health needs. For example, under the federally funded Super Storm Sandy Social Services Block Grant Mobilization Referral and Treatment for Mental Health, DFTA is assessing both social service and mental health needs of older adults impacted by Super Storm Sandy. Many of those impacted are immigrants, and we are poised to address their mental health needs free of charge with the help of a multi-lingual team in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, and Japanese. That can provide assistance based on their mental health service needs.

Understanding the feeling of isolation could have a harmful effect on the mood and immigrant senior population. DFTA is working to help these aging demographic become contributing members of the city through its Job Readiness Programs. For over

three decades, DFTA's Senior Employment Program has been providing services for employment and training to eligible senior immigrants who can show permanent residency card or have a green card, or a work authorization card for those who are non-citizens. They all need their Social Security card to work, and the participants enrolled in this program receive the following services: Career Counseling; computer skills; job readiness; job referral and placement; paid training and demand, high demand occupations such as home health aid and security. Referring to training and community assignments, participation in WIA Workforce Centers and other general support to enhance their ability to gain employment.

In conclusion, I thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony on meeting the needs of our immigrant seniors, and I applaud the leadership of Chairpersons Chin and Menchaca in ensuring that New York City continues to care for our diverse aging population. I look forward to continuing this partnership with the New York City Council in these efforts. And with me today is Deputy Commissioner Caryn Resnick who will help answer any questions. But I just want to mention

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH  
2 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

22

3 that just by the showing of the number of people in  
4 the constituency in this room, how important an issue  
5 this is. And I really look forward to working with  
6 the New York City Council in the year ahead and the  
7 years ahead and this Administration to really meet  
8 the needs, and the growing needs, and our response to  
9 that need. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Council  
11 Member Menchaca, do you want to introduce the other  
12 Council Members that are here?

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yes, there are two  
14 members of the Immigration Committee that are here,  
15 Council Member Koo and Council Member Mathieu Eugene.  
16 And there are some others that will be coming soon.  
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We've also been joined  
19 by Council Member Treyger on the Aging Committee.  
20 Okay, I'm just going to start with a couple of  
21 questions. I guess in my opening statement I talked  
22 about the Language Access Plan. So has DFTA updated  
23 it since it was first put together?

24 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: In 2009?

25 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK: Yeah, we required I think it's every year that we update the plan and submit it to the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

[Pause]

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: It's not available on the website. Is it posted on the DFTA website every year?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: I don't know that we do that, but we certainly can do that.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Uh-huh. I think that would be helpful for all the advocates, and for the Council Members. Unless when you update it, you send us a copy.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: We would be happy to post it on the website.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. Thank you. Also in your testimony, Commissioner, I was very interested when you talked about the Mental Health Service that you are putting together. And they are available in different languages. And we know that this is such an important issue especially in the immigrant community. Recently every time I read about it in the newspaper and the Chinese newspaper,

Chinese seniors taking their own lives, it's just really upsetting. And also we have to do something about that.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: [interposing] Yes, we--

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And that's a whole service--

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: [interposing] That's one way.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: for seniors and such a critical need.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Right. When we speak about language access, that's only one aspect of it. Cultural competency encompasses so much more in understanding the various situations and the culture. And actually, the clinical manifestations of social isolation in the community. So we're working with some specialists out of Cornell to help us understand what those cultural barriers are, what those cultural nuances are. And we're tailoring those mental health programs so that we can meet those needs.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I guess my question with that is that in terms of outreach, letting



people know that these services are available. And especially for the immigrant population utilizing community based organizations, the epic media to really get the word out that there are programs available to help people. For people to sort of overcome that stigma--

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Right.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --that is-- It's not a good thing that you want to talk about. But this, you know, the health issue, the mental health issue is something that we should all be talking about. Because we all have mental health issues. And we need to really take care of that. So I think DFTA can really work with us to get the word out to the community in the language that they understand. And also the senior center. The fact that every time we visit a senior center, the seniors that go to senior centers they are so much healthier. And their mental health is apparently much stronger than the seniors who don't go to senior centers. So that's another are that we need to increase services. Because I know that going to that is-- What's the percentage of the seniors that do go to DFTA centers. Do you have that data statistic?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Around 10% of seniors actually access DFTA senior centers. Naturally, there's a higher proportion of immigrant seniors, and low-income seniors that access our services. But in terms of outreach, and I'm not necessarily going to comment on the statistic of who is mentally healthier, a senior that goes or doesn't go. I think, you know, we need to reach seniors overall. Whether they come to senior centers or not, there are serious mental health needs. And it's going to take a concerted effort in terms of outreach to reach people. Especially, if they're isolated, if they're homebound. We need to really do some serious thinking, and action around outreach. So we will engage the City Council in that effort as well.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and I know that one of the innovative centers that was funded by DFTA they do a virtual senior center. They also connect to seniors who are-- Who don't go to the senior centers because they're homebound.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Yes, to bring in activities using social media.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: [interposing] So do you have any like-- So far any kind of results from that type of innovative center?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Well, from the self reports of the agencies that are actually conducting that program, and just, you know, from my own experience the seniors that participate in that program actually do enjoy it very much, and there's a benefit. Unfortunately, at this point in time it's very costly to have one senior hooked up with the Internet all of the paraphernalia that goes to, you know, having that interface at the current moment. And, you know, we're very hard to advocate that that cost come down. And one of the ways it can come down is through the cable provider. So we're trying to advocate that those fees be reduced considerably for seniors.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Council Member Menchaca.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. Thank you, Chair Chin, and thank you for your testimony. I have two sets of questions. And the first set of questions is really exposing I think what Council Member Chin kind of spoke about. The communities

that are a little invisible, and are not coming to the centers. And specifically your testimony did not speak to the LGBTQ community where, you know, we have an immigrant LGBT seniors in our community. And so, what are you doing in terms of programs or relationships, organizations, and training capacity at DFTA to address this particular community?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Well, DFTA for many has had sensitivity training for all staff, and offered that through subcontracting with SAGE to provide sensitivity training to all senior centers all 251 senior centers at some point in time. Thank you, City Council, for funding an expansion of LGBT Senior Center Services, and we are working very closely with SAGE to implement that. And I just think it speaks to the invisibility of the senior LGBT community in general. And it would also require that, you know, once the senior centers are up and running that that outreach is done so that they can access those services if they choose to do so. And as a parallel process, we also need to create a welcoming environment in general senior centers as well--

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] How  
confident--

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: --in the LGBT  
community.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: How confident to  
you feel like your senior centers are open and  
welcoming to the LGBT community?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: You know, that's  
such a complicated question. In some centers they're  
very welcoming, and in others they are less welcoming  
depending on the culture of the specific center.  
Depending on whether they create a welcoming  
environment. And they're made up of humans, and  
seniors are probably-- You know, the seniors that go  
to centers if they're closeted, and it's generally a  
closeted demographic, if you may. And with that,  
they're less likely to be out as the seniors, you  
know, in a center that's not welcoming. Or that they  
perceive not to be welcoming, or they just may choose  
to be closeted because that's what they're used to  
doing. So we're trying to change that, and it won't  
change overnight. But as the world changes, so will  
the senior centers, fortunately.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: How much of that is-- How much of that prerogative is a priority within and I'll even go in MOIA in all the agencies, and what do you see as the number one barrier to getting or gaining that reality that people are all asking for?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Well, I think that the barriers are more cultural, and it is a commitment of DFTA. It's one of our many priorities, and I trust that-- You know, the world is changing much more quickly than government can change. So I am really hoping that that will poise us in a very favorable way. That we can promulgate the number of senior centers that are specifically for gay and lesbian people across the five boroughs.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Great.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: So this is the first of many I hope.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you and I want to also offer my second set of questions, but the kind of main thesis that I want to impose not just as a member of the LGBT community and the Caucus and the Immigration Committee, and working the Asian Committee. But when we can focus on these

communities that are sometimes invisible, and these are some of the most vulnerable communities. We actually impact the entire system in how we are open to everybody. And so they'll transform and we're seeing this in the healthcare world where we're seeing models where this is just good practice period. And so, I'm hoping that we can really measure the success with this Council reviewing and being oversight agents. But we're going to want to see some progress here especially with all the commitment we're making with the City Council. And we're hoping that DFTA matches and exceeds that as well.

My last set of questions are around the Muni ID Program, and what is your outreach plan and strategy for our immigrant seniors?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: [off mic] Why don't we have Israel start and then we can--

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ROSARIO: Thank you. Good morning, everyone.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Introduce yourself, please.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ROSARIO: Sure.

My name is Israel Rosario, Jr. I am Assistant Commissioner of Interagency Initiatives for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. As you know, we have a comprehensive plan in terms of the actual Municipal ID rollout. So we recently met with the Department for the Aging, both the Commissioner, the President and the Assistant Commissioner. And one of the possibilities we discussed was actually having senior citizen centers as actual outreach sites, and potential sign-up sites as well. We discussed a number of other challenges as well as related to language, and where we can actually partner and collaborate. For those that may not be aware the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs serves as a bridge, not just between the Mayor's Office and the community, but also with-- It's a reciprocal bridge with community-based organizations with respect to connecting to City agencies.

We're actually in the process of undergoing a citywide listening tour, and it's a listening tour that essentially it's citywide as planned. And we're making sure that we're actually targeting very specific neighborhoods that we know



1 have very specific ethnicity blocks, and have  
2 traditionally a lack of city services and programs.  
3 This includes senior citizen centers and senior  
4 communities. While we have been working with a  
5 senior-- an organization of community based  
6 organizations that is working directly with seniors,  
7 the focus group sessions that we've had so far have  
8 actually had seniors as a prominent part of the focus  
9 group as well. So with respect to the Municipal ID, I  
10 think that there are still a lot of Ts that need to  
11 be cross and Is that need to be dotted, but we have  
12 talked-- we have spoken with prominently about a full  
13 partnership on that initiative as well as with the  
14 City Council Speaker's Office.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Great. Well,  
17 thank you for that. I think you've just kind of set  
18 the stage for this. And like you said, we need to  
19 get from concept to actual strategy, and I'm hoping  
20 that all the advocates that are here in the room can  
21 kind of hear that commitment. And can hold us all  
22 accountable to that need that we're going to have.  
23 The success of this program really comes to this  
24 community that we're talking about today. And if we  
25 can't get to them, this program means nothing to the

city. And so, I'm just hoping that we can get to a point where we can review this. And our committees are going to be looking at that in a big way. And also offering that capacity on the ground through our Council districts and our organizations that are here today. So thank you. It doesn't sound like you have more to say beyond the concept. But if there is anything that you can give us as far as things that are concrete, I'd like to hear them today. I would like everybody else to hear them today, but are you there yet? Have you chosen a senior center that you can give us an example about, and anything more material right now on outreach?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: We don't have the specifics other than a full commitment that we will use our senior center network to sign people up and gain access. But certainly that will be focused on those senior centers and immigrant communities that have higher populations of immigrants. That will be the first order of business.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay. Well, with a month and a half a way, we have a lot to do, and I'll be looking forward to working you on the ground. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We are also joined by Council Member Deutsch on the Aging Committee. I think just on that point about the Municipal ID, I think every senior center should be one of the sites for sign-up. And we should target signing up every senior whether they're immigrant or not because the whole concept of the Municipal ID we want every New York City resident to sign up, right? So I know that recently I saw a notice from the Parks Department. And they are having a hearing about a huge change. [sic] So the Parks Department is-- What they're doing is that they want to give discounts to people with Municipal ID, and I think that's a great thing. We should all go to the hearing, and testify and say yes, the Parks Department should do that.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Right.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Discount to the recreational center, to the, you know, to getting the tennis permit, and you could show your Municipal ID.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Absolutely. We don't want it to become the Municipal Immigrant Card. We want it to be the Municipal ID Card for all New Yorkers, and in any way that we can de-stigmatize that particular card, we will do that. So I couldn't

1 agree with you more, and once we also tell the  
2 benefit of the card and they can access, all seniors  
3 can access the museums and the cultural activities.  
4 And as more and more things sign on to the benefit of  
5 the card, the more appealing it will be.  
6

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I think that's what we  
8 have to push out there is that everyone us should  
9 have one of those cards. Because a lot of benefits  
10 come with it. One other question I wanted to ask in  
11 terms of senior centers is that-- Because you were  
12 giving us that a higher percentage of immigrant  
13 seniors and low-income seniors go to the senior  
14 centers. Now, we know a lot of seniors, the one that  
15 are mobile, they travel to the senior centers that  
16 provides the services they need or the language  
17 capacity they need. So you have any kind of data  
18 from DFTA to see like how many seniors actually come  
19 from other boroughs or other communities to go our  
20 local senior centers?

