

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE  
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON  
WOMEN'S ISSUES AND THE  
COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

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March 17, 2015  
Start: 10:18 a.m.  
Recess: 7:19 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: STEPHEN T. LEVIN  
Chairperson

LAURIE A. CUMBO  
Chairperson

FERNANDO CABRERA  
Chairperson

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Maria Del Carmen Arroyo  
James Vacca  
Inez D. Barry  
Rory I. Lancman

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

Gladys Carrion  
Commissioner  
NYC's Administration for Children's Services

Susan Nuccio  
Deputy Commissioner of Financial Services  
NYC's Administration for Children's Services

Jill Krauss,  
Deputy Commissioner for Communications  
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Camille Rivera  
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Steven Banks  
Commissioner  
NYC Human Resources Administration

Ellen Levine  
Chief Programming Planning & Financial Officer  
NYC Human Resources Administration

Erin Villari  
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NYC Human Resources Administration

Jennifer Yeaw  
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Jeremy Hoffman  
Director of Childcare Policy  
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Stephanie Gendell  
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Sarah Fajardo  
Child Welfare Policy Coordinator  
Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families

Gregory Bender  
United Neighborhood Houses

Sharif Griggs  
Alumni of Foster Care

Anthony Turner  
Peer Specialist  
You've Got to Believe

Valerie Lynch

Jessica Marcus  
Brooklyn Defender Services  
Family Defense Practice

Gretchen Bedell  
Foster Parent  
You've Got to Believe

Amy Ellengbogen  
Project Director  
Crown Heights Community Mediation Center

Chris Parque  
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Homeless Services United  
Coalition of the New York City Non-Profit Homeless  
Service Programs

Raysa Rodriguez  
Vice President  
Policy and Planning  
Women in Ned (WIN)

Kisha Shakamona Veras  
Homeless Artist

Richard Lewis  
Community Board 12

Ann Valdez  
Community Voices Heard

Melinda Nimmons  
Community Voices Heard

Michael Hentz

Joseph Wimpa [sp?]  
Community Voices Heard & WEP Worker

Lisa Levy  
Director of Policy Advocacy and Organizing  
New York City Coalition Against Hunger

Rachel Sabella  
Director  
Government Relations  
Food Bank for New York City

Yakima Pena  
Community for Healthy Food

Eric Munson  
Chief of Staff  
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

Marianne Yang  
Immigration Practice Director  
Brooklyn Defender Services

Michael Jackson

David Eng  
Human Services Council of New York

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[sound check, pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning. Good morning everybody. I am Council Member Stephen Levin. I'm Chair of the City Council's General Welfare Committee. I want to welcome everybody to today's preliminary budget hearing. Because we have a full day with ACS, HRA and DHS, and public testimony all coming before this committee, I'm going to keep my opening statement brief. For the next two and a half ours we will examine the Preliminary Budget for the Administration for Children Services, also known as ACS, and it is the City's agency responsible for protecting and strengthening the City's children, youth and families through quality child welfare, juvenile justice and early child care and education services. This hearing is being held jointly with the Committee on Women's Issues chaired by Council Member Laurie Cumbo, and the Committee on Juvenile Justice chaired by Council Member Fernando Cabrera.

I would also like to acknowledge the other committee members who have joined us this morning, Council Member Jimmy Vacca, and we expect other council members throughout the morning. And I



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would like to thank the committee's staff and the General Welfare Committee who worked on today's hearing, Brittany Morrissey, Tonya Cyrus, Policy Analyst for the Committee, and Andre Vasquez, Counsel for the committee as well as my Legislative Director Matt Ojala. I would also like to thank Commissioner Carrion and her staff for being with us this morning to provide testimony and answer council member's questions. Today, we will be hearing testimony from ACS and its Expense and Capital Budgets for Fiscal 2015--2016, and Fiscal 2015 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report.

ACS' Proposed Fiscal-- Oh, we've been joined by Council Member Donovan Richards. ACS' Proposed Fiscal 2016 Expense Budget totals \$2.95 billion, which is a \$43.2 million increase compared to Fiscal 2015's Adopted Budget. This increase can be primarily attributed to the new edition of funds for Child Welfare Reform, and a debut of funds for Operation Safe, which was introduced in the Fiscal 2015 Executive Budget. The Council looks forward to hearing the Administration's testimony on several important issues today including the Early Learn provider and enrollment rates, future funding for

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1 child care vouches, protective, preventive and foster  
2 care services, and the Preliminary Mayor's Management  
3 Report indicators regarding family permanency  
4 services. Additionally, much of our discussion this  
5 morning will center on the new funding for Child  
6 Welfare Reform and the implementation of Operation  
7 Safe. Again, I want to thank everybody for being  
8 here this morning, and I will now turn it over to my  
9 colleague Fernando Cabrera, Chair of--I'm sorry.  
10 We'll send it over to--to Chair Laurie Cumbo of the  
11 Women's Issues Committee.  
12

13 [pause]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Correction. We'll  
15 send it over to Chair Fernando Cabrera of the  
16 [laughter] Juvenile Justice Committee.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: First, a Happy St.  
18 Patrick's Day to everyone. Good morning. I am  
19 Council Fernando Cabrera, Chair of the Juvenile  
20 Justice Committee. I would like to thank Chair Levin  
21 and Chair Cumbo for their collaboration with the  
22 committee, and also to all of the committee members.  
23 The last 2015 Preliminary Budget hearing much of our  
24 discussion focused on the Close to Home Initiative,  
25 and the status of the transfer of youth from the

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State in Limited Secure placement facilities, two city facilities. I look forward to hearing any updates that ACS may be able to share with us today. In addition to the Close to Home Initiative, last year's hearing also involved discussion pertaining to Raise the Age. The 2015-16 New York State Executive Budget set aside \$25 million partly for the placement of newly sentenced youth in OCFS facilities as part of Raise the Age. So it is clear that State is preparing for the next stage of this process. I hope to hear how ACS is preparing for the potential impacts, fiscal or otherwise that this could have on the city. I am pleased to see that the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report describes several positive things. From the report, we can see that more in-care youth are being referred to mental health services, and more are actually receiving those services. Continuing the term that initiated in Fiscal 2009, the average daily population of juveniles in detention continues to decrease. I would like to applaud the Administration for such an encouraging--for such encouraging trends. And I would also like to hear how we could continue this

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progression, and make similar improvements regarding  
other areas.

