

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
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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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Maria del Carmen Arroyo
Karen Koslowitz
Deborah L. Rose
Chaim M. Deutsch
Mark Treyger
Paul Vallone
Mathieu Eugene
Daniel Dromm
Peter A. Koo
Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.

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)

Israel Rosario, Jr., Assistant Commissioner
Interagency Initiatives
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA)

Christian Gonzalez-Rivera, Associate
Center for an Urban Future

Bobby Sackman
Director of Public Policy
Council of Senior Centers and Services

Alicia Fry, LMSWE
Clinical Director of Case Management
Services Now for Adult Persons, Inc. (SNAP)

Kyra Garcia
Services and Advocacy for LGBT Elders (SAGE)

Larry Lee, Executive Director
New York Asian Women's Center (NYAWC)

Howard Shih
Director of Research and Policy
Asian American Federation

Rena Resnick, Communication Manager
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

Hing Lin "Helen" Sit, Director
Chinatown Neighborhood NORC Program
Visiting Nurse Service of New York

Migdalia Santiago, Licensed Social Worker
Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Transgender Community
Center
Founder of PFLAG, Parents of Lesbians and Gays
for Families of Color and Allies

Michael Stoller
Chief of Government and External Relations
Jewish Association for Services for the Aged
(JASA)

Elaine Rockoff, Director
Community Based Programs
Jewish Association for Services for the Aged
(JASA)

Helen Drook, Supervising Attorney
New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)

Kwon Kim, Social worker and President
Korean Community Services
Metropolitan New York

Suki Terada Ports, Vice President
Japanese American Association of New York
(JAA) and Co-Founder APICHA

Mohammad Raziv, Executive Director
Council of People's Organization

Dr. Vasundhara Kalasapudi
India Home

3 [sound check]

4 [gavel]

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

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

3 seniors is lower than the native-born population.

4 And immigrant seniors are often unable to qualify to
5 receive supplemental income such as Social Security.

6 One of the largest barriers for immigrant seniors is
7 language.

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

11 According to a study by the Center for Urban Future,
12 94% of Korean seniors, 92% of Chinese seniors, 67% of
13 Mexican seniors, 65% of Cuban seniors, and 53% of
14 Central American seniors indicate Limited English
15 Proficiency. These seniors are often unable to
16 access essential services because of the inability to
17 communicate with service providers in agencies in
18 their native language. Studies have indicated that
19 difficulty with the English language often correlate
20 to poverty, food insecurity, and lack of economic
21 mobility. And this population is also more likely to
22 be in need of public assistance.

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

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

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

3 the City must do more outreach to these populations
4 so that they can access services available to them.

5 It is imperative the population, the immigrant
6 seniors who do not qualify or have access to public
7 benefits receive focus and support from DFTA in
8 easing the challenges of aging. Today, the Committee
9 on Aging and the Committee on Immigration looks
10 forward to hearing from DFTA on how it can make its
11 services accessible to immigrant seniors. How
12 culturally sensitive programs and services are
13 developed, and how the agencies plan to address the
14 growing number of immigrant seniors in New York City.

15 I would like to ask Council Member Menchaca to give
16 his opening remarks. Thank you.

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

3 meet the needs of various disenfranchised communities
4 in our city.

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

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

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

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

13 This Muni ID Card is meant to do three things
14 specifically: Make them feel part of the community;
15 to integrate them into our city; and improve their
16 access to various services the city has to offer.

17 It's a simple concept and ensuring that the program
18 is implemented correctly throughout will allow us to
19 better meet the needs of our immigrant seniors.

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

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

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

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

3 how they can access senior services. A recent report
4 by the Center for an Urban Future provides sobering
5 information regarding the challenges and
6 circumstances faced by our older immigrants in this
7 city. The report states that in the next two
8 decades, the number of city residents 65 and older
9 will be increased by 35% going from approximately
10 998,000 to 1.3 million in 2030.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

7 [Pause]

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: [interposing] Yes,
7 we--

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

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

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: for seniors and such a
13 critical need.

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

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

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

9 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Right.