21 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: We can give you  
22 those demographics. I don't have them with me today,  
23 but yes we do. And we can also cross-reference to  
24 see how many seniors belong to multiple senior  
25 centers. And that's something that we encourage,

senior center shopping. I know that some of the providers may not encourage that, but certainly we want people to have choice. And the more activities that they can avail themselves, the richer their lives are. So we do encourage that.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, because I know recently one new one opened up or happened to be an innovative center. And they are tracking people who normally don't go to senior centers. When I ran into them, they said, yeah, we never go to senior centers. But they heard about the center, and their activities, and beautiful scenery and new facilities. So people who don't normally go to senior centers started going. So I think that that is really important to let people know what centers are available. And also for centers that do serve our seniors from all over the city. Somehow we need to make sure that they also get the additional resources that they need. Because they are serving a larger number of people.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: I couldn't agree with you more.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, Council Member Vallone has some questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Good morning,  
Commissioner, again.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Good morning.

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: As Chair of the  
Senior Centers I thank you. Just in the last few  
months you can see the difference within my community  
and throughout the city especially on this topic,  
DFTA changing its approach. And especially with our  
immigrant communities language barriers, meals,  
special case management services. And I appreciate  
that because there is a lot of work to do. And  
that's what these hearings are for, but we take it  
step-by-step. And acknowledging the increase in the  
senior community and so many different communities is  
critical to that. I especially thank you for  
tonight's-- We're having an Aging Hearing tonight  
out in Northeast Queens, and I know we wouldn't be  
able to put that together just on these topics to our  
Co-Chairs. To bring the information out to the  
districts so that our seniors who can't make it here  
can have that. So we appreciate you coming out to  
the Council districts and giving that information out  
there. So that we can hold these hearings. I see a

lot of our providers came today, too, to help spread that word.

Is there any data that I guess for each of the Council Members that we could see through DFTA that of the immigrant community the percentage of phone calls that come in per community whether it's Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Greek, Italian. It doesn't matter, but can we see as the increase? Because then we might be able to--

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: [interposing] We do track that. What I can tell you is that we get between 45 and 50 calls for the language access every month, and you can--- you can break that down further.

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Because I think that would be a big help to address as the communities change and shift and the demands for each. Then we can bring those language barriers and break them down per district a little better.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Thank you.  
That's all.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member  
Treyger.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you,  
(coughs) actually, two co-chairs, Chair Chin and  
Chair Menchaca for holding this very important  
hearing. Welcome, Commissioner and the rest of the  
team. The Chair mentioned before about seniors with  
mental health concerns. That's the main concern we  
have. I'm also concerned about those seniors who  
have physical handicaps that can't make it to the  
centers each day. And how much access they have to  
culturally competent meals and programs and  
activities? Can you speak on the homebound seniors?  
Because I have a very big senior population that is  
homebound. My concern is do they have the same  
access to the same culturally competent programs and  
meals as seniors who are able to make it to the  
centers?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: I believe they do.  
We have in every borough and in every community  
district can avail themselves of home delivered  
meals. And we do-- We monitor that. We monitor  
that those meals are delivered appropriately. That  
the nutritional standards are met, and that those  
meals do reflect the culture of the community that  
they're being distributed in. Does that mean it's



perfect? No, of course not, because we deal with many different cultures than just the restrictions on the number of caterers, the type of caterers, and we try to improve upon that. And we will continue to try to improve upon that. There are some just logical limitations, but we do monitor that. And we aspire to a place where every senior can get the meal of their choice one day.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Yeah, I definitely sometimes hear feedback that homebound seniors get certain-- And they're grateful for any meal, believe me. But they'll hear from friends that a certain meal at the center is much more I guess culturally related to their culture. The ones they get delivered as their meals each day. So the more we can kind of close that bridge the better, and I look forward to work with your office to make sure that we're getting culturally appropriate programs to all of our communities. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Deutsch.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you, Chair. I just want to show my appreciation to you,

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH  
2 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

42

3 Commissioner. I recently had--and this is important  
4 for everyone else-- I recently had a challenge with  
5 my seniors in my district and the Commissioner and  
6 the Deputy Commissioner personally came down without  
7 a minute's notice with a day's notice actually. And  
8 we're hoping to resolve the issue, and you are really  
9 hands-on, and I really appreciate what you've done.  
10 You came down and you spoke to my seniors, and you  
11 took a personal interest like it was your own  
12 problem. Thank you so much.

13 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: You're very  
14 welcome

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. I have one  
16 last question about the Job Training Program. Do you  
17 have any data in terms of how many LEP participants  
18 in the Job Training Program. The Job Training  
19 Program for Seniors.

20 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Our Title 5 Older  
21 Worker Program?

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

23 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Yes. I don't have  
24 it with us, but we can certainly let you know in  
25 terms of the languages spoken?

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean the LEP, the language that they speak, and also does this training program come in different languages?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Yes, they do. So we can get you that data.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and how many-- In your testimony you do talk about, you know, helping the senior population with job training and getting them employment. I know that is a wonderful programs because a lot of seniors take part in it. But have you thought about in terms of expanding it, and getting more resources for it?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: That's a program that DFTA has had for decades now. So we're not of the federal government. It's a Title 5 program that has limited funding for it, and it's a very difficult program to administer in many ways because of, you know, depending on the economy and the job situation. And the preferences of the seniors. So often with the goal of permanent employment, that becomes challenging. So whether or not there are federal resources to expand that program is really the question. And when there is, we will access that as well.

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH  
2 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

44

3 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But also I think that  
4 it is a wonderful program, that we should duplicate  
5 it. We should also look at whether City resources  
6 should be put in there to really help expand the  
7 program. Because I know a lot of seniors and if  
8 they're in they're early 60s--

9 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: [interposing]  
10 Well, we--

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --they can still--

12 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: --we do it  
13 [interposing]

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: You start with 55,  
15 yes?

16 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Right.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So a lot of them are  
18 still very, very productive.

19 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Right.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And they just need the  
21 training.

22 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Right, and we have  
23 different types of employment programs and volunteer  
24 opportunities for seniors who really want to remain  
25 productive and make a contribution. So we're  
expanding our volunteer programs as well, and looking

at-- Without being in the confines of the Title 5 Program, which has very strict requirements, how we can expand out opportunities outside of that program.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I think that would be great. I think the City Council look forward to working with you on this. Because a lot of the senior centers are run by volunteers?

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And most of them are seniors and they have so much skill and talent. A lot are music teachers and arts and crafts teachers. They're all seniors. And I recently had a workshop on Medicare and also on SCRIE. My interpreter was a senior. She was able to do the translation for us because she's been trained on the programs. She was able to translate for seniors in the community. So it's really great.

COMMISSIONER CORRADO: And many of our programs are staffed by volunteers like the HICAP program, and they're highly trained, highly skilled seniors that are very knowledgeable and very helpful. So, we can find jobs, paid and unpaid jobs. Certainly the whole volunteer effort of DFTA is expanding and how we nurture and train and show our

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH  
2 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

46

3 gratitude to the volunteers is something that we're  
4 working with the Mayor's Office as well. And we'll  
5 see. You'll hear more about that in the future I'm  
6 sure.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. Thank you.  
8 We'll look forward to that. Any other questions?

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I think we  
10 could-- You can go.

11 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And thank you for  
13 testifying today.

14 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We're going to call up  
16 the next panel. Christian Gonzalez Rivera from the  
17 Center for an Urban Future. Bobby Sackman, Council  
18 of Senior Centers Service. Alicia Fry from Services  
19 Now for Adult Persons, and Kyra Garcia from SAGE.

20 [background discussion]

21 [Pause]

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Please identify  
23 yourself, and you can begin. And thank you,  
24 Commissioner, for staying to hear this report. Thank  
25 you.

CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ-RIVERA: So, hello,  
Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.  
My name is Christian Gonzalez-Rivera, and I'm a  
recent associate at the Center for an Urban Future.  
We're a non-partisan public policy think tank based  
here in Manhattan. The published study is about the  
key challenges and opportunities facing New York. I  
mean from studies on the important role of public  
libraries to the need to improve the City's usable  
workforce [sic] development system. We've done a  
number of studies about the immigrant New Yorkers  
from the report about the powerful impact of  
immigrant entrepreneurs back in 2007 to the need for  
more useful well programs.

Last year the Center for an Urban Future  
published the first comprehensive study documenting  
the rapid growth of New York City's older immigrant  
population. Our report entitled The New Face of New  
York Seniors, revealed that foreign-born individuals  
now make up 46% of New York seniors and account for  
all of the growth the City's older adult population.  
And a lot of the numbers from that report have  
already been mentioned by you and by testimony from  
DFTA. So I won't repeat many of those. But the

important part is that the senior population is increasing in terms of the immigrant part, much faster than the in-born population. In fact, in about 21 of the 55 census designated neighborhoods, immigrants are already the majority of the senior population including 10 out of 14 Queens.

So older immigrants are clearly not a mixed population. In fact, we can't talk about older people in New York City without talking about immigrants. Unfortunately, immigrants do face a considerable set of challenges. Despite comprising 46% of the population of the senior population in the city, they comprise 65% of all the seniors who are living in poverty. That's about 130,000 urban seniors who are living in poverty. And as was mentioned before, part of that reason is the fact that almost a third of older immigrants have zero Social Security benefits. And, of course, in addition to all the challenges that most seniors face including declining mobility, increased isolation.

The challenge of living on a fixed income, and vulnerability, of course, to elder abuse. Many older immigrants face the additional challenges of language and cultural barriers, and a greater need



for services due to greater poverty levels. For example, not only do 60% of immigrant seniors in New York have Limited English Proficiency, but even worse. Thirty-seven percent of immigrant seniors, which is about 200,000 seniors, are linguistically isolated. Meaning that nobody over the age of 14 in their household speaks English. You know, these challenges are daunting enough when you look at immigrant seniors as whole. But the most crucial part of the story is that the challenges.

You know, poverty, race, English proficiency, access to services and others vary significantly by country or region of origin. For example, 47% of seniors born in Mexico live below the poverty line here in New York City. And of the fastest growing groups of seniors there's the Chinese, Indian, Caribbean, and Korean immigrants all of them with poverty rates above 25%. And as another example of sort of the difference in English proficiency, fully 82% of Russian seniors in the city live in linguistically isolated households. It's the highest rate in the city. So poverty rates, English language proficiency, and the extent to which immigrant seniors can interact with the world outside

their families and communities is largely correlated with how long they've been in the United States.

By this measure, seniors from different countries and regions of origin vary tremendously. For example, the average Russian senior who is 65 years and older only arrived in the United States when they were 53 years old. The average Korean immigrant senior only arrived at the age of 49. So, of course, they are less likely to speak English. Less likely to have earned the ten years, the ten to five years of recovered earnings in order to have access to Social Security, to Medicare and other federal benefits. And are much more likely to have their worlds limited to only the families and the communities.

But despite the greater need for services, there is less capacity for government and non-profit services to provide for their needs. Largely because a lot of the organizations that are-- that provide linguistically and culturally development services also tend to have less capacity and funding than those that serve seniors in general. And really the challenge in serving the older immigrant population is precisely its diversity.

And it requires service providers to step up to the diversity of challenges that exist in this diverse senior community. And, of course, ensuring that service providers are up to the task requires leadership from the top.