While much of today's focus will be  
directed towards the Close to Home Initiative, I  
would like to examine some of ACS capital projects,  
specifically renovations for the Horizon and  
Crossroads Juvenile Detection Facility. I believe  
making the necessary renovations will be an important  
investment and enable us to better serve the youth at  
these facilities. ACS traditions of youth and family  
justice aims to help young people to be a positive--  
to be positive member of society. And we could help  
the Division to achieve this vision by ensuring that  
youth--that they youth they provide care for stay in  
a healthy and productive environment.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank  
Brittany Morrissey and our Financial Analyst; Beth  
Cullen, and our Legislative Analyst; and William  
Hongach, our Policy Analyst for the work they did in  
putting together today's budget hearings. I'm  
looking forward to hearing from the Commissioner.  
Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member Cumbo  
for an opening statement.

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CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Thank you and also a  
Happy Saint Patrick's Day to everyone. It's  
beautiful to see this sea of green out here today. I  
am Laurie Cumbo Chair of the Women's Issues  
Committee. I'd like to thank Chair Levin for his  
support and collaboration with the committed, and I'd  
also like to thank my other Chair, Council Member  
Cabrera. I'd like to thank my committee staff,  
Finance Analyst, Brittany Morrissey; Counsel Aminta  
Kilawan; and Policy Analyst Joan Pavoni for their  
work in preparing this hearing.

As March is National Women's Herstory  
month, as I like to say, I would to take this  
opportunity to recognize the incredible growth that  
women have made. This has been an incredible month  
as well as an incredible year, and I'm so very proud  
as I watch my predecessor Public Advocate Letitia  
James fight for so many of the issues citywide that  
affect women, as well as our Speaker Melissa Mark-  
Viverito, the first Latina ever elected to this  
position. I'm also very proud to be surrounded by so  
many women in power. We have over two dozen New York  
City commissions and directors in the Administration,  
Commissioner Carrion being one. I'm so very proud to

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have this many women working in so many positions of power and Senator Montgomery also sends her regards to you.

As March is National Women's History Month, we have to recognize that great strides have been made, but there are still so many more strides that we have to continue to make such as in Albany. One of the things that we're very passionate about is breaking the three men and/or now four men in a room. And we certainly want to see Andrea Stewart-Cousins as part of that dynamic where she's able to make critical decisions on our \$130 billion budget. A pay gap still exists with women overall earning 77 cents for every dollar the average White male makes. If we dissect this figure we find that Black women make only 70 cents and Hispanic women only 61 cents for every dollar that the average man earns. The median wealth for single White women is nearly \$42,000. While the median wealth for African-American women is \$100 and \$120 for Latino women. Ultimately, one of the biggest obstructions to economic security and advancement for low-income women and communities of color is the lack of access to affordable high quality childcare. And that's why we are here today.

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We must acknowledge that ACS and the City of New York is in an amazing position to act as the catalyst for change and positively impact the work for women and girls of New York, including women and girls of color that face even greater economic disparities. ACS oversees the largest municipal childcare system in the country. Fortunately, this means Early Learn can help so many children and families.

During today's hearing, I would like to examine the Early Learn provider rate and salaries for Early Learn teachers. We need to ensure that the New York City is providing the best possible early education and care for low-income children. Childcare providers, the majority of whom are women, need to be adequately compensated, and we need to attract and retain the highest quality teachers and care providers. We cannot afford to provide inadequate services when the stakes, the future of the children of New York City, are so high. That being said, ACS Fiscal 2016 Budget does not include additional funding for childcare services. This leaves no additional resources for the City to address some of the concerns regarding childcare. I am happy to see that money was added for Child Care

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Welfare Reform. Coupled with the funds added in  
Fiscal 2015 for Operation Safe, money for Child Care  
Welfare Reform will help to strengthen the City's  
provision of protective and preventative services.  
Although this is extremely encouraging, I am curious  
to learn more about the implementation of these  
reforms, especially how they will incorporate and  
foster cultural awareness and sensitivity. These are  
the issues that we cannot turn a blind eye to.  
Rather, we must gauge a constructive dialogue to  
ensure that collectively we support the children and  
families of New York City while also empowering the  
women across our city. I look forward to having a  
critical discussion on these matters today, and hope  
that we can work together to ensure that the needs of  
these unique and often vulnerable populations are  
met. So I thank you, and I look forward to your  
testimony today, and I thank all of you for being  
here for this very important discussion on our most  
valuable resource, New York City's children. Thank  
you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Chair  
Cumbo. We've also been joined by Council Member  
Ruben Wills, and thank you very much Commissioner



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1 Carrion for coming today to testify. I know that  
2 we've been joined also by Deputy Commissioner Jill  
3 Krauss and Deputy Commissioner Susan Nuccio. We will  
4 ask before testimony for you to raise your right  
5 hands please. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
6 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your  
7 testimony before this committee, and to respond  
8 honestly to council member's question? Thank you  
9 very much. Commissioner Carrion, the floor is yours.  
10

11 [pause]

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Can you turn on your  
13 microphone, please?

14 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Good morning  
15 Chairs Levin, Cumbo and Cabrera and members of the  
16 Finance, General Welfare and Women's Issues and  
17 Juvenile Justice Committee. I am Gladys Carrion,  
18 Commissioner of New York City's Administration for  
19 Children's Services. With me today is Susan Nuccio,  
20 Deputy Commissioner of Financial Services, and Jill  
21 Krauss, my Deputy Commissioner for Communications. I  
22 appreciate-- She does everything. I appreciate  
23 having this opportunity to brief you on the  
24 Preliminary Budget, and to update you on the  
25 Children's Services ongoing work to protect and work

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New York City's most vulnerable children and families. Children's Services budget for the 2016 Preliminary Budget Plan provides for operating expenses of \$2.95 billion, of which approximately \$907 million is tax levy. This is an increase of last year's adopted 2015 budget of \$2.91 billion, and an approximate \$895 million city tax levy funding. The \$12 million tax levy increase is due to the new funding added to the 2015 Executive--the 2016 Preliminary Budgets funding that has been added primarily to support Child Welfare Reforms. For too long the world of child welfare has focused on protecting children without paying much attention to how they're doing. Promoting the wellbeing of the children must be as important as keeping them safe and stable. All of the initiatives that comprise our Preliminary 2016 Budget are oriented toward these goals: Safety, permanency and wellbeing.