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

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

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

23 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Yes, to bring in
24 activities using social media.
25

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

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

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Council
21 Member Menchaca.

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

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

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

3 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] How
4 confident--

5 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: --in the LGBT
6 community.

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

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

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

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

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Great.

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

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

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

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

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

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

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

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Introduce
25 yourself, please.

3 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ROSARIO: Sure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Good morning,
4 Commissioner, again.

5 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Good morning.

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

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

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

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

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

22 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Absolutely.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Thank you.

24 That's all.

25 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member
Treyger.

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

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

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

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

22 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: You're welcome.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member
24 Deutsch.

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

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?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 COMMISSIONER CORRADO: Yes.

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

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

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.

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

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

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

9 So older immigrants are clearly not a
10 mixed population. In fact, we can't talk about older
11 people in New York City without talking about
12 immigrants. Unfortunately, immigrants do face a
13 considerable set of challenges. Despite comprising
14 46% of the population of the senior population in the
15 city, they comprise 65% of all the seniors who are
16 living in poverty. That's about 130,000 urban
17 seniors who are living in poverty. And as was
18 mentioned before, part of that reason is the fact
19 that almost a third of older immigrants have zero
20 Social Security benefits. And, of course, in
21 addition to all the challenges that most seniors face
22 including declining mobility, increased isolation.

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

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

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

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

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

18 But despite the greater need for
19 services, there is less capacity for government and
20 non-profit services to provide for their needs.
21 Largely because a lot of the organizations that are--
22 that provide linguistically and culturally
23 development services also tend to have less capacity
24 and funding that those that serve seniors in general.
25 And really the challenge in serving the older
immigrant population is precisely it's diversity.

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

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

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

3 culture and linguistic competence and credibility in
4 the community. But they may not have the capacity or
5 funding to be effective subcontractors. Just as the
6 Age-Friendly Initiative advocates for an age in
7 everything focus, we need to re-conceptualize the
8 services that we have available for older people to
9 have an immigrant in everything focus. After all,
10 immigrants make up almost half of older New Yorkers
11 and are growing number, and it's a share of the
12 population. So you can't talk about older New
13 Yorkers without talking about immigrants. Thank you
14 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 Thank you. Oh, I had one more thing I wanted to say.
21 They have a dream, too. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 Creating an environment of safety and
11 respect requires education not only for professionals
12 but for older adults who have been in the community
13 for many years, and are often guarded and fearful of
14 groups that are different from themselves.

15 Neighborhoods have changed drastically as adults have
16 aged in their communities. A lack of knowledge about
17 other cultures along with media that perpetuates fear
18 regarding certain specific groups help to create a
19 sense of mistrust among older adults.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 [Pause]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 agencies who serve aging seniors. I think it was
4 mentioned a lot by groups previously that the growth
5 in Asian senior population continues unabated. At
6 least according to the analysis by our Census
7 Information Center. In the last few years, the Asian
8 senior population grew at least nearly three times
9 the rate of the senior population overall with nearly
10 117,000 Asian seniors now residing throughout the
11 five boroughs.

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

25 So as the senior population disperses--
The Asian senior population disperses, our member

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Many of our clients work their entire lives, or maybe

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 any service. Even the second generation they speak
4 English. However, they are hiding in their home, and
5 only the seniors take care of them. So what can we
6 do with them? I mean we try to provide server.

7 However, you know, you need to-- I think you need to
8 make that person, you know, willing to go to seek for
9 help. Otherwise, you know, you cannot do it.

10 There's that and only mobile crisis or you call 911,
11 but it may be too late. So this is something we are
12 concerned about.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 suggestions, and we will listen to those ideas.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Dromm.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you. Just
7 to follow up a little bit on what Council Member
8 Vallone has just said. You know, I have a very large
9 "Asian" quote, unquote community, but one of the
10 things that I don't see happening in some of my
11 senior centers is that the South Asian community is
12 rarely in those centers. And so, I'm sorry I had
13 missed the presentation of the Administration, but
14 one thing led to another this morning. I was a
15 little bit late getting here. You know, I just
16 wonder what we can do to correct that situation. I
17 think the issue for Asians in general is important.
18 But I'm also deeply concerned about the newer arrived
19 immigrants as well. And so, I don't know if any of
20 the panelists have suggestions about that. I do have
21 a piece of legislation because I think one part of it
22 is that we don't just aggregate the numbers among the
23 Asian Community, and that we need to know all the
24 different diverse groups that the centers are
25 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.