And DFTA took an important step in that direction by adding, as you mentioned, adding language in the recently released Elder Abuse Prevention and Intervention Services are a key. The Center for an Urban Future commends the department for this very important addition. And we stress that the most effective actions the department can take to serve the increasingly diverse senior population at time with limited resources. Of course, is to ensure that linguistically and culturally competent services are required through loud and clear language in all future RFPs, and to follow up with providers who ensure that these services are actually reaching immigrant seniors. And to provide technical assistance to organizations that are based in the actual communities that we're trying to serve.

But to do this right, DFTA needs to create a pipeline to city contracts for those community-based organizations that often have the

1 culture and linguistic competence and credibility in  
2 the community. But they may not have the capacity or  
3 funding to be effective subcontractors. Just as the  
4 Age-Friendly Initiative advocates for an age in  
5 everything focus, we need to re-conceptualize the  
6 services that we have available for older people to  
7 have an immigrant in everything focus. After all,  
8 immigrants make up almost half of older New Yorkers  
9 and are growing number, and it's a share of the  
10 population. So you can't talk about older New  
11 Yorkers without talking about immigrants. Thank you  
12 again for the opportunity to testify.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Bobby.

15 BOBBY SACKMAN: Good morning. I'm Bobby  
16 Sackman, Director of Public Policy with the Council  
17 of Senior Centers and Services. I'm not going to  
18 read through the whole thing. I'm going to do some  
19 highlights. But I do first-- Christian's  
20 organization and me and Christian we work together.  
21 I am glad we know each other. It was an incredible  
22 report, and I want to thank you for doing this  
23 hearing because seniors are silent. And in terms of  
24 the immigrant community, I believe what needs to  
25 happen is not only those of us in the room today who

are pretty much in the aging community. We need to see immigrant groups here whether they're direct service providers or advocates or both. But if you could help us collaborate with those I think that would go a long way to accomplish what we probably all want to accomplish.

So I think what you've heard today is a lot of the funding issues. I'm the money person. So a lot of the funding issues that we've actually talked about over the years are important to older immigrants. And whether it's from senior centers themselves-- Senior centers or other programs, I'm going to go through some of them. I wanted to say, though, that, you know, older immigrants as older adults in general are really anchors in their families and their community. And I don't think that they get the credit. So while we speak in terms of we need to help them, I think we also need to ask them what's the best way to help you. Because while often facing very difficult challenges in their lives, they still manage to get through. And they still manage to help their family. And they still manage to help their community, and how do we help them in a way they want to receive assistance. I

think is really key, and give them the credit they're due.

So some of the funding that the City Council put in this year, the Six Meal Program. The Administration and the City Council put in money for the meals. That can only help. They could provide better quality through the more diversity of food. And also as of 2003, and you'll see in my testimony, I went back and looked. We used to have ELS funding. We had citizen classes. And Isabel Chivas [sp?] is here, and she'll be embarrassed that I mentioned her. But I'll give you an example, City Hall Senior Center, which is in your district. But it is also one that I know really well. They were serving seniors. Not only teaching them English, but getting hundreds through the citizenship classes, and it's daunting. You can imagine how daunting that's going to be for an older adult because they hold their hands. You know what I'm saying. They really support them. This is a user-friendly environment. So let's bring back that friendliness. I'm asking for a million dollars and it's been 750 as we speak. So over ten years ago now, but we lost our plan.

Funding social workers at senior citizens we've been asking for this one for over 15 years, and it's more important than ever now. We all want bilingual staff at senior centers. We have to pay for them. We have to attract them, and we have to keep them. We have to attract them, and we have to keep them. It's not always easy to get, especially younger folks into aging field. So how do we attract and keep them there, and make sure that we do indeed have social workers that are trained. MSWs or equivalent degree, but masters in social work that are trained to do everything that you're talking about. Whether it's counseling in mental health. Whether it's benefits or other situations that people face and older adults face. That could be another really strong thing. For 15 years or more we're asking for this, and if there is anyway between City Council and actually the Administration. Because when you're paying for staff, it has to come off of the administrative side for the baseline. So really, anything that you could help us with.

Elder abuse was mentioned by Christian. We're thrilled that we now have \$2.8 million up for an RFP. City Council put in an additional million.

That's three times as much money as we had in elder abuse when we sat here last year. So again, the call to a competency to a traumatized population is really key. What is elder abuse in different communities. They may not even have the words for elder abuse. What's acceptable behavior that we might not think is acceptable behavior. And how do we intervene in those very particular situations especially culture.

Case Management. I know a much of folks have asked about homebound people. Again, last spring we had 1,800 people on a waiting list. Money was put in to bring down caseloads from 80 to 65. I'm willing to bet that in six months, they're going to be back up, or they're not going to be at 65. The demand is too great.

I want to add something a little bit new to the conversation, and that's family caregivers, and it's not only, but it's mostly a woman's issue. That if we don't have access to affordable elder care that's a the workforce issue of the 21st Century. Ever time we talk about childcare, if we don't talk about elder care, then women probably around age 50. Probably some women in this room who know people. They're struggling to stay in the workforce. If



they're low income and they have the kinds of jobs where they have unsteady schedule, and they're already financially struggling. They're taking care of somebody who as Christian was saying is not eligible for benefits. The struggle is even greater. There's a federal funding stream for caregiver support, which are like support groups.

Information and referral. Some respite, which is basically home care, it's remained stagnant. It's only federal. There is no City or State money in its funding pot. And yet, if we don't support the family caregivers, we're really losing out on supporting these older adults. And just as a sideline, we've been working closely with the Controller's Office on workplace flexibility. This all affects caregivers of older adults. Some are doing both. They're taking care of kids, and their elderly parents or relatives.

So the conversation that I think we haven't quite had yet, and I'm hoping we can raise. We love that you increased SCRIE. We need an aggressive plan. Again, especially in different languages because it's a very under-utilized program. How do we come up with a funding pot. We keep

1 talking about that we need a plan, but we don't have  
2 a funding pot to do this.

3  
4 And then, finally housing, affordable  
5 housing. CSCS has been working a lot. We have a  
6 housing plan. It's on our website, and as you hear  
7 about folks that are in poverty, near poverty, how do  
8 we keep-- SCRIE is key preservation. Keeping people  
9 where they're already living, but how do we build new  
10 affordable housing with services so those people age  
11 in place. So these are all pieces, and yet seniors  
12 get siloed out. So when we're talking about housing,  
13 when we're talking nutritional hunger, when we're  
14 talking about families and the workforce issues that  
15 women face, how do we stop putting seniors and their  
16 needs aside. And know that unless there are people  
17 like us at the table, nobody else raises it. So how  
18 does it become part of our serious conversation.  
19 Thank you. Oh, I had one more thing I wanted to say.  
20 They have a dream, too. Thank you.

21 ALICIA FRY: Good morning. Bobby is a  
22 very tough act to follow, and as always, she  
23 motivates me and riles me up. So I'm going to go off  
24 script for just one moment because I'm all about the  
25 staff, and Bobby mentioned the staff. I do believe

that in aging services our staff are our most valuable, natural and renewable resource. Our clients want, need, and deserve highly skilled and motivated staff. And if we want to recruit and retain these staff, we must train them, support them, and pay them adequately. Now, I'll go back in the script.

Good morning Chairwoman Chin, Chairman Menchaca and distinguished members of the aging and immigration communities. I am Alicia Fry, LMSW. That stands for Licensed Master Social Worker. I'm the Clinical Director of Case Management at Services Now for Adult Persons, Inc. a/ka/a SNAP, not to be confused with food stamps. We had the name for 30 years before they co-opted it. Founded in 1980, SNAP is a multi-service social services organization serving persons 60 years of age and older and/or caregivers who live in Queens. We operate one innovative senior center in Queens Village and one neighborhood center in Rosedale. We serve over 300 home delivered meals per day, provide caregiver support services, transportation and escort services, and volunteer and friendly visiting programs. Our

Case Management Program serves more than 1,000  
elderly at-risk clients.

According to the Guinness Book of World  
Records, the Borough of Queens is the most diverse  
place in the world. So that's kind of a fun fact,  
but while this diversity enriches communities in many  
ways, it also presents many challenges. Those of us  
who work with the older adult population recognize  
that senior immigrants are at greater risk of  
compromised health, poor nutrition, social isolation,  
and poverty. Many older adult immigrants find  
themselves in a society they are unfamiliar with, and  
feel uncomfortable in. Cultural competency is  
critical. So you're circling back to training the  
staff and supporting the staff is critical to  
improving access to services for these older  
immigrants, and involved a number of endeavors and  
initiatives. These include: Greater education for  
professions regarding language, customs, beliefs and  
values. Cultural awareness training for  
professionals, which also involve greater  
understanding of ethnic, racial, religious,  
geographic, and social norms. Competent work by  
professionals must reflect appropriate application of

knowledge, and a greater awareness of attitudes that engage immigrant senior populations. Through supportive interactions, best practices by professionals need to be outlined so that they can create an inviting atmosphere. And encourage older immigrant adults to utilize the services that are available in the community.

Creating an environment of safety and respect requires education not only for professionals but for older adults who have been in the community for many years, and are often guarded and fearful of groups that are different from themselves. Neighborhoods have changed drastically as adults have aged in their communities. A lack of knowledge about other cultures along with media that perpetuates fear regarding certain specific groups help to create a sense of mistrust among older adults.

Caregivers of older immigrants are also important resources in terms of reaching and understanding their older generation family members. Often, adult children of immigrants find themselves caught in a cultural divide. These children are living and adapting to an American way of life, and are often confronted with older family members who

feel isolated and abandoned by the younger generation. These adult children can inform professionals as to what would be the most effective ways to connect with their older family members. They can also benefit from learning more about community resources so that they can help bridge the gap by encouraging older family members to participate in community groups. Education for professionals, clients and family caregivers is crucial if community agencies are to make a difference in reaching and serving immigrant seniors.

Creative programming, which would include food from different backgrounds, cultural specific dance, discussion groups, use of theater, music, and movies that stimulate conversation can all be integrated into senior center settings, libraries, community organizations, and even local coffee shops where naturally occurring immigrant populations gather. Cultural competence involves an understanding of one's own biases, the obtaining of information about different cultures, experience, and encounters with individuals from different cultures along with a desire for cultural competence. Education in this regard is no small task and takes

time along with budgets that supports staff and programs of quality. The two go hand-in-hand. There is no way around it.

Providing food that meets the needs of various cultures is also an important part of connecting with immigrant populations. Food preparation as well as diversity within cultures regarding food can be challenging, but is necessary when creating senior centers. Collaboration between and among service agencies provides for an effective method of meeting diverse nutritional needs. In light of fiscal constraints developing and nurturing existing relationships within the aging network allows agencies to utilize a pool of available resources in both a cost-effective and efficient way.

Facing a rapidly aging city with complex diversity, SNAP looks forward to continuing this dialogue with the City Council and the Department for the Aging. In working together this is much promise for greater cultural competency within the aging network. Thank you.

KYRA GARCIA: Hi. Thank you so much, first of all, for taking the time to consider the experiences and the needs of this really vulnerable

segment of our community. I'm Kyra Garcia representing SAGE, Services and Advocacy for LGBT Elders. SAGE is the nation's oldest and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT older adults. First of all, just sincere thanks to the City Council and the LGBT Caucus for its support of SAGE. It has really meant a lot to us.

Everyday more than 100,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender LGBT older people throughout New York City navigate the challenges of aging. Many have meager incomes, reduced economic security, small support systems and a host of health and isolation related barriers. Roughly one-third of these seniors live in poverty, and more than 15% of LGBT seniors contemplate suicide. When we take these statistics together with the well-documented challenges faced by immigrants, the deck is quite clearly stacked against the city's older immigrants who are LGBT. These members of our community face three-fold obstacles to health and happiness. The challenges of aging the language barriers, and legal complications of immigration and the demoralizing and the stabilizing effects of a lifetime of anti-LGBT discrimination both sublet and over.