ACS' child welfare work is threefold and it involves protective, preventive, and foster care services. Each year we investigate over 60,000 reports of maltreatment, and we provide preventive services to over 25,000 families. So children can remain safely at home. And when out of home

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placements are necessary, we oversee approximately 11,000 children in foster care. ACS depends on over 2,000 dedicated frontline staff to make difficult decisions that have profound consequences in the lives of children and families.

I am pleased to announce that the Preliminary 2016 Budget positions ACS to make the most significant investment in our workforce, and child welfare practice in over a decade. As proposed, the budget will also help ACS strengthen our ability to provide intensive services to families, and to better identify which families could benefit the most from these services. Early in the de Blasio Administration, ACS embarked on a series of reforms to bolster our child welfare practice. All of the initiatives related to last year's Operation Safe are well underway. We are in the process of hiring 362 new positions including 130 new Child Protective Specialists, creating 23 new Family Services units, which oversee our highest risk cases. And adding three new units in emergency children's services, which initiate child protective investigations overnight and during weekends. ACS has also hired 35 new attorneys and administrative

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staff within our division of Family Court Legal Services to support our legal efforts in Family Court to promote positive outcomes for vulnerable children and families. And to help assess the appropriate level of supervision in high-risk cases. As we expand our frontline staff, we must make sure that they're constantly strengthened, developed and supported throughout their careers. The Preliminary Budget allocates \$9.79 million to establish an ACS workforce institute in partnership with CUNY and our non-profit providers. This institute will support professional development, opportunities similar to those offered by other helping professions such as teaching and medicine. Every child welfare worker will have meaningful educational opportunities from the latest in brain science and evidence-based mental health programs to the most effective family engagement strategies. In addition to serving all of our frontline staff, the institute will also support our private partners, which include more than 2,000 preventive and foster care caseworkers employed by our contractor providers. The institute will feature a curriculum developed by experts in child welfare

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and educational fields. And provide a full catalog  
of courses with simulated and exponential learning.

ACS is also developing a comprehensive  
coaching model, which will reinforce a culture of  
supportive supervision and continuous improvement in  
our work. The most important and challenging  
decisions a child protective professional must make  
related to assessing risk. The Preliminary Budget  
funds ACS to develop a predictive risk assessment  
data tool that bolster our capacity to target  
appropriate support services and intervention. We  
will join other jurisdictions like California,  
Michigan and Florida all who already use aggregated  
data compiled from hundreds of thousands of child  
welfare cases to understand what factors predict  
whether a family may be the subject of a future  
substantiated report. Some of these factors include  
histories of foster care placement, past incidents of  
domestic violence, level of prior ACS involvement and  
incidents of homelessness. By combining these  
factors in an analytical database, frontline staff at  
different stages of the case will be able to identify  
highest risk families, and ensure that they receive a  
higher level of supportive intervention that can help

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prevent maltreatment and future system involvement.

Experiencing the stress and trauma of poverty, homelessness, depression, substance abuse and violence places extraordinary challenges on parents and their children, especially those who are under five years of age. Research shows that children at highest risk of severe neglect or injury of those whose bond with their caregivers is not strong. The

2016 Budget proposes that ACS adds 240 new slots of evidence-based preventive services focused on these high-risk families with young children. We believe that the additional investment in evidence-based clinical mental health services for parents with trauma, as well as mental health services for parents with very young children will provide tremendous support to this vulnerable population. Families and children experiencing housing instability and homelessness are among the city's most vulnerable citizens. At any given time, about one-quarter of the families in homeless shelters are actively involved with ACS. Since the beginning of Mayor de Blasio's Administration, ACS has in close collaboration with DHS developed a series of new measures to better understand the needs of ACS child

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welfare involved families in shelter, and to increase interagency coordination to ensure proper services and supports.

Under the 2016 Budget, ACS will re-establish two child protective units at the PATH Center in the Bronx. These new units will be comprised of one child protective manager, two child protective supervisors and ten child protective specialists. Working in tandem with the DHS intake staff, these units will assess the needs and risk of incoming ACS involved families, and help them access a wide array of preventive services, support supports, and childcare. As well as help with the families that are already in the homeless shelters that are child welfare involved.

In addition, this spring ACS will conduct an enrollment drive to ensure that every child in a DHS shelter under five has access to quality childcare. Finally, of all the fatalities of children known to our child welfare system, half involved infant deaths related to unsafe sleeping conditions. Practices like sharing the bed with an infant, having objects in the crib and placing infants on their stomachs can be dangerous. Using a

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public health approach, we're working with agencies like the Health and Hospitals Corporation, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, community based organizations, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the private sector to develop a coordinated public awareness campaign. The proposed budget allows ACS to hire outreach liaisons whose work will include engaging community members, developing local strategies and distributing educational materials related to safe sleep practices. We look forward to partnering with the Council on this important initiative.

Considering the quality--considering the impact that quality early education has on the development of cognitive, social and emotional skills for all children especially those coming from highly stressed environments, is integral to ACS' work of strengthening and support families. ACS is deeply invested in moving toward a coordinated aligned early care and education system that provides quality services for all children. As many of you know, in December ACS issued an RFP to award \$56 million new Early Learn New York City Services. The RFP targeted 39 zip codes and locations where the City Council has



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funded child care services for the past several years. ACS is currently reviewing the submissions and we expect to announce recommended awards from approximately 4,800 Early Learn New York City seats by the end of April. We recognize that the transition to Early Learn may present new challenges for some providers. So we look forward to continued communication with the Council in the months ahead. We are excited to bring in new providers, and serve additional communities with quality early care and education services.

Now, moving on to Juvenile Justice. The time has come for New York State to offer developmentally appropriate services to the 16 and 17-year-olds who come to the attention of the Justice System. This will be accomplished when the State passes the proposed legislation raising the age of criminal responsibility, which ACS strongly supports. One of the existing functions of ACS is to work with justice--Juvenile Justice involved youth to promote public safety and to improve the lives of young people, families and the communities by providing therapeutic treatment, safe and secure custodial care, responsive health care, effective re-entry

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services, and promoting educational achievement.