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

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

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

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

16 [Pause]

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

21 [Speaking Chinese] You may begin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 of the former Soviet Union. JASA is a sponsor of HUD
4 funding for affordable senior housing. Among the
5 nine apartment buildings JASA owns and manages,
6 apartments at Brighton and in Manhattan are virtually
7 100% occupied by Russian speaking seniors. Chinese
8 immigrants occupy about 95% of the apartments at
9 Positively 3rd Street. And other residents of JASA
10 housing hail from Argentina, the Dominican Republic,
11 Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Mongolia, Poland, Puerto
12 Rico, and Romania.

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 Among the other services JASA offers
22 seniors are: Translation services by staff in
23 Spanish and Russian as needed. ESOL classes and in
24 2014, FY2014, 200 seniors participated in our English
25 language classes. English as a second language
classes, citizen classes and approximately 90% of the

3 36 participants obtained citizenship. Yiddish and
4 Hebrew classes, discussion groups in English,
5 Russian, and Spanish. Bilingual activities including
6 computer and exercise classes. Special cultural
7 programs such as concerts by Russian and Hispanic
8 performers, and a popular Caribbean celebration with
9 a special menu, salsa dancing classes, and much more.
10 This is just a small sample.

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

24 MICHAEL STOLLER: [interposing] 32
25 languages.

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 HELEN DROOK: I'm trying to. Okay.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 the ability to sign up for appointments with
2 volunteer interpreters either on the phone or in
3 person when they interact with the city agencies.
4 These volunteers with their language tested and
5 trained under issues about which they would be
6 providing translation. About to ensure ease of
7 communications. Because our city agencies also
8 literally deal with life or death issues, it is vital
9 that immigrants and city representatives are able to
10 communicate without confusing. Expanded language
11 capacity would allow the city to reach many more
12 immigrant seniors in need and offer assistance before
13 their situation becomes an emergency situation.
14 Increasing the language appropriate of the immigrant
15 in place would also help other immigrants learn about
16 and obtain the public benefits to which they are
17 entitled. The USDA sponsored stamps, but over half
18 of the non-participant households in New York City
19 believe there are ineligible for stamp benefits.
20 Almost a quarter of those who are eligible do not
21 currently receive those benefits. The problem is
22 exacerbated for immigrants without legal status.
23 They are likely to be unaware that they are eligible
24 for some benefits even though they are undocumented.
25

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

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

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

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

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --share your personal
19 experience.

20 HELEN DROOK: Okay.

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

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

1 problem. As again, was acknowledged here before.

2 Nationwide each year 10% of seniors experience
3 psychological, physical, or financial abuse and
4 neglect by a family member or caregiver. Many cases

5 are never reported, as victims are unable or afraid
6 to report instances of abuse. As with other areas,
7 this problem is exacerbated for an immigrant

8 population. Many undocumented are unwilling to
9 report abuse to City or State agencies as they're

10 afraid that it will raise a red flag with the
11 Immigration authorities, and it will lead to removal

12 proceedings. Other immigrant seniors are unable to
13 report abuse to government entities because they

14 cannot communicate in English, or do not know how to
15 contact the proper authorities. We believe that DFTA

16 and other agencies could play an important role in
17 ensuring that all seniors are aware of their rights

18 to report abuse regardless of immigration status or
19 language capacity. We would be happy to discuss our

20 proposals further, and look forward to working
21 together to ensure that immigrant seniors are able to

22 access city services they need. And again, thank
23 you, and I commend the Council for all the work that

24 you are doing. Thank you.
25

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

13 FEMALE SPEAKER: [off mic] Vasundhara
14 Kalasapudi.

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

17 [Pause]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 3. KCS has kept its mission of serving
20 seniors even though it has faced the suffering from
21 budget deficit in order to meet the-- But in order
22 to meet the breakeven point, cases should serve over
23 200 meals, but currently only serves 115. The break
24 even number has been increased to increase in meals
25 and gas costs. In the meantime, reimbursement is
fixed or decreased with the contractors.