At SAGE we help constituents access basic necessities like housing, medical care and food. This can be particularly challenging for our immigrant community members. As an example, we found a consistent need for multilingual services, and assistance with challenges resulting from legal complications that combine immigration issues, and the longstanding absence of LGBT relationship recognition. Which unfortunately that recognition or that absence of recognition has been alleviated too late to help many of our community members as they are in their 60s, 70s, and 80s. We fully expect to encounter and ever-greater demand for these services as we expand our outreach into the outer boroughs. And as we see an increasing number of older adults who out as LGBT. Any conversation about our City's older immigrants should consider the particular needs, experiences, and challenges of those who are LGBT. Thank you so much for your consideration.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, we are joined by Council Member Dromm of the Immigration Committee. Does anyone have any questions of this panel? Thank you very much for coming to testify, and thank you for your recommendations, and we look forward to

working with you. We're going to call up the next panel. Larry Lee from the New York Asian Women's Center and Howard Shih from the Asian American Federation. Joanne are you testifying together? Okay, Rena Resnick from the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, and Helen Shih [sic] from the Visiting Nurses.

[Pause]

LARRY LEE: Thank you, Chairs Chin and Menchaca for convening this important meeting. Thanks to the Council Members for coming, and for the people that are supporting this issue. My name is Larry Lee and I'm the Executive Director of the New York Asian Women's Center. We're the largest not-for-profit agency in the country serving Asian-American survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. We're extremely thankful to be a recipient of the City Council grant to provide elder abuse services to Asian. Asian immigrants and Asian seniors have a lot in common. Both have a high level of poverty, poorer housing, a greater need for language assistance, and for help from the government to meet their needs. For many Asian immigrant senior this situation is worse. They

face even greater poverty and more culture and language barriers. The ranks of Asian seniors are increasing the fastest nationally and in New York City. Asian seniors are more likely to be immigrants than seniors in the general population. In New York City, there are well over 100,000 Asian seniors. Asians now are the poorest group in New York City. Certainly, the poverty rate for Asian seniors is significantly higher than the rate for all elderly New Yorkers. Asian seniors are more than twice as likely to not have health insurance coverage, and to have a lower rate of public health coverage. Three out of four elderly Asians have English limitations compared with one-third of all city elderly adults. More than 30 different Asian languages or dialects are spoken in Queens alone.

Our Recommendations. To assist Asian immigrants, city government agencies should be culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate. They should hire Asian and Spanish language staff, and train all staff to be culturally aware. Information forms should be translated into major Asian languages. City government should require contract agencies to be culturally based and

linguistically appropriate. City agencies should emulate federal agencies, create funding avenues exclusively for cultural specific programs. Immigrant status should not keep immigrants from getting services. The senior Asian immigrants prevention services need to be extensively conducted. Asian communities need to understand that Asian elders are abused and the forms it takes. For Asians only physical abuse is considered abuse, and that is minimized. The Asian communities need wide-ranging community education about elder abuse. Asians are more likely to be silent about being assaulted, and may not consider what is happening to them to be abusive. They don't report violence to the police. Like many others, Asians don't want their relatives to be arrested.

With so many Asian seniors experiencing language-- experiencing language and cultural barriers, community based programs have to assist seniors in navigating the system to get access to government programs, health insurance programs as well as other needed services. Asian agencies should be compensated for this extra work. Services provide to seniors should be culture specific. NYAWC offers

culturally based counseling and Asian wellness services. This includes acupuncture, meditation, Thai Chi and Yoga. Our services are more appropriate than mainstream professional counseling techniques suggested by government agencies to assist seniors. Senior Asian immigrants have many needs that are not being filled. NYAWC urges the City Council to champion cultural and language specific assisted programs, and to ensure that government agencies are culturally and linguistically based. Thank you.

HOWARD SHIH: Thank you for the Committee on Aging and the Committee on Immigration for convening this very important hearing. I'm Howard Shih, the Director of Research and Policy at the Asian American Federation. The Federation's mission is to raise the influence evolving the Pan Asian American community through research policy advocacy, public awareness, an organizational development. Established in 1989, the Federation represents a network of community service agencies in the fields of health and human services, education, economic development, civic participation, and social justice.

I'm here today to lend the Federation's support to the tireless efforts of our member

agencies who serve aging seniors. I think it was mentioned a lot by groups previously that the growth in Asian senior population continues unabated. At least according to the analysis by our Census Information Center. In the last few years, the Asian senior population grew at least nearly three times the rate of the senior population overall with nearly 117,000 Asian seniors now residing throughout the five boroughs.

Our fastest growing groups were the Bangladesh and Pakistani seniors who nearly doubled in population between 2010 and 2013. This outpaces the near double digit growth rates seen in other aging groups, and has resulted in increasing diversity within the Asian senior population. Asian seniors are also becoming very geographically diverse. While most seniors are largely concentrated in-- Asian seniors are largely concentrated in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens we're seeing emerging Bangladesh and Pakistani populations in the Bronx, and an emerging Korean senior population in Staten Island.

So as the senior population disburses--  
The Asian senior population disburses, our member

agencies will require more sites to provide services to match the language and cultural needs of those senior populations. And the needs of the Asian senior population are indeed great. Over one in four Asian seniors living in poverty with poverty rates reaching as high as more than 30% for Bangladeshi and Chinese seniors. Language barriers remain high. Aside from the Chinese and Korean statistics that were cited before, 88% of Bengali speaking and three in four Urdu speaking seniors were Limited English Proficient.

One of the reasons why Asian seniors are attracted to New York City while other seniors are moving away from New York City is that our member agencies provide a lot of excellent services to the community. However, while they're facing increasing ways of seniors to serve, they have to serve them with either level or sometimes even decreasing levels of support from the government. As a federation of these agencies, we are presenting our support for the following priorities for Asian seniors:

1. In a city where more than one in ten Asian aging seniors-- One in ten seniors are Asian, no Asian led homebound New York provider has a direct

contract with the city. Our member agencies who subcontract for homebound meals often find that their programs are cut first in the face of when the ax falls on city budgets.

2. Few, if none of the existing senior housing serves diverse language, cultural, and dietary needs of Asian seniors. In particular South Asian seniors.

3. Both Queens and Brooklyn do not have a senior center with regular hours serving South Asian seniors.

4. We need to address the increasing need for in language and culturally competent health and in particular mental health services for Asian seniors.

5. We ask that a portion of any new funding, particularly the additional New York State community services for elderly program funding, coming to the City be spent to help agencies directly serving Asian seniors to build their capacity.

6. We are also encouraging the amendment of the contracting process in order to acknowledge that Asian led agencies providing services directly to Asian seniors are in the best



position to use additional dollars the most cost-effectively, and finally

7. Please continue to support research to study the most effective programs, best practice models and demographic changes in our senior populations so that we can work together to fill service gaps.

We look forward to working with the City Council and both committees to help improve access to services for Asian seniors. Thanks.

RENA RESNICK: Thank you Chair Chin, Chair Menchaca and the Committees on Aging and Immigration for inviting us to speak today. My name is Rena Resnick. I'm the Communication Manager of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty. We applaud the City Council for expansion of the Age-Friendly Initiative as well for improving access to senior centers, and encouraging the development or more quality senior housing accommodations.

For more than four decades, Met Council has supported and championed families, seniors, and adults living in poverty and near poverty. Met Council provides immediate assistance to New Yorkers

in crisis, and creates pathways to self-sufficiency through the following programs:

American's largest kosher food pantry system; emergency social services, family violence service, home repairs, home care services, benefits enrollment and outreach, and affordable housing. Our grassroots Jewish Community Council Network provides support to families in their neighborhoods, right where they live. In the fight against poverty we serve immigrants, seniors living on fixed incomes, the non and under-employed, and all those in needs. As an organization founded on Jewish values, we serve everyone with dignity and empathy regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion. We leverage government contracts with privately raised funds from individuals and foundations to increase the impact of our services. Our culturally sensitive professionals provide an array of services to insular and immigrant clients utilizing a nuanced understanding of the client's community norms to move them from crisis to stability.

Since Met Council's inception, time for senior immigrants has been Met Council's mission.

Many of our clients work their entire lives, or maybe

become too frail to work. Their lack of a deep and wide enough safety net makes it difficult for them to remain safely in the homes that they love. To adjust these needs, just this month Met Council created its first geriatric services manager to coordinate all our services offered to seniors to ensure that they are the most effective, efficient, and compassionate. To ensure that this vulnerable population is served with dignity and are educated on all services they are entitled to, we work diligently in our outreach efforts.

During the time when a tailored outreach is increasingly relying on social media we found that reaching the senior immigrant population requires a different approach. In order to connect with senior immigrants and help them form and enroll them into available benefits, we have utilized a few simple but critical tools including traveling to the neighborhoods where seniors live; creating initial pre-screening questions in client's native languages; utilizing volunteers; and creating comprehensive follow-up plans.

But while I've highlighted three programs that have successfully permitted the senior immigrant

population, which include our Outreach on Project Met Repair, which is funded by the City Council, which provides free home repairs for seniors. Our outreach turn more seniors into SNAP, and this past summer when the City Council and Administration increased the income qualifications for SCRIE, our outreach programs to enroll more seniors.

In conclusion, Met Council cannot continue providing critical social services to thousands of needed New Yorkers without the vital partnership of New York City Council. We deeply value your leadership and partnership, and look forward to working together to help the needy throughout the New York area. Thank you.

HELEN SIT: Hi. Good morning, everybody, and my name is Helen Sit. I'm the Director of the Chinatown Neighborhood NORC Program of Visiting Nurse Service of New York. So today I'm here to discuss the Visiting Nurse Service of New York. With respect to if you know how our city can better serve our immigrants, and especially the senior so they can connect to the community and have more, you know, successful Asian place. So, just, you know, I give everybody a copy. I don't want to read all my

statement here. But you know, the most important thing is the language barrier, and also the SS services. Our Neighborhood NORC Program is a policy [sic] program. Visiting Nurse Service of New York is the lead agency, and also we work with CCPA, CPC, and all kind of other community agencies. Humanitarian House [sic] too. And it is prize here, I've got to say. [sic]

So, we're here to serve the residents. You know, we serve the residents about 2,000 seniors within the 24th block of the Chinatown area. And they are all-- and 99% are Chinese, and what we provide are social services, health services, and a lot of activities to connect them to be together. And since we started in 2006, we have the survey. We did several surveys to saying that, you know, to our seniors what is the need of our seniors in this community. So we can, you know, we can obtain that service for them. So 66% of the residents surveyed they got the information assistance from their families and friends only. Not the agencies. However, after, you know, we worked very hard and we tried to help them understand you can go to agencies to get more information. Now, more than 70% of them

are earmarked as a place to get the information and support. And then, you know, surprisingly there is an 18% they leave home less than once a week or never. That means they are more homebound by environmental or a physical problems. And besides, you know, we provide walking service we do home visits. And if that is not enough, we have family visiting, and also telephone homebound support group to try to make them more connected to the community and not so isolated from the outside.

And also, 41% they state their mental health are frail or poor. Just you talked about before mental health. I think everybody is trying real hard to outreach, you know, the member and promote the mental health especially to the poor. However, we have some case, you know, our seniors they don't have mental issues, but their family members have mental issues. So what happen then? They're stuck at their home, and the family member, their senior they're very vulnerable. They don't know what to do. They worry about if they die or they become sick, you know, who is going to take care of their family member. However, these group of people they are hiding. They are not reaching out to

any service. Even the second generation they speak English. However, they are hiding in their home, and only the seniors take care of them. So what can we do with them? I mean we try to provide server. However, you know, you need to-- I think you need to make that person, you know, willing to go to seek for help. Otherwise, you know, you cannot do it. There's that and only mobile crisis or you call 911, but it may be too late. So this is something we are concerned about.