Raise the Age will allow our agency to extend these intervention services and care to the 16 and 17-year-olds who need and can benefit from them.

ACS is committed to providing young people with--in our Juvenile Justice programs with safe and security environments as well as programming and exposure to experiences that encourage youth to thrive. We firmly believe that preventive services for youth in crisis are imperative, and out-of-home Juvenile Justice placement is, and should be our last option. As such, I am happy to report that the New York State Commission of Criminal Justice Services extended the contract with ACS, and with New York finally in the Center for Court Innovation to provide alternatives to detention services to youth in Queens. These services address the needs of youth who are at risk of detention due solely to family instability or conflict rather than public safety or failure to appear. The initial funding timeline for this program was March 2013 through December 2014 and was recently extended by DCJS through December 2015 with an additional \$333,000 in funding. To better serve youth in secure detention, we're looking to add

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significant funding to improve the infrastructures of the two facilities that we directly operate. We're moving forward with large-scale renovations that will include the creation of a psychiatric medical suite in both Crossovers and Horizon, classroom updates and upgrades, energy, lighting, roofing, and plumbing upgrades. Kitchen equipment upgrades, and outdoor recreation area enhancements. We believe that these physical improvements will greatly improve young people's experience while in our care.

I am excited to announce that Limited Secure Facilities Phase 2 of Close to Home will officially launch next month. We experienced some challenges with respect to construction and renovation of the limited secure sites. However, our three non-profit provider agencies have hired over 300 staff, conducted numerous trainings during the past six weeks, and are on track to begin accepting LSP youth. Each of the six sites will serve 12 to 20 youth for a total projected census of over--census of approximately 100 young people in our system.

It is my sincere hope that as I endeavor to continue to strengthen the work of ACS, I can re-fame our work to impact on wellbeing that speaks to

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1 the success of our young people. I would like to  
2 thank our dedicated workforce for their tireless  
3 efforts to support--support the children and families  
4 of New York City. I look forward to a continued  
5 productive collaboration with the City Council.  
6 Thank you for your time this morning, and I welcome  
7 your comments and questions.  
8

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
10 Commissioner. I'm going to ask a couple of questions  
11 and then turn it over to my co-chairs for their  
12 questions, and then we'll have other members ask  
13 questions. Thank you very much for your testimony,  
14 Commissioner. I know that there's been great strides  
15 that CS has made over the last year under your  
16 tenure. And we are very excited about all the areas  
17 of advancement and innovation that ACS is embarking  
18 upon. We are thrilled to see new funding in  
19 protective services and preventive services. I do  
20 have a few questions, though. Starting with the  
21 Administration has a--a Children's Task Force that we  
22 were told was going to come out with a list of  
23 recommendations I believe back in December. And  
24 then, we were told that it was going to be coming out  
25 in January. It's now mid-March and those

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1 recommendations have not been presented to us. We  
2 don't know what areas those recommendations will  
3 cover. We don't know what within ACS' jurisdiction,  
4 other agencies' jurisdiction those recommendations  
5 will be addressing. And my concern is that a lot of  
6 those recommendations would be best addressed as part  
7 of the budget process. Because they may involve the  
8 allocation of funds that we think is most appropriate  
9 in the setting of putting forward an FY 2016 budget.  
10 Do you have a date when those recommendations will be  
11 presented to the Council and to the public?  
12

13 COMMISSIONER CARRION: The  
14 recommendations are close to being finalized. We had  
15 more input from the task force members than  
16 anticipate. And so we're--we are planning and  
17 hopeful that we'll be able to finalize the work of  
18 the task force on those recommendations very soon and  
19 no later than next month.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Will those  
21 recommendations be taken into account as the  
22 Administration is preparing an Executive Budget for  
23 2016?

24 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes, I'm sure that  
25 that will be part of the discussions, and we are more

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than prepared that once those recommendations are  
finalized to discuss them with the City Council, and  
discuss them with your office.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Are those  
recommendations, and I know that they're not  
obviously finalized yet, but will they involve  
significant proposed allocation of funds?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: I don't know yet  
because those recommendations haven't been finalized.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You know, we think  
that obviously we're disappointed that they're not  
here yet. Because we believe the most appropriate  
way to discuss those recommendations would be through  
the preliminary budget process, and through this  
hearing as you discuss the Preliminary Budget. And  
then, through the Council's response to the  
Preliminary Budget, and obviously the Executive  
Budget through the full process of budget  
negotiations. So we are hopeful that--that that--  
those recommendations really should be presented  
within the next couple of weeks because we as--as was  
mandated by the Charter, we'll be presenting a  
Preliminary Budget response. And those issues should  
be taken into account in that setting. So if it's

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possible, we think it's--it would be best for the Administration to present those recommendations as soon as possible.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: I understand your concerns.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. I wanted to ask a little bit about Operation Safe and Child Welfare Reforms. In reviewing the two sets of programs, I want to make sure that we best understand the relationship between the programs, the initiatives. How the funding works because we have funds that will be allocated as part of Child Welfare Reforms, and we have it as \$27.7 million for Fiscal 16 for Child Welfare Reforms, and \$25.3 million as part of Operation Safe. Can you just speak in general terms about the relationship between the two initiatives? What falls in which--which falls in which category and how that works together.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So I mean overall, Operation Safe is really about bringing in more resources, more staff to do the work--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: --and op--and our Child Welfare Reforms is really efforts of how do we

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1 support and strengthen that staff? And I can talk in  
2 particular to Operation Safe. So that's an overall  
3 arching framework that we brought in additional  
4 staff--

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

7 COMMISSIONER CARRION: --with a--with an  
8 eye to really make sure that we can continue to lower  
9 caseloads, to be able to have staff that has the  
10 proper supervision, bring in more supervisors. And  
11 then, the Child Welfare Reforms with our institute  
12 and the work there is really an effort to strengthen  
13 the skill set of the staff overall in the agency.  
14 But Operation--Operation Safe adds 362 new positions  
15 to our Child Protective, Preventive and Foster Care  
16 Services. As you said at a cost of \$25.3 million.  
17 Operation Safe the breakdown of the 362 positions  
18 are--includes one, an internal monitor positions. It  
19 also provides for 229 positions for the enhancement  
20 and redesign of Family Services Units. These are the  
21 units that deal with the high-risk cases that are  
22 court ordered supervised cases. Restructuring of the  
23 next set of five positions will be for the  
24 restructuring of our borough offices in the Bronx and  
25 in Brooklyn. They have very high caseloads. We are