3 Currently, KCS has four different
4 segments of subcontractors. Meals rates are
5 different. \$5.43 with Peter Cardella; \$5.46 for
6 Retained [sic] Meals; and \$5.00 for Fresh Meals;
7 [sic] and \$5.80 with the Catholic Charities; and
8 \$5.50 with Community services. New contributions
9 used to come to the subcontractor, but one of the
10 contractors took the contributions out of several
11 contracts and revenue. That's a decrease of the
12 reimbursement actually. Community fund raising and
13 discretion money funding from the City Council
14 members have supplemented the budget deficit. So far
15 we can maintain it. But other problems we have is
16 repairing and maintaining of the vehicle. The
17 vehicles that deliver the meals needs to be replaced
18 sometimes or repaired sometimes, and no support is
19 given to the subcontractor under this current system.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 KWON KIM: We sure will.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And we will work with
5 you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 health, tax, and legal immigration status
4 information.

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

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

3 Affordable housing is needed so that
4 people who speak many languages can get help to
5 obtain housing. Some of the worst over-crowding
6 housing exists among Asians. Better access to health
7 and mental health is needed. At present, the Health
8 and Hospitals Corporation is aware of the need for
9 more bilingual signage and staff, and they have
10 promised to undertake a new signage program. But one
11 of the most serious problems is that because they're
12 isolated, and maybe their children have moved away or
13 one thing or another, the Asian community and
14 especially the Japanese have the highest rate of
15 suicides of any seniors in New York City. It's very
16 disproportionate to the other groups, and it's a
17 clear need that is unmet. We look to you at the City
18 Council to help develop a more Asian aware equity and
19 funding distribution and program development. We
20 have grown to 14% of New York City, and yet receive
21 approximately 1% of funding from both the City and
22 foundation funds. We thank you for haring this, and
23 we stand ready to help in any way to provide
24 information and ways to better use our people power
25 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 This particular guy I couldn't believe it
15 when I went, and this was because of Hurricane Sandy
16 when I seen him. I was like, Oh, my God. What
17 happened to this guy? And we will have come here.
18 We opened up the space. My board funded it. I have
19 to figure out other ways to get resources. It's only
20 200 meals. Are you kidding? 200 meals is nothing.
21 And if you ask me, and I'll be blunt with you, yes
22 all these groups that we did-- We do partnership.
23 It's not that we don't, but just I'm mentioned to
24 you, we're the first ones to cut off and say, Ah. I
25 got to look at, and I'll be very clear again, those
26 groups I'm not saying they didn't do a great job.

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

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

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

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

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

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

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

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

6 I don't know them. They are different
7 people. Different food. Why did you leave me there?

8 And another friend of mine, Olivia Demarks. [sic]

9 She quite her job as a geriatric psychiatrist for two

10 years to take care of her father with Parkinson's

11 disease at home. So we all being professional when

12 we struggle this much to care for our own parents,

13 how about the common man who is walking the streets.

14 What do they know without language, and without

15 knowing what has to be done? So that's when we

16 realized it's high time. We started an organization

17 called India Home with a-- You know, with an

18 overview of broadly the South Asian community.

19 India Home people think that it is a

20 home, but it is homeless. India Home is homeless.

21 We all have homes, board members, but not India Home.

22 So when you are poor, the organization is poor. You

23 try to become creative. Just like he was mentioning

24 like collaborating with others. So that's when we

25 started collaborating with SNAP in the Eastern

Queens. Somebody said no for the rent persons. We

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 MOHAMMAD RAZIV: Sure.

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

11 MOHAMMAD RAZIV: [interposing] Sure.

12 [laughter]

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

19 MOHAMMAD RAZIV: That's good.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 [gavel]
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24
25

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