And today, we are happy to have some seniors here to support us, and everybody have their own immigrant story. So we cannot tell everybody the whole story. It would take the whole day. However, we picked one story that's really-- We think it's very significant. You know, it's Mr. White. He's 61 years old, a Chinese speaking, mono-speaking, monolingual man. He's come here like about 20 years ago, and now what happened is he's referred to us by his neighbor. And because he cannot pay his rent, what happens? Because he's sick and he used up all his savings to pay the rent. And now, he cannot work and no more savings. The landlord is about to throw him out because he cannot pay the rent. So he is so

scared and helpless, and no access to any social service. He doesn't know he is entitled to any government entitlement service until when he reached to us.

Okay, so now what we do is we work with government different agencies, you know, there's a settlement to get him some lawyer or the rent that help him ease the rent issue. And also provide him temporary funding to pay the rent in arrears. And for the medical issue, we work with the downtown hospital to provide him medical assistance. And the main thing is the first step when we first met. And because he has no money to buy food, and he's like, you know, eating whatever he can find at home. So we connect him with the SNAP program, and also the local service, the local senior center so he get the nutritional meal. So from this point of view, not only one program can serve the community. You need to work with so many different agencies because everybody is from is from a different aspect. So we work together to help him to be connected to the society. And also at the end now, he's, you know, reaching the retirement age and he got Social Security.



1                   And now, he can really rest at home and  
2  
3 retire and have a happy aging. So this is one of the  
4 few stories that we have, and we can have a lot.  
5 However, we would like to also thank the City Council  
6 because the leap so much. Our landlord program is  
7 funded by DFTA, Office of the Aging, and fortunately,  
8 Margaret Chin is very-- She knows that because with  
9 her effort, with the whole City Council effort we  
10 were awarded the \$1 million to the Neighborhood NORC  
11 program, and we are one of them that we can be, you  
12 know, get some money to continue our program. And  
13 still, there is a lot of need, and I wish we had more  
14 funding, and more diversity on the services. That's  
15 why I need to say thank you very much.

16                   CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Thank you  
17 to this panel for your good work, and your  
18 suggestions. Council Member Vallone has a quick  
19 question.

20                   COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Just a quick  
21 comment, and--

22                   CHAIRPERSON CHIN: [interposing] And  
23 Council Member Dromm.

24                   COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: --a thank you to  
25 the groups that have come today, and our fearless

1 leader Margaret Chin and Co-Chair today. The Asian  
2 community I think we're very lucky to have Margaret  
3 leading us, but most of the council members now are  
4 also asking for the additional. I mean the  
5 statistics of the one in ten, and of the one in ten,  
6 three and four not speaking English are very, very--  
7 Disturbing is not the right word, but eye opening to  
8 realize the critical services that need to go right  
9 away into the-- Whether it's Korean, Chinese, South  
10 Asian, Indian, Bangladesh they're all within the same  
11 leagues. And I've seen Mr. Kim here for KCS again,  
12 and he's was one of the first when Margaret and I had  
13 the hearing on about food preferences for our senior  
14 centers. Because in the Asian community it was  
15 brought to our attention, but it opened the door to  
16 all the language barriers, number one. So have DFTA  
17 here listening with Donna Corrado our Commissioner.  
18 We would like to work with you, and I thank you for  
19 putting the suggestions that you did on the points.  
20 Because that's what we look at on how we can look at  
21 next hearings, legislation and funding for the  
22 budget. Your ideas. You are the groups providing  
23 the services. So we are here to listen to you. So I  
24 just wanted to thank you for putting those  
25

suggestions, and we will listen to those ideas.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Dromm.

COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you. Just to follow up a little bit on what Council Member Vallone has just said. You know, I have a very large "Asian" quote, unquote community, but one of the things that I don't see happening in some of my senior centers is that the South Asian community is rarely in those centers. And so, I'm sorry I had missed the presentation of the Administration, but one thing led to another this morning. I was a little bit late getting here. You know, I just wonder what we can do to correct that situation. I think the issue for Asians in general is important. But I'm also deeply concerned about the newer arrived immigrants as well. And so, I don't know if any of the panelists have suggestions about that. I do have a piece of legislation because I think one part of it is that we don't just aggregate the numbers among the Asian Community, and that we need to know all the different diverse groups that the centers are currently serving versus the number of people who in the general population who might be hitting the aging

3 population. And so, I'm pushing for that legislation  
4 to move forward. But until that time, I'm just  
5 wondering how we might even make our centers more  
6 available to those newer immigrants particularly  
7 those in the Asian subgroups.

8 [Pause]

9 HOWARD SHIH: There are a lot of groups  
10 that are doing really good work with seniors. They  
11 just don't have city funding. They don't have the  
12 formal designation in a senior center. So  
13 opportunities to open up funding for these groups  
14 that are doing a lot of good work is one of the  
15 priorities that we have as a federation. I think,  
16 you know, in terms of doing outreach to meet seniors  
17 from newer groups. And emerging populations know  
18 about the city services in general is an important  
19 part of our mission as well. And I think we would  
20 like to work with the Council and the council members  
21 to look of opportunities to reach to the new  
22 communities that are coming, that are arriving in our  
23 city.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So I do provide  
25 some funding to India Home, for example, but certain  
not enough for the population I think that exists.

1 And, you know, I think that the Administration should  
2 really begin to look at how to make these services  
3 more broadly available to those constituents, Indian,  
4 Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Tibetan, Mahali. And I think  
5 in general the population of New York City needs to  
6 understand all those differences, particularly  
7 language, cultural, and even diet of the different  
8 groups. I just continue to see that as a very big  
9 need in our communities, and just wanted to comment  
10 and really stress that point. So thank you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Could I respond,  
13 Council Member? And that is I thought I heard the  
14 Administration say that the threshold is something  
15 like 30% if people that they have to hire. And I  
16 think it's very important that they hire at a more  
17 level threshold. Because I think when people see  
18 South Asians in the center then they see. If they  
19 don't feel that anybody is there, then they're not  
20 going to come. So I think language is by far very  
21 key, but culture as well. So it's very important to  
22 hire. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, Council  
24 Member Dromm. I think earlier when the Commissioner  
25 testified, right now we're only serving about 10% of

the seniors. So I think we need to really work together to push for more funding from the Administration together with the City Council to fund more senior centers because that's the newer population. But also, I think even in many communities there are not enough senior centers. So we really need to work hard on that aspect in terms of the budget. So thank you again to the Panel for coming today. Whoops, okay. Next, we want to call up Magdalia Santiago from the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Community Center. Elaine Rockoff from JASA. Michael Stroller from JASA and Helen Drook from New York Legal Assistance Group.

[Pause]

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We have another panel, but if anyone else that wanted to testify you have to fill out a form with the Sergeant. Okay. I just want to thank some of the seniors from coming out.

[Speaking Chinese] You may begin.

MAGDALIA SANTIAGO: Okay. Good morning, Margaret Chin and all the council members and everybody here personally. My name is Magdalia Santiago. I am a licensed social worker. I work at the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Center for

eight years, and I am also the co-founder of PFLAG for Families of Color and Allies Chapter in New York. That's a group that supports parents that have gay children in the city.

Considerational Challenges: According to the taskforce, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender elders, 3% between 1.5 to 3 million or 3.8% to 7.6% of seniors in the U.S. A report from August 2014 by the New York State Controller's Office said: New York City has the largest immigration population of any city in the nation. New York City immigrant population more than doubled over the past four decades. Immigrants often come to New York to escape death, imprisonment, and violence when they are defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in their country of origin. Many LGBT immigrants were professionals with full careers before they came here. When they arrived, they faced multiple hardships such as difficulty applying for job skills, lack of opportunities, and language barriers. These obstacles can remain for decades. Often the elderly only jobs immigrants can find require physical labor. And many seniors cannot work these jobs, or don't stand a chance of being hired.

I am working with a client from Mexico who is a senior gay man who is monolingual Spanish speaker, HIV positive, and has been here for over ten years. When he was diagnosed with HIV, he returned back to Mexico, but wasn't able to assess HIV medication there. Even if he moved, he was gravely concerned that due to homophobia, he wouldn't be given medication. Not wanting to die, he returned back to here. With no chance of employment and few supports, he's giving more and more each day. As we work to provide services, resources, equality, and safety for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, particularly immigrants, we see an increasing number of transgender Latino women over the age of 50 in our programs. Undocumented LGBT immigrant seniors have few real opportunities to resolve their immigration status other than seeking political asylum, which has its own risks.

For many engage in Cupid, Render, and Twitter, meeting a partner has become much harder. Even if they do try to marry, if they enter it illegally, they will be sent back to the country according to our ways, a justice issues. While a partner at any age must prove financial stability



1 enough to support them both and provide health  
2 issues. For LGBT illegal seniors, not being able to  
3 return to travel freely means never getting to say  
4 good-bye or attend funerals of their friends,  
5 siblings, parents, and even their own children in  
6 their country of origin.  
7

8 For most seniors in a normal  
9 relationship, the caregivers often become their  
10 children of their spouse. Many LGBT immigrant  
11 seniors will grow old with no primary caregiver at  
12 all. We must create safe spaces for LGBT immigrant  
13 elders where they feel supported, can make friends,  
14 and have access to practical resources. If there  
15 were fewer barriers to the senior citizens services,  
16 I believe that many LGBT immigrant seniors would  
17 certainly use them. A suggestion for the council  
18 members include the specialized needs of LGBT  
19 immigrant seniors when deciding on measures to  
20 improve and assess new senior services which already  
21 Councilman Menchaca mentioned at the beginning and  
22 SAGE. Thank you.

23 MICHAEL STOLLER: Good afternoon. I'm  
24 Michael Stoller. I'm the Chief of Government and  
25 External Relations for JASA with Elaine Rockoff,

JASA's Director of Community Based Programs. First, we want to thank the Chairs of the Committees on Immigration and Aging for holding this important hearing and serving an increasingly diverse and growing community of seniors in New York City and for allowing us to testify on behalf of JASA. Second, I want to apologize for not having copies of this. This is a team effort that went late into the night last night. And so I'll get it copied info for the Council and send you as many copies as you want.

JASA's mission is to sustain and enrich the lives of the aging in the New York metropolitan area so that they can remain in the community with dignity and mortality. The senior service system in the city was originally set up decades ago as more or less a one size fits all model. As the City experienced waves of immigrants from around the world, the system had to adjust to the needs and cultures of the new New Yorkers. At the same time, the elderly population in the city was growing exponentially. Clearly, this was and is a challenge for the city and service providers.

Among other groups, JASA serves a large number of immigrants from Russia and other countries

of the former Soviet Union. JASA is a sponsor of HUD funding for affordable senior housing. Among the nine apartment buildings JASA owns and manages, apartments at Brighton and in Manhattan are virtually 100% occupied by Russian speaking seniors. Chinese immigrants occupy about 95% of the apartments at Positively 3rd Street. And other residents of JASA housing hail from Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Mongolia, Poland, Puerto Rico, and Romania.

From 2008 to 2012 with funding from UJA-Federation of New York, JASA sponsored the Tsunami, which means "with us" in Russian. The Tsunami Program is an intensive case management program created sadly because of seven suicide deaths in Far Rockaway among Russian speaking seniors with mental health diagnoses. And who, due to isolation and language barriers weren't getting to their doctors. Tsunami provided in-home assessments and counseling, referrals needed for language competent licensed mental health services. Support groups, psychiatric and medical appointment reminders, assistance with securing benefits and entitlements and transportation. While the program operated, and that

tense [sic] there were no deaths from suicide in the communities with Russian speaking population, and several mental health crises were averted.

The Coney Island Act of Aging New York Program serves a diverse local population and conducts many programs to attract a large number of Russian speaking and Spanish speaking seniors in that community. Cross-country appreciation is often achieved through arts programs that showcase different cultures. JASA secures grants through philanthropic sources to support targeted intergenerational and multi-cultural programs.