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1 very concerned about the ability to have one borough  
2 commissioner have that span of supervision. So we've  
3 divided those two offices into separate zones and  
4 increased both the supervision and administrative  
5 ability for oversight of those two offices.  
6

7 The nature of the cases for both the  
8 Bronx and Brooklyn are very high-risk cases and the  
9 volume is high. And so, we wanted to make sure that  
10 we have the proper staffing, and the proper  
11 supervision in those two boroughs. We also are 92  
12 positions in Operation Safe for the restructuring of  
13 the family permanency and family support,  
14 investigative consultants and policy and planning  
15 units. We're going to establish with the 92  
16 positions case compliance of monitoring units. That  
17 will help focus particularly on reunification cases  
18 on those transition points that are very important  
19 and critical in the life of a family. When we're  
20 ready to do trial discharges, we want to make sure  
21 that we can provide support both to the agencies as  
22 they are making those decisions, and also to the  
23 families. So we will have enhanced oversight over  
24 those functions. We are also going to be hiring five  
25 investigative consultants that will--that will be

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supporting the work of the case monitoring compliance units. And that will include two director level positions, and we will be having staff for our Policy and Planning Division. We also have hired 35 additional Family Court attorneys, consisting of 25 attorneys and five attorney supervisors and clerical positions to be able to deal with the enhanced work in Family Court.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Currently, how many Child Protective--so there's--you said that in terms of new child protective staff, there's 300 and its child protective specialists?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 300 and--?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: 62 overall, but its--its 200 Child Protective workers; 229--?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 229.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: its 130 Child Protective workers.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. How many current Child Protective workers are there in ECS?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Currently, pre-Operation Safe 1,978.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. In terms of caseload, the PMMR notes that the average caseload rose from 7.6 in 2014 to 9.3 in the first four months of Fiscal 15. What is the agency's target right now? I believe is 12--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] 12.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --is that correct.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: 12.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so right now, the agency is still below--the actuals are still below the target, is that correct?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And you said that in--particularly in Brooklyn that the caseloads are particularly high. Do you know what the--do you know specifically what those caseloads are?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Not off the top of my head.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But they're above the agency target of 12? Is that right?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: In some instances. It's un--you know, it--it varies across depending on division. I think that, you know, you have to keep

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in mind that that number is a four-month. It's a moment in time.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: The seven was very low. Also a moment in time, but I think with the effort to staff up, we want to make sure that we keep caseloads as low as we can.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh. In terms of new Child Protective Specialists, often we hear of turnover in positions like that. Can you speak a little bit to efforts that ACS is undertaking to discourage turnover, and to support those staff members from--from burnout?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We're very cognizant of the turnover and, in fact, our turnover rate has gone down from last year. I think that what is very important is to make sure that we support our workers with the proper supervision and training, which is why we're--we in this budget propose Workforce Training Institute. It's very important for staff to feel supported, to have the resources they need to do their job, and the knowledge base to be able to do their job. It's also very important for us to deal with the secondary trauma that staff

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1 experience on a day-to-day. And so there will be and  
2 has been wellness focus on making sure that each of  
3 our borough offices, our field offices staff have the  
4 support they need to deal with that secondary trauma,  
5 and feel that they're supported. That becomes very  
6 important. We sometimes tend to focus just on  
7 salaries, when that is what is important to workers.  
8 But when you survey workers, salary yes is important,  
9 but other things are as important if not in some  
10 instances more important. And having the right  
11 supervision, having the right training, and support.  
12 And having an agency that understands the secondary  
13 trauma that they face and efforts to deal with that,  
14 and help them to address that is very important.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In terms of the  
17 budgets both for Operation Safe and Child Welfare  
18 Reforms those are both reflected in the Child  
19 Protective Services' budget? Is that correct? Is  
20 it--are they entirely within those budget categories?

21 COMMISSIONER CARRION: They're sprinkled  
22 across Protective, Preventive, and Foster Care.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. With regard to  
24 Preventive Services then, we--the Budget for 2016,  
25 the Preliminary Budget reflects a decrease of a

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couple of million dollars, \$2.9 million, a decrease of Preventive Services from FY Adopted 15 to Preliminary 16. Can you speak to why there was a decrease then in Preventive Services in the Preliminary Budget?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: There really isn't a decrease in Preventive Services. That represents date dollars for both Nurse Partnership, Nurse Family Partnership and Safe Harbor dollars. And we have not received that allocation from the State.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that expected?  
Are you in conversation--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] It is expected.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --with the State?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We expect that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How much does--does ACS expect from the State for those two programs, Safe Harbor and Nurse Family Partnership?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's about \$2 million for the Nurse Partnership and about \$550,000 for the Safe Harbor in monies.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So there would still be a decrease then of--

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] No.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --of about \$400,000?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's 2.2

[background comment]

COMMISSIONER CARRION: For the Nurse.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: \$2.2 for Nurse. So  
you're expecting then for the Preventive Services  
Budget to be entirely flat?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes. Well-

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]

COMMISSIONER CARRION: For DPS because we  
have 240 slots for intensive Preventive Services.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That would be added?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: That would be--  
that is under the Child Welfare Reforms.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that reflected in  
the Preventive Services budget.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
We're self-funding. [sic]

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We're self-funding  
those--those additional slots for Preventive.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, if--if  
Operation Safe--I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Excuse me.  
If Safe Harbor and Nurse Family Partnerships are

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restored to \$2.9 million of State funding, then that would--that would show a preliminary--a budget for Preventive Services, an increase of zero from Adopted 2015, right? So, how then are the new Preventive slots reflected in the budget?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So the 240 slots were--were funded using money that's in the budget, but was not out programmed in contracted slots.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So there was--there was funding--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: There was funding in our budget that--there was funding our budget from over time slots that agencies may have closed. And, you know, their slots were not reprogrammed. So there as additional money to fund that. The headcount for reform plan is additive, and it would be in the preventive area in the PS--when you get to the PS side.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Okay?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So then it's not reflected in the Preventive Budget because it's--it's somewhere else in PS, is that right?