ELAINE ROCKOFF: Our 24 senior centers are very active in meeting the cultural and educational needs of the people we serve. Holiday celebrations open to and attended by all include Hispanic heritage celebrations, Cinco de Mayo, International Women's Day, which is Russian. Chinese New Year, Saint Patrick's Day; winter holiday such as Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanza. And Jewish holidays including Passover, which have proven popular among a diverse population. Victory Day is a major commemorative day for the Russian community, celebrated at centers with significant Russian

speaking populations. For example, in South Brooklyn. JASA has used this opportunity to salute veterans of all wars, and to provide participants with the chance to share and reminisce about their experiences during World War II from American and Russian perspectives.

At JASA's Van Cortlandt Senior in the Bronx, we offer a social cultural group called Latinos En Frienda to provide meaningful cross-cultural experiences with meetings occasionally conducted in Spanish with English translation. The group discusses Latin traditions such as Three Kings Day and takes trips to area museums including El Museo Del Barrio. They invite speakers to address the group including a Lehman College professor who spoke about immigration and encouraged everyone attending to share his or her own experiences in immigration to this country.

Among the other services JASA offers seniors are: Translation services by staff in Spanish and Russian as needed. ESOL classes and in 2014, FY2014, 200 seniors participated in our English language classes. English as a second language classes, citizen classes and approximately 90% of the

36 participants obtained citizenship. Yiddish and Hebrew classes, discussion groups in English, Russian, and Spanish. Bilingual activities including computer and exercise classes. Special cultural programs such as concerts by Russian and Hispanic performers, and a popular Caribbean celebration with a special menu, salsa dancing classes, and much more. This is just a small sample.

The work of JASA's over 700 volunteers supports and enriches our programs and services from assisting with activities at senior centers to providing support to our clients during emergency. Volunteers make a significant difference in the quality of life of the seniors JASA services. Our volunteers are representatives of the diversity in New York City and speak over 30 languages including Cantonese, Creole, German, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Patwa [sp?], Portuguese, Slovak, Spanish, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Yiddish. I'm just going to really quickly run down the whole list of the--

MICHAEL STOLLER: [interposing] 32  
languages.

ELAINE ROCKOFF: --of the 32 languages.  
Bengali, Cantonese, Creole, Danish, English, Farsi,  
French, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian,  
Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese,  
Malayu, Patuwa, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian,  
sign language, Slovak, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, or  
Ukranian, Urdu, Uzbek, Vietnamese, and Yiddish.

MICHAEL STOLLER: And we're happy to  
supply this testimony in any of those languages  
[laughter] if you so desire. In addition to directly  
providing the services to a diverse senior  
population, JASA collaborates with other  
organizations to enhance culturally specific service  
delivery to often under-served populations. For  
example, JASA in partnership with the Kings County  
D.A.'s Elder Abuse Unit, the NYPD and the New York  
Asian Women's Center -- I know Larry Lee was here  
earlier. Is one of the nine entities in the country,  
and the first in New York to receive a grant from the  
U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence  
Against Women. Bringing to it each agency's  
expertise, the project partners will train criminal  
justice professionals, government agency staff and  
victim assistance to increase their ability to

respond to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation in the communities. The program also includes a specific focus on the elderly Asian population, and will enhance services for people age 50 and older who are victims of abuse.

As Elaine said, this has been a sample of the ways in which JASA meets the needs of our city's immigrant elderly. With funding for additional ESOL and citizenship classes, advanced training for staff in cultural competency, and much more needed housing for the elderly. Together we can do so much more. I want to thank you again, the City Council, for opening this important discussion, which we hope will continue, and which we are delighted to be part of. Thank you.

HELEN DROOK: Hello, my name is Helen Drook and I'm a Supervising Attorney at the New York Legal Assistance Group. I want to thank the Council for the opportunity to speak here today, and for all the work that you're already doing on behalf of the elderly in New York City. New York Legal Assistance Group is a non-profit law office dedicated to providing inclusive legal services for low-income New Yorkers.



CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Excuse me. You need  
to talk into the mic.

HELEN DROOK: I'm trying to. Okay.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: You can move it back a  
little bit.

HELEN DROOK: Okay, is that-- is that  
better.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And if you could  
please try to--

HELEN DROOK: [interposing] Say  
everything I have? [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, you know, give  
us the highlights of your testimony.

HELEN DROOK: I will. I realized that a  
lot of numbers were repeated here, and the concerns  
are obviously we share the same concerns. And I  
promise I'll do this in less than two minutes.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, because we have  
another panel, too.

HELEN DROOK: Yeah, I understand. Again,  
NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, veterans, families  
facing foreclosure; renters facing eviction. Those  
in need of government assistance; children in need of  
special education; domestic violence victims; persons

with disabilities; patients with chronic illnesses;  
low wage workers; members of LGBTQ community,  
Holocaust survivors and others in need of free legal  
services. Last year we handled 42,000 cases for New  
York City residents, over half of whom were  
immigrants, and more than a quarter of whom were  
people over 60. Due to the increasing lack of  
affordable housing, changes in public healthcare  
policies, high poverty rates, and a growing number of  
frail and disabled seniors living alone, seniors need  
to access the city services more than ever to allow  
them to age safely in their homes and communities.

This is especially true for immigrant  
seniors who often face greater barriers such as  
undocumented status and lack of English proficiency.  
NYLAG will work with immigrant seniors on a daily  
basis with the benefit from the increase in city  
assurances and services tailored to their unique  
needs. Based on our experience, we have several  
suggestions to improve the City's ability to reach  
the vulnerable population. Perhaps the greatest  
problem is the lack of language appropriate services  
for immigrant seniors. According to census data,  
two-thirds of the City's 463,000 immigrant seniors

have limited English proficiency with nearly 200,000 living in linguistically isolated households, as was mentioned here before. Without out access to translators or interpreters the result can be failure of seniors to access the public services and benefits to which they are entitled leading to hunger, poor health, homelessness, isolation and depression.

While we applaud City agencies for providing printed materials in the six most common languages, we believe there is an even more critical need for increased spoken language capacity at City agencies, senior centers and help lines. We proposed expanding the City's capacity to provide language appropriate services through a program model that is in NYLAG's own Language Access Volunteer or LOVE program. As with this program, pre-screening multilingual volunteers sign up to provide interpretation on behalf of NYLAG clients at specific dates and times, which are then catalogued in a shared calendar system. NLYAG staff members in turn schedule appointments with the low English Proficient Clients during appropriate time slots, and are able to access free on-demand interpretation services. In a similar city program, immigrant seniors could have

the ability to sign up for appointments with  
volunteer interpreters either on the phone or in  
person when they interact with the city agencies.  
These volunteers with their language tested and  
trained under issues about which they would be  
providing translation. About to ensure ease of  
communications. Because our city agencies also  
literally deal with life or death issues, it is vital  
that immigrants and city representatives are able to  
communicate without confusing. Expanded language  
capacity would allow the city to reach many more  
immigrant seniors in need and offer assistance before  
their situation becomes an emergency situation.  
Increasing the language appropriate of the immigrant  
in place would also help other immigrants learn about  
and obtain the public benefits to which they are  
entitled. The USDA sponsored stamps, but over half  
of the non-participant households in New York City  
believe there are ineligible for stamp benefits.  
Almost a quarter of those who are eligible do not  
currently receive those benefits. The problem is  
exacerbated for immigrants without legal status.  
They are likely to be unaware that they are eligible  
for some benefits even though they are undocumented.

Regardless of immigration status, targeted outreach to immigrant seniors about their eligibility for these programs would allow more of them to age in place knowing that their food is secure and medical bills are paid. City agencies including NYLAG [sic] should make sure that this information is posted in multiple languages in all senior centers, and, of course our medical channels that cater to elderly immigrants.

I'm trying to skip as fast as I can to the end, but it's increased out to--

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We have your written testimony, so you can--

HELEN DROOK: [interposing] Well, I understand that some--

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --share your personal experience.

HELEN DROOK: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And also, we're very familiar with NYLAG's work so--

HELEN DROOK: All right. Well, then you'll want to hear this. [laughs] Increased outreach is also needed to educate and protect immigrants from elder abuse and neglect, a growing

problem. As again, was acknowledged here before.

Nationwide each year 10% of seniors experience psychological, physical, or financial abuse and neglect by a family member or caregiver. Many cases are never reported, as victims are unable or afraid to report instances of abuse. As with other areas, this problem is exacerbated for an immigrant population. Many undocumented are unwilling to report abuse to City or State agencies as they're afraid that it will raise a red flag with the Immigration authorities, and it will lead to removal proceedings. Other immigrant seniors are unable to report abuse to government entities because they cannot communicate in English, or do not know how to contact the proper authorities. We believe that DFTA and other agencies could play an important role in ensuring that all seniors are aware of their rights to report abuse regardless of immigration status or language capacity. We would be happy to discuss our proposals further, and look forward to working together to ensure that immigrant seniors are able to access city services they need. And again, thank you, and I commend the Council for all the work that you are doing. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you very much,  
and we do have the whole testimony, and we thank you  
for the good work that NYLAG does. Thank you to this  
panel for all your good work, and thank you for  
coming in today. Okay. I'd like to call up Mr.  
Kwon Kim from KCS. Suki Terada Ports representing  
Japanese American Association of New York. Muhammad  
Raziv from Council of People Organization. And if I  
pronounce this wrong, please correct me. You may.  
Vasundhara Kalasapudi [sic]

FEMALE SPEAKER: [off mic] Vasundhara  
Kalasapudi.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. Vasundhara  
Kalasapudi. Thank you. From India Home.

[Pause]

KWON KIM: Thank you for giving us this  
opportunity, and I'm focusing on the under-served  
Asian American and homebound seniors in Queens. Also  
our recommendations on that will be. I'm Kwon Kim, a  
social worker and President of the Korean Community  
Services in Metropolitan New York, an advocacy  
called KCS. KCS was founded in 1973 as a multi-  
social service agency, and currently serves or has an  
average of 1,100 individuals. Out of 1,100

1 individuals, 700 people are seniors. KCS is  
2 sponsoring two senior centers, an adult day care, and  
3 SCSEP, Senior Community Service Employment Program,  
4 and also state and home delivered meal services as a  
5 subcontractor with four different contractors in  
6 Queens. This testimony reveals how the exiting  
7 homebound home delivered meals program in New York  
8 City has invariably impacted the Asian-American  
9 homebound seniors in Queens.  
10

11 Under the existing system, any senior in  
12 need of a home deliver meal has to contact case  
13 management agencies that refer him or her to a home  
14 delivery meal agency called a contractor. If the  
15 person needs a regular American meal or kosher meals,  
16 the contractor will serve immediately. However, it  
17 the person needs Asian ethnic food, the contractors  
18 refers them to a subcontractor for preparation and  
19 delivery of their Asian food to the client. KCS is  
20 only one subcontractor for Asian ethnic meals in the  
21 entire borough of Queens, and currently delivers 115  
22 meals per day. The Borough of Queens is the most  
23 favorable county for Asian-Americans. Twenty-five  
24 percent of the population is Asian in there. A rough  
25 estimate of the number of Asian seniors eligible for



homebound meals in Queens is about 800 people. But only 115 seniors receive the service.

Some Asian seniors may receive regular American meals, but as we all know, seniors have a strong preference for his or her own ethnic food. A few reasons for the rise between the eligible seniors and those that are actually served:

1. Over 90% of Asian seniors are LEP, which prevents seniors from knowing about the homebound meals services that are available. And also discourages them from accessing case management for services.

2. Outreach strategies to the population has rarely been challenged by the current system. Subcontractors do not allow you to take a leave for elderly Japanese.

3. KCS has kept its mission of serving seniors even though it has faced the suffering from budget deficit in order to meet the-- But in order to meet the breakeven point, cases should serve over 200 meals, but currently only serves 115. The break even number has been increased to increase in meals and gas costs. In the meantime, reimbursement is fixed or decreased with the contractors.