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COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, there is--  
it's spread in various areas, and there is at least a  
million dollar difference on the Preventive Personal-  
-Personal Services budget when you look at the  
functional. So that's reflect of some Child Welfare  
Reform headcount?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What is the current  
number of slots available in Preventive Services  
prior to the additional 240 slots.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We have about  
25,000 preventive--what is it?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
[interposing] 25,000 families.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, I mean you  
really--we have 25,000 families, children. In  
Preventive it's 12,000--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
[interposing] 791, I believe. [sic]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 791 slots.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
I've got it. I have it here.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We'll find the  
exact number for you.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. But the--but  
the additional slots are going to be funded with  
existing monies, is that right?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Going back to--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
[interposing] I've got it.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's 12,741.  
12,741 slots.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So it would be up to  
about 13,000 slots in Preventive Services?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: That includes--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
[interposing] I believe it includes the 240, yes.  
[sic]

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing]  
Yeah, the 240 is included in that yes. [sic]

COMMISSIONER CARRION: There are two 40s  
included in that number.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The 240 included in  
that--?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] The  
12,741 includes--is inclusive of the 240 slots.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Are those 240 slots  
being utilized--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [off mic]  
[interposing] It's a capacity number.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --at the moment or  
are those to be utilized afterwards?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: They're to be  
utilized.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: After the budget is  
adopted?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So the current  
usage is then 2000 and--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] 571.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Got it. Okay. Going  
back to Operation Safe for a moment, one of the  
positions, the new positions is an Internal Monitor.  
Can you speak to what the Internal Monitors' position  
will entail? What are they responsible for? What  
are they looking for? Who will they report to? So  
on and so forth?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So the Internal  
Monitor's position that we created with Operation  
Safe. That position was filled until December. We

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1 had actually hired someone that worked for most of  
2 the year, and then just recently left. So that  
3 position reports directly to me as Commissioner. And  
4 the intent in establishing that position is that I  
5 wanted to make sure that all the reforms. All the  
6 recommendations that we received as an agency are  
7 representative from our Accountability Review Panel  
8 that reviews child fatalities, DOI recommendations,  
9 child stat recommendations would actually be reviewed  
10 and implemented and that we close that loop. And so  
11 the primary function of that person has been to  
12 develop and infrastructure or protocols for us to  
13 make sure that we are reviewing those  
14 recommendations. The recommendations that we received  
15 in the past, we received recommendations from the DA.  
16 We've received recommendations from grand juries.  
17 We've received recommendations from reports and  
18 making sure that we have a protocol for reviewing  
19 those recommendations, for acting on those  
20 recommendations. And the reason for not acting on  
21 those recommendations if they don't make sense for  
22 us. And so, that person's job has been to establish  
23 that structure, to review that and put them all in a  
24 centralized place. And also to make sure that we're  
25

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1 implementing the reforms that we say we're  
2 implementing. That we're on track, that we have the  
3 systems in place to review, and to make sure that we  
4 are being responsive to the concerns that have been  
5 identified both in the past and as we move forward.  
6

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that monitor going  
8 to be issuing reports, written reports?

9 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Not that I  
10 anticipate that report to me.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Will there be any  
12 opportunity for the Council or the public to--to see  
13 the recommendations that the Internal Monitor is  
14 making, or assessments that the Internal Monitor is  
15 making?

16 COMMISSIONER CARRION: We certainly can  
17 have always discussion with the City Council.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Has it--did ACS  
19 consider utilizing an external monitor, an outside  
20 monitor to be able to--so outside of the chain of  
21 command of ACS?

22 COMMISSIONER CARRION: No.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. If possible, I  
24 think that it would be helpful to this committee in  
25 its oversight role to be able to see some of those

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recommendations that the Internal Monitor is making,  
and get a little more insight into what they are  
looking at, and the recommendations that they are  
making.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We always welcome  
the opportunity to share our work with the Council.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: All right. I want to  
speak for a moment, and then I'll turn it over to my  
co-chairs [coughs] about issues that are arising out  
of foster care that are concerning. We saw in a--the  
most recent Federal Child and Family Services Review  
Data that New York State is ranking consistently very  
low in the bottom five states for four out of seven  
of the indicators. And only met the National  
Standards for one indicator. So in terms of  
maltreatment in care, we rank--46 out of 48 states  
ranked did not meet the National Standards.  
Recurrence of maltreatment 48 out 48 states ranked  
permanency within 12 months. 35 out of 49 states  
ranked permanency in 12 months for child--for  
children in care from 12 to 23 months. 50 out of 51  
states ranked did not meet the National Standards.  
Permanency in 12 months for children in care 24  
months or more. 48 out of 51 states ranked re-entry

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1 into foster care in 12 months. 40 out of 48 states  
2 ranked also did not meet the National Standards. In  
3 placement stability we ranked much higher, three out  
4 of 48 states ranked where we did meet the National  
5 Standards. But in looking at the PMMR, we saw that  
6 the--one thing that jumped out at us the--the  
7 adoption rates for the first four months of 20--of FY  
8 15 has decreased 21.5% from 339 in Fiscal 14 to 266  
9 in the first four months of Fiscal 15. The children  
10 eligible for adoption has remained at 4.4%-- Excuse  
11 me, 4.4% more children are eligible for adoption.  
12 They remained in ACS custody for the reported period.  
13 What do you believe is happening there, and how is  
14 ACS addressing that particular issue in light of the  
15 fairly dismal performance across the board as per the  
16 Child and Family Services review data?

18 COMMISSIONER CARRION: So first, I think  
19 we have to use some caution in using a four-month  
20 period to be able to predict or forecast what it will  
21 look like in a year. There are lots of fluctuations,  
22 and so a four-month window really does not give us an  
23 accurate picture.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] But  
I'm just saying possibly. I mean if we're--it makes  
up a third of the year.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] It  
does. [sic]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So obviously if we're  
down by 21% for the first four months of the year,  
and it's been that, we would have to make up for it  
by being 21% over for the next four months just to be  
on track.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, anything is  
possible.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So having said  
that, I think that we're recognized that that is a  
challenge. You know, as the numbers in foster care  
shrink, the children that are going to be left in the  
system, we'll have a higher number of children for  
instance waiting to be adopted. But historically,  
over time our numbers in time to adoption has been  
very, very long. And so, what we have done at ACS,  
and it is an area of great concern to us. We don't  
want children languishing in care when they can be--  
if we could expedite the adoption process. So we've