Currently, KCS has four different segments of subcontractors. Meals rates are different. \$5.43 with Peter Cardella; \$5.46 for Retained [sic] Meals; and \$5.00 for Fresh Meals; [sic] and \$5.80 with the Catholic Charities; and \$5.50 with Community services. New contributions used to come to the subcontractor, but one of the contractors took the contributions out of several contracts and revenue. That's a decrease of the reimbursement actually. Community fund raising and discretion money funding from the City Council members have supplemented the budget deficit. So far we can maintain it. But other problems we have is repairing and maintaining of the vehicle. The vehicles that deliver the meals needs to be replaced sometimes or repaired sometimes, and no support is given to the subcontractor under this current system.

In order to solve this issue for Asian homebound seniors, KCS has strongly recommended an agenda of items.

1. New York City should consider having subcontracts with existing contractors for Asian ethnic seniors for effective and efficient operation of home delivered meal services. This can avoid a

duplicate revenue cost for both contractor and subcontractors, and improve better communication with the case management agencies.

2. Mandate the case management agencies to provide information flyers in Asian languages, and that the subcontractors for Asian meals get involved in outreach and intake process if there is no proper step in understanding Asian language and culture.

It is not easy to change a system, but I believe that modifying the existing system by adapting recommendations will cause better services to the tighter [sic] population, and encourage the subs providers to commit to better practices. Thank you very much. I put the 800 based upon the census there. Also, Asian-American Federation put good things on those data. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Just one quick question, Mr. Kim. Have you had any conversations about this with the Department of Aging.

KWON KIM: On the way, I met the Commissioner and we're going to have a meeting soon.  
[laughs]

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: That's right, you've got to have a meeting to talk about this.

KWON KIM: We sure will.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And we will work with  
you.

KWON KIM: Back it up, yeah. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, we will work  
with you to kind of fix this problem. Because it's  
not the first time we've heard it. So thank you.

SUKI TERADA PORTS: Good afternoon,  
Committee Chairs Chin and Menchaca and the committee.  
As a one-half month shy of 80 years old New York born  
senior, I, Suki Terada Ports, am honored to speak  
before you about the needs of Japanese and Japanese-  
American seniors some of whom were immigrants many  
years ago as were my mother and grandparents. We are  
an ethnicity within the context of the multi-ethnic  
Asian community here in New York City with the same  
needs you have heard from. But with many same  
solutions, but we each have arrived on different  
paths for different reasons.

People of Japanese ancestry have been,  
for the most part, a silent invisible ethnicity.  
This is incidentally the first time we have testified  
before the City Council. In part centuries of a  
culture including a reluctance to bring a problem

outside of the family or to admit the need for help fostered a sort of "we will take care of it ourselves" tradition. The shadow of racism so visible on the west coast was less known here on the east coast. For example, our bilingual Japanese community family doctor was not allowed to deliver babies south 125th Street. So from 1930 to 1960, we were all born in Harlem. The Sydenham now closed. Knickerbocker now closed. Mother Cabrini now closed. Lutheran, where I was born, now closed and Jewish Memorial also closed.

Starting on the day of Pearl Harbor, Doctor Iwomoto [sp?] and some 20 other men were rounded up at police precincts in New York City, processed and sent to Ellis Island, which was incidentally empty. Soon, about 200 others were shipped to Ellis Island. Others were put under house arrest by the FBI for duration of the war as was my mother. A Japanese corporate community most with U.S. headquarters in New York City was immediately sent back to Japan. Japanese serving organizations were closed, including ours, including the Buddhists and the Christian church. There was never any proof of sabotage by the enemy, the closest being a German

U-Boat Amagansett, but no Germans or Italians were rounded, nor were their organizations closed.

When the War was over, 120,000 mostly American citizens incarcerated on the west coast were relocated. However, Mayor Florio La Guardia wrote to the War Relocation Authority and said: Do not send any of those Japs to New York City. We don't want them, and they are not welcome there. Suddenly, New Jersey towns, Long Island, Westchester and more began having Japanese-Americans settle in there. Now, some members of returning Japanese corporations and their families rotated on a year-round-- three-year schedule to live in New York City, but some of those corporations are moving.

And as the Vice President of the Japanese-American Association of New York we are proudly celebrating our service to the Japanese-American and Japanese communities in the Greater New York area for 107 years this year. Our program started by meeting the needs for burial places for Japanese who died in New York alone. And memorial services have continued. Through a merger of several organizations since 1952, we have become known as JAA, the Japanese-American Association of New York.

The American Friends Service Organization has helped Japanese-Americans throughout the country. And they helped the Japanese in New York send food and money and clothes to Hiroshima and other countries, parts of Japan after the War. The Japanese there wanted to do something for New Yorkers who sent them relief. And so, when they were finally able to get it together, they sent a large metal Buddhist, Buddha, which if you go to 105th and Riverside Drive you'll see it standing out there. It has lots of scars from the heat, from the atom bomb, but he's standing there watching over the Japanese in New York City.

Our mission of service to the community has not changed since its inception, and while I'm-- You can read some of the programs that we have for all of the community. But the seniors are invited to all of them, and it's wonderful to see them participating in all of the various programs. And some of them stay and watch the little kiddies, which are so cute, the little two and three-year-olds running around. The seniors have a lunch program twice a month, and it's prepared by volunteers. These meals are sent to the homebound also. We also have a volunteer program to provide health, mental

health, tax, and legal immigration status  
information.

Our Senior and Health Weeks provide  
widely diverse programs attended by over 2,000 people  
and I might add that we have various culture  
programs. But there are participated by the seniors  
because it not only reminds them of some of their  
ancestry, but it also brings a sense of closeness to  
the rest of the community like the Cherry Tree  
Festival that we have. We've planted over 200 cherry  
trees in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. They're  
really pretty. So look at them in April.

We see the need for a major contract for  
meals for seniors so that outreach and administration  
by bilingual and the multi-Asian cultures staff who  
would be aware and can help people who are virtually  
left out by the existing lunch contractors. That's  
not to say that the major contractors don't provide  
lunches for people throughout the city. But because  
they subcontract to the Asian communities, they're  
the first to get cut, and very often they can only  
serve a small part of a community. So there are  
Asians all over the city whose lunch programs are not  
met, or their needs are not met.



Affordable housing is needed so that people who speak many languages can get help to obtain housing. Some of the worst over-crowding housing exists among Asians. Better access to health and mental health is needed. At present, the Health and Hospitals Corporation is aware of the need for more bilingual signage and staff, and they have promised to undertake a new signage program. But one of the most serious problems is that because they're isolated, and maybe their children have moved away or one thing or another, the Asian community and especially the Japanese have the highest rate of suicides of any seniors in New York City. It's very disproportionate to the other groups, and it's a clear need that is unmet. We look to you at the City Council to help develop a more Asian aware equity and funding distribution and program development. We have grown to 14% of New York City, and yet receive approximately 1% of funding from both the City and foundation funds. We thank you for haring this, and we stand ready to help in any way to provide information and ways to better use our people power to enable our multi-language, multi-cultural communities. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thanks.

4 MOHAMMAD RAZIV: Thank you. My name is  
5 Mohammad Raziv. I'm the Executive Director of  
6 Council of People's Organization. Thank you,  
7 Margaret Chin. This was wonderful that we are able  
8 to testify, and we look forward to seeing how we can  
9 work together helping the community. So we have a  
10 community center where we work with many community  
11 and mostly South Asians, and who are Muslims. At the  
12 moment, we are the only senior center for the Muslim  
13 community. There are over a million Muslims within  
14 the community of New York City. However, not one  
15 senior center them. We're the only provider at this  
16 moment, and we find-- Thank you to Howard with the  
17 numbers that he gave us, yes we do provide the  
18 Pakistanis and the Bangladesh tremendously, but we  
19 also service the Arab population. We're finding out  
20 that the increase yes it is at 50% and it's  
21 continuous, and in the coming years it's going to be  
22 at 86% increase in seniors.

23 What has happened, and one of the things  
24 that I wanted to share with you is the New York Times  
25 article, which showed in 2013 what has happened  
within the community. This particular person is 78

years old. He worked as a-- at that moment, he was working as a security guard. And then at the end now he only has \$600 a month, and he's surviving with his wife and living in an illegal basement. But this is what we're finding out, many of these seniors that came into this country just like all immigrants they lived as roommates with other people. And now they're seniors, they've got their kids her, they're ending up being roommates with other people again. It's unfortunate that these individuals are the ones who have been working here in the City of New York.

Yeah, they didn't understand how to do savings because they weren't aware. Now, they're in situations where many other seniors are committing suicide. We're finding out in our own culture in our own community many seniors when they end up going to the hospital or their long-term care in nursing homes, they just tell the person listen, cut me off just let us die. We don't want to go back. We don't want to go anywhere. We just want to die out. And this is what's happening. Coming back towards the contracts. It's unfortunate we don't even have one contract. Yeah, we have a million plus people. We have all these seniors. Not one contract. The only

1 thing we have is \$5,000 from a discretionary fund  
2 that was allocated, and that was in 2013.

3  
4           This year I think it's going to be  
5 \$11,000, which is nothing, which is pathetic. And I  
6 understand other people have contracts and  
7 subcontracts. I don't even have that. And we have  
8 been serving the community. The way we've been doing  
9 it, yes volunteers. Figuring out different ways.  
10 That's the only way we're able to do it. But it's  
11 unfortunate that these are the community members that  
12 are here. They're existing. You know, they don't  
13 understand the system? Absolutely, it's across the  
14 board, as others are mentioning. But the sad part is  
15 we need to figure out because there is also a  
16 demographic change of where the seniors or the  
17 community organization, and I'll say it very bluntly,  
18 who have been receiving rubber stamped contracts.

19           Their seniors have done well, and they've  
20 moved on. It's time to look at the new immigrants.  
21 It's time to figure out how to help these new Asian  
22 or South Asian immigrants who are coming who need  
23 that help. Yeah, maybe we can help them with  
24 capacity or guiding them. Absolutely. But being a  
25 subcontractor, and I'll be again very blunt. May

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH  
2 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

117

3 organizations they do the subcontract and then they  
4 write about it. They say yeah we serve all these  
5 other-- All these groups, and they write it to those  
6 big companies, not big companies, big grants, big  
7 government grants. And they get it. And then we are  
8 left with the bag, and not getting those contracts.  
9 And I'll be very clear. We tried it. We worked with  
10 other organizations. and we're trying still because  
11 we don't have the experience? Okay. But that  
12 doesn't mean that you can't carve out smaller  
13 contracts. Don't give \$50 million to one  
14 organization or two organizations. No, make it not  
15 like \$100,000 grants. Fine. I don't care, but don't  
16 do that That's pathetic.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Can I ask you a  
18 question? So your center, your senior center it's  
19 not funded by the City?

20 MOHAMMAD RAZIV: No it's not.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Did you have-- Did  
22 you apply for the RFP.

23 MOHAMMAD RAZIV: Yes, I applied for the  
24 RFP, and I actually, and I'll be very blunt again. I  
25 joined another organization bigger. I figured, you  
know what, this organization has 15 centers. I said

I'll have a great chance. Unfortunately, I have no chance because budgets were cut, and guess who gets cut first? I got first being the new person and a leader. You know, I don't have enough data, but you see all the people who are-- I mean on the streets. You see the people. They've got their turbans on or whatever you want to call it. They're selling newspapers, those seniors or they're picking up the cans on the floors all around the neighborhood. That's what they're doing. They're trying to survive.

                  This particular guy I couldn't believe it when I went, and this was because of Hurricane Sandy when I seen him. I was like, Oh, my God. What happened to this guy? And we will have come here. We opened up the space. My board funded it. I have to figure out other ways to get resources. It's only 200 meals. Are you kidding? 200 meals is nothing. And if you ask me, and I'll be blunt with you, yes all these groups that we did-- We do partnership. It's not that we don't, but just I'm mentioned to you, we're the first ones to cut off and say, Ah. I got to look at, and I'll be very clear again, those groups I'm not saying they didn't do a great job.

They did. They actually did so phenomenal that they helped their communities to evolve and do better, and have the positions and things in place for them.

It's awesome, but I don't think that \$25 million to one organization or \$10 million and then you find out there were things done within that organization and the organizations, which was not correct. And we're here struggling. Thank you.

VASUNDHARA KALASAPUDI: Hello. I think he expressed most. [laughs] I'm going to tell you the story I think because you have my testimony.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

VASUNDHARA KALASAPUDI: I lost my father a few years back in India with vascular dementia, but I wanted to bring him over here. That's the first time I realized. I called Washington everyday.

Everyone told me the same thing. Dr. Kalasapudi, your seniors did not have any subsidies where they can get you Indian colleague. And I said okay this is it, and then one of my colleagues who is also-- She's the Board President now, Dr. Bali, took care of her mother in this country with gender dementia.

Each time she had to go for a medical conference, she would leave her mother in a nursing home for two days

just for conference days. With the seating of dementia the mother would come back home and blame her. Why did you leave me there with two people?

I don't know them. They are different people. Different food. Why did you leave me there? And another friend of mine, Olivia Demarks. [sic] She quite her job as a geriatric psychiatrist for two years to take care of her father with Parkinson's disease at home. So we all being professional when we struggle this much to care for our own parents, how about the common man who is walking the streets. What do they know without language, and without knowing what has to be done? So that's when we realized it's high time. We started an organization called India Home with a-- You know, with an overview of broadly the South Asian community.

India Home people think that it is a home, but it is homeless. India Home is homeless. We all have homes, board members, but not India Home. So when you are poor, the organization is poor. You try to become creative. Just like he was mentioning like collaborating with others. So that's when we started collaborating with SNAP in the Eastern Queens. Somebody said no for the rent persons. We



1 convinced them to give us a space at least to  
2 operate, to bring our seniors over there, weekly  
3 ones. We started our senior centers in 2009, in  
4 2007, and then there is another senior center,  
5 Sunnyside Community Services in Western Queens. They  
6 agreed to give us a one-day space in a week. Every  
7 Monday we operate there and Queens Community House  
8 also.  
9

10 At the same time, we don't have any  
11 contract with the Department of Aging. And two  
12 commissioners, believe it or not, the previous  
13 commissioners, they came and visited our centers. I  
14 went and I met them in their office. Not just me. I  
15 mean our group went and met. They said it's great  
16 for them. Believe it or not India Home, on behalf of  
17 India Home, I received actually 10 or 11 awards  
18 saying that it's the most stable way you did things  
19 including CSCS the Health [sic] Award. But what good  
20 it is. In fact, the Democratic Party when they gave  
21 me an award, I challenged publicly. I said, Take  
22 this award and give \$10,000 to India Home. I would  
23 be happy because what do I do? I mean they're all in  
24 the, you know, somewhere accumulating the dust all  
25 those awards.

1                   But what we need is funding for the  
2  
3 programs. And so far as Council Member Daniel Dromm  
4 mentioned he's trying to help us from his  
5 discretionary funding. Mark Weprin is helping us.  
6 So it's the Council Members giving \$3,500, \$8,000,  
7 \$10,000, but how long will we survive like this?  
8 And, in fact, I'm the-- There's no Executive  
9 Director. I had to be the Executive Director. You  
10 know, why? Because I can do it pro bono, and we  
11 don't have money to pay for that. At least we need  
12 \$50,000, right? To get a really good Executive  
13 Director you need a six-figure salary. Who can do  
14 grant monies and dollars? We don't have that kind of  
15 money. Unfortunately, and I was almost willing to  
16 tell that we have been struggling quite a bit.

17                   Do you believe if I tell you. I donate  
18 more money to India Home than my own home mortgages.  
19 Yes, it's true. You can look at our tax returns. If  
20 you want, I can send my personal tax returns to you.  
21 I used to support a lot more organizations in the  
22 past, which I could not do. I tell them every time,  
23 Look, I can give you only \$100 or \$200. Not more  
24 than that because my thousands are given to India  
25 Home. And that's what we are doing, and, in fact,

maybe if we don't get this funding, I have to take a line of credit on my car and then put the money into this. And then you will us. We will have a Times story saying a doctor who is supposed to be, or who is in the top 2 to 3% income bracket, became homeless because we want to provide services to our community.

And, in fact, at one time I was about to call my community members and tell them, Look, we are supposed to be quote, unquote "ethnic minority". a moral ethnic minority because on one hand we had 20% or 15% who are stinking rich, right? On the other hand we have so many people who are stinking poor. And I want to call the rich people and tell them, Look, we are paying taxes here, state, city, federal everything. Are we getting anything? The right thing, what is needed for our community. We are paying a lot of money, but are we getting even person to file tax returns into this? No, we are not getting that. And recently, to solve the Bangladeshi senior in Jamaica the Council Member Rory Lancman he called us. He said, I heard a good job.

You are doing a good job. Would you mind opening a center for the Bangladeshi seniors? I said, Whether it is Bangladeshi, Pakistan, India,

1 Nepalis, Buddhists, everybody, all of us we  
2 Saltations. [sic] We are DSNYs. That's what we call  
3 ourselves. It's the same food-- I mean it's the  
4 difference in, a slight difference in food. Some eat  
5 a lot of meat, but we watch the same movies. We  
6 share the same culture with different languages. So  
7 we said we have no problem. We are going to do that.  
8 Honestly, as he mentioned, we could not compete with  
9 a bigger organization. Actually, the grant, though  
10 we applied, they invited us to apply. We did apply.  
11 We did not get the grant in the first place.

12  
13 It was given to a bigger organization in  
14 the neighborhood because they have 50 years of  
15 history. How can we somebody who has more than 50  
16 years of history? Because we don't have that  
17 infrastructure. That's why we could not get it, but  
18 later the bigger organization for them when compared  
19 to millions, a \$100,000 is nothing. For whatever  
20 reason, cultural defenses they refuse to sell. Then  
21 again, Council Member's office called us. Would you  
22 mind doing it? I said, we applied. We didn't get  
23 it. As long as you put the money into the department  
24 contract then we can do it. So that money was  
25 transferred. So now we are opening on December 1st

for Bangladeshi seniors three days in the Jamaica  
Muslim Center. Because it will be an investment.

They are nice enough to give the space to  
run the senior centers. But I would sincerely  
request or I would beg. I have no shame to beg your  
help in getting the help for saltations, and internal  
agency whether it is Japanese, Chinese I think  
everybody eats the same problems because we don't  
have infrastructure. We don't even know. Believe or  
not, the first time when we received the Council  
Member grant for \$5,000 in 2009, it took ten months  
for us to figure out how to get that little contract  
through the Department of Aging. What paperwork  
needs to be done? I think maybe you have to modify  
the contracts. You have to say, Okay, these are  
budding organizations.

At least I'll join both of the  
departments like the Immigration Department and the  
Department of Aging. Create an immigrant de facto  
[sic] for us, and then maybe tat would help us  
really? I'm sorry, really. Maybe it's your way of  
expressing it a little bit more emotional but as  
Council Member Daniel Dromm said, the population is  
increasing. And Sunnyside like today if you come.

1 Anyone of you if you come to one of our centers,  
2 there are so many seniors. They're coming for three  
3 years. They're saying, why don't you make it two  
4 days or three days. I said, we don't have money. If  
5 we had money yes we can do it but Council Members  
6 though they have respect for your home and they like  
7 your home, but there's a limit. Because to get to  
8 all of the groups, too. Not just one organization.  
9 So if you can do anything for this population that  
10 would be it. A great help. Otherwise, you know,  
11 maybe one day you'll see a story, Dr. Kalasupudi is  
12 homeless in New York. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I thank you, but what  
15 I would recommend is that-- Is to contact the  
16 Administration. The Mayor needs to hear this, and  
17 also this year was the first time that we were able  
18 to access new funding for senior centers and senior  
19 services. So I think that as we move ahead, we will  
20 continue to fight for more resources, but we need to  
21 work together with the Administration. So I think  
22 it's important before the next budget, which starts  
23 at the beginning of the year, that your community and  
24 people who go to your center need to start writing  
25 the Mayor, and also the council member that

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

127

represents them. And let them know that this service is really needed. We know that. We've been advocating for more funding, but we also want to make sure that the community makes their voices heard.

MOHAMMAD RAZIV: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: You want to close on this? [laughter] Yeah, you've got to do it. I'm telling you because--

MOHAMMAD RAZIV: [interposing] Sure.

[laughter]

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --the Mayor needs to hear it. I mean in the last Administration every year we had to talk about against budget cuts. This was the first time. This is my fifth year in the City Council. The first time we're able to get new money--

MOHAMMAD RAZIV: That's good.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --for senior services. We've got to keep that going.

SUKI TERADA PORTS: Margaret, can I add one thing that I didn't read over when I was trying to shorten it. But, you know, the language is so critical because there is no Asian language. So people have said to us, Well, why don't you Asians

get together. It's not like Spanish were there are different countries, but there is a basic aura of one language with modifications. But there is no way that you can combine the various languages, and the critical thing that happened to the Japanese community last year was when the rolled out Obamacare. There was no New York State navigator who spoke Japanese, which mean that nobody in the Japanese speaking community could get insurance.

Except that we asked the Korean Community Service if they would help the Japanese community. Now anybody who knows various bits of Asian history having a Japanese community working with the Korean community it's historic. But it was a wonderful relationship. The Korean organization went out of their way to help us. But we were desperate because we needed to have somebody help us with the navigator. This happens with all of the various services. If you don't have somebody there who speaks the language, I mean that community gets left out. And I think that one of the things that a lot of people don't understand because they don't have Asian history in most American history classes. Most



people don't know that some of us aren't the best  
buddy with some of the neighbors in company there.

You know, people know if you say or don't  
say I'm from Trinidad if I'm Jamaican. People  
understand that, but they don't understand things  
about North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China. I mean  
it's all very different. And if you talk to somebody  
from Bangladesh and the partition came and so forth  
and so on, there are all kinds of things that we have  
to work together. And we're trying, and it turns out  
that somebody like Asian Federation could get a big  
contract just like the Coalition of Asian Children  
and Families has put together 15 groups and contract  
charged to improve the health. It's possible for us  
to get together with one of the bigger Asian  
organizations. But when we're subsumed among the  
bigger organizations that are not Asian who don't  
understand our culture, our language or whatever  
else, then we're lost.

So, you know, we need to have on the  
Council the friends who will say there should be an  
Asian contract. Even an Asian contract is harder  
than most because there could be possibly 32  
different lunch programs they would have to have

throughout the entire city. We live in Queens. The Japanese community lives all over the place. This community, that community. The Napolis [sic] are in one place, and we're not all in one community. No more. So, you know, it's a very serious issue, but we don't in the Japanese community for example we don't have a council person who represents us because we don't live in one particular place. And part of this because of what Mayor La Guardia said. The Japanese just didn't want to re-gather again because we could have been locked up easily.

And so I think there is a lot of stuff about the Asian community that most council people don't know with the exception of the Chairman here. You know, there have been other council people who have learned about us. But there's a difference in learning about somebody than being from that somebody. So if you understand that, you're not going to say to somebody Korean, Oh, you want some whatever tonight for dinner. You know, it's like everybody eats sushi now, but Japanese can't afford to eat sushi at home because it's too expensive. I mean, you know, everybody knows about what we eat. As a matter of fact, I say that most American's

stomach knows about us better than their brain  
because everybody goes to a Chinese restaurant or an  
Indian restaurant or a Korean restaurant or whatever.  
You know what you're going to get, but you don't know  
our housing needs and our other needs.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, I think this  
time this year the Council has put up funding to help  
groups build their capacity together with the Asian  
Federation, the Hispanic Federation. So I think we  
want to help organizations build their capacity so  
that they can go and apply for the government grants,  
and we'll continue to work on that. But definitely,  
we'll follow up with some meetings with the  
Department of Aging to see how we can access more  
funding for services that you provide. Thank you so  
much for coming out to testify today. Thank you.  
Okay, so the hearing is now adjourned. Thank you.  
[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date November 19, 2014