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initiated what we're calling No Time to Wait. We secured private funding from a foundation to help us partner--to help us identify in partnership with the Family Court, with the Judiciary where are the delays in the system? What's causing--what are the barriers to timely movement across the continuum to be able to facilitate and expedite adoptions. As you know, we're not the only player in this that has something to do with moving adoptions. And so, we are--have hired consultants that are working with us, and with the court system to identify where are those delays. Preliminarily, they've identified some areas where they think that we can do better in expediting the process. For instance in being able to speed our subsidy, our adoption subsidies. Developing a different business process that would expedite that. Looking to see how we can increase our kinship adoption and kinship care. Also looking how we could expedite the acquisition of documents like birth certificates. And, working better with our city agencies our partners in really being able to assemble the documents that are necessary. So it's an area where we're focused on, an areas where we're doing work. And that we're cognizant that it takes

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too long in New York City Council and in the State of  
New York to adopt a child.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The private funding  
that you spoke of, how much does that account for?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's about \$200 or  
\$300,000 over two years.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: \$300,000 over two  
years. Because the--because the budget for adoptive  
services--adoption services in the Preliminary 2016  
Budget is--there's no increase in the Preliminary  
Budget of City tax levy or State of Federal funds.  
So that would be the only--the only increase would be  
this infusion of private funds? So that would be  
the--the only increase would be this infusion of  
private funds.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: The private  
dollars to fund the initiative No Time to Wait.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Just in terms  
of, and this is my last--my question before I turn it  
over to my co-chairs. In terms of kinship, there has  
been also in the PMMR over that four-month period a  
decrease from 2014 of 4,028 down to 3,736. So,  
that's also indicating a lag, if you will, in--in the

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first four months of the 20--Fiscal Year 2015. So,  
is there--is that an area of concern or are you--?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's an area of  
concern. It's part of the No Wait--No Time to Wait  
initiative to really look at how we incentivize that  
more and, and how we use that as a vehicle to  
expedite permanency for children in care.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. I want to  
acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member  
Annabel Palma, as well as Council Member Daneek  
Miller. And I want to turn it over to my Co-Chair  
Laurie Cumbo to proceed with questions. Council  
Member--Chair Cumbo.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Thank you, Chair  
Levin and thank you so much for your presence here  
today. Want to start off with a low ball question  
just a little bit off the beaten path. Wanted to ask  
you from the last time we met because you were so new  
to the position, what are one of the things that  
you're really proud of that happened over this year?  
And what continues to be one of your greatest  
challenges?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, I think that  
one of the things that I think is important in the

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work that we've commenced at ACS is really to change the framework to look at the wellbeing of children. And really to change the conversation. That we focus on how children are doing. As a system, we're very good at measuring the things that Council Member Levin pointed out to, and that we don't do so well at. But time to permanency and things like that all very important things that we measure. But we forget about the child, and we forget to really focus on how are they doing. And our--and that's really important because it is really it should be about the child. And coming into care should not be an adverse experience that results in poor outcomes for children and young people. And so, I'm very focused on that, and as a system really working hard to reorient the system to really look at the wellbeing. And to work with our partners to really focus on the wellbeing of the child. How are they doing? How are they doing in school? What's their emotional-social development? You know, are they ready to learn? Are they--are they excelling in school? Are they having the normative types of experience that children have that are not in foster care? Those are the things that I am focused on, and that's-- I think we started

that conversation with our partners, and I look forward to really deepening that work.

In terms of challenges, the agency is one big challenge.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's--it's very hard work. There are lots of challenges in every aspect of our work. Some challenges with infrastructure, our inability to do our work as efficiently and as smart as we would like. Because we don't have the infrastructure. For instance, IT tools. Things like that have really surprised me having come from the State, and making certain assumptions about the capacity of ACS and other city agencies to have the tools to do the work. Also, trying to make sure that we create, have the resources and work to develop those tools in IT that we need to strengthen the training of our staff. Our work is getting more and more complex as the science and research develops. We need to help our staff, our workers, our frontline workers understand that. Have a better understanding of trauma. So those are the things that keep me up at night. But those are the things that challenge me, and what I'm proud

about introducing in the agency and working toward having a trauma informed development--development in the appropriate system that is really focused on the wellbeing of children.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: In your testimony you spoke about the development of the Predictive Risk Assessment Data Tool Predictive Risk Assessment Data Tool. Are these the types of tools that you're looking to have implemented and expanded throughout the agency to assist with your work?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: And where are you with that implementation of this?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, we're-- we're-we actually have much of data--

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: --right, in building that capacity, and we're building that tool. And so, we're in the process of building the tool. We identified who our partners are that we need in terms of the expertise to develop that tool. So we're on our way. We know how to do it.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Okay. I wanted to ask you more on a--on a more recent issue that's

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1 happened. And I want to understand how a tool like  
2 that can be helpful. So we recently all saw the  
3 horrific incident that happened at McDonald's. And  
4 as we're looking at it unfold, we're seeing these  
5 young women brutally beating up another young woman.  
6 It looks just on first glance as it's an issue of  
7 some girls having the fight. But then when the  
8 reports come out you're seeing that the leader in  
9 that had been arrested six times. Had stabbed her  
10 brother. Had punched her grandmother in the face, is  
11 also a mom herself I believe at the age of 15 or 16.  
12 And having all of these development issues. When and  
13 where does ACS intersect with a situation such as  
14 this? Where does your agency get notified that a  
15 young person like this is in trouble? Because the  
16 media has made her out to be politically in many ways  
17 a brute of sorts. But, you know, I really believe  
18 that a young person like that has some serious  
19 challenges. And wanting to know in all of the  
20 testimony that's been put forward, we're looking for  
21 solutions to have this sort of thing not happen. And  
22 when someone is being alerted to the fact that  
23 they're having such a long--so many run-ins with the  
24 Police Department, when does ACS intersect with this?

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: So there are two ways that we intersection. There would have to be a call to the SCR that reports some abuse or neglect. And then there has to be--we have to meet a standard to see whether or not there is the case as indicated. Is there sufficient evidence? Is there probable cause to believe that there has been abuse and neglect? So that is one door where cases like this might come to our attention. The other is the Juvenile Justice System--

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: --but we are either in our role there as we run the detention system. So a young person would have to be arrested, and detained in order to come into our detention. And our detention is pre-adjudication waiting for the case to heard in court. Or, if a judge then makes a decision and decides to place a young person, they would go into our either limited and a non-secured system now. And that would be a judicial determination as to whether or not a young person would be placed in a non-secure setting. Those would be the two instances or there is a third. Or, whether or not a family seeks Preventive Services,



1 and that would have to be a voluntary act by a family  
2 seeking help. Unless in Family Court the judge, if  
3 there was abuse or neglect, would mandate Preventive  
4 Services. So it would require a call to the SCR. It  
5 would require a decision by a judicial body. Or, if  
6 we didn't--if ACS didn't think that there was  
7 sufficient evidence to indicate a case and to remove  
8 children, or mandate services, we could recommend  
9 services to the family. We could work with the  
10 family, but the family would have to be willing to  
11 engage with us. So there are opportunities across  
12 the continuum for us to be able to provide services  
13 to families. But there has to be a willingness on  
14 the part of families to engage. Or, there has to be  
15 a determination by a judicial body that says these  
16 services are mandated. Or, they come into our  
17 Juvenile Justice System, and they're placed with us,  
18 and get services through that system.

20 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: So in this particular  
21 situation, the young woman was arrested several  
22 times, but not detained. And so because she's  
23 arrested and is not then placed in one of your  
24 facilities, then it's almost as if a situation such  
25 as hers would not reach ACS' attention in that way?

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: It might not. It would depend once again if a family affirmatively sought out help.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: It seems like there a--there's a--there something missing in that scenario because I know that in doing further research on that case that there was an order of protection that the family put out against that particular young woman after the incident happened with her grandmother. So it seems that they may have been instructed in some ways about what they could to do protect themselves. But it seems like there's a--there's a missing link in terms of them then being given all of the options to say these are the types of services that are available when a situation like this happens. And so, it would seem that there is more research that needs to be done on the part of this when young people are exhibiting very dangerous signs that they are a danger to themselves. They're a danger to their family, and a danger to society. It appears that we have to do more preventative or interjections in that way in order to prevent situations like that from happening.

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I have other questions that I would like to go into, but that is certainly something of interest to me that I want to go further into. I want to talk about--this was very interesting to me, and I wanted to know about the number of fatalities of children known to our Child Welfare system. You said that half involved infant deaths related to unsafe sleeping conditions. I was not aware that ACS was working so proactively on this. How many fatalities happen every year as a result of unsafe sleeping conditions with families?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's--it's about-- about 40 a year. About 40 a year.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: 40 a year?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: And has that been--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing]

Consistent.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: consistent?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: And can you talk to me a little bit about this campaign that you want to do in order to bring greater awareness to this issue?

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: So, ACS--this has been an issue for ACS for a number of years, and ACS has been involved working in collaboration with partner city agencies like the Department of Health and the Office of the Medical Examiner, and HHC, the Health and Hospitals Corporation to really do training. And so, there's been a lot of training and work already done to increase everyone's awareness across the systems about unsafe sleep conditions. This particular--we've been also-- I recently had a conference. I think it was in November and December where we had a conference where a coupled of hundred people were present from across city agencies. And we invited Baltimore, the City of Baltimore to come because they have one of the most compelling and effective safe sleep campaigns to share with us and have some lessons learned from the. And that was very incisive and very helpful. And from that exchange of learning, we have developed this now campaign where it really is about how do we get into the community and create awareness in the community? We feel that we've created awareness around the professions, and that we become aware of this problem. But really using more of a community

organizing approach to get the message out about safe sleeping messages. And, we are partnering with our city agencies, but also with the Academy of Pediatrics, some foundations, some private partners, community-based organizations to work. So we will have staff in community to really develop these messages, do presentations. Do a video that we can show widely so that we enhance everyone's awareness that these are preventable deaths. And that we can do something to prevent these children from unnecessarily dying because we didn't know what the best sleeping arrangements could be for a child.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: And you said it was Boston, correct.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Baltimore.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: I'm sorry. And in Baltimore, were you able to understand that their decrease was as a result of that type of program?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We--we--yes. They had a decrease.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: The had a decrease, and they also created this awareness of the issue in the city so that there was buy-in. There

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was awareness, and there was community working together on many levels to really prevent any further deaths of children. But they did have an impact on their bottom line.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Thank you, and I definitely want to be a partner in that as Chair of the Women's Issue Committee, but this is certainly a critical issue to the wellbeing of our babies and children. I wanted to talk a bit about UPK. The Fiscal 2016 Budget show a decrease of \$14 million in UPK and the Head Start Program area. Wanted to know why is UPK funding declining? Couldn't that additional funding still be utilized? And wanted to start with that, and then to get a little bit more into UPK.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So that \$14 million was a one-time allocation when UPK was launched to be able to fund classroom enhancements and professional development for the teachers.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Okay. Now, one year later we've been talking still a lot about the disparities there. At the Fiscal 2015 Preliminary Budget hearing you stated that ACS was in the process of exploring the possible options for addressing the

1 pay disparity between UPK and Early Learn teachers.  
2  
3 And this was a big issue with the rollout last year.  
4 One year later, what options have you identified for  
5 addressing this issue in terms of the pay disparity  
6 between UPK and Early Learn? And is ACS considering  
7 implementing any of these options that I hope have  
8 come to the forefront at this time?

9 COMMISSIONER CARRION: So first let me  
10 share with you that that's been part of the work of  
11 the task force--

12 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-huh.

13 COMMISSIONER CARRION: --and those are  
14 the recommendations that we're waiting for. But as,  
15 you know, as part of the initial rollout, there was  
16 additional funding to have parity between the DOE,  
17 community-based teachers of the fours with the Early  
18 Learn teachers, lead teachers for the four-year-olds.  
19 So that level of parity was established.

20 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Right.

21 COMMISSIONER CARRION: I think that there  
22 is additional work to be done, and that's the work  
23 that's being-- Those issues about parity across the  
24 systems that is being looked at as part of the work  
25 of the task force.

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CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: So it's still being  
looked at?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It still is.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: How long do you think  
we'll be looking at it?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: I think it will be  
a while.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Okay, I'll get back  
to that issue in the second round of questioning.  
But wanted to move into better serving our youth in  
secured detention. I mentioned this last year when  
we were looking to add significant funding to improve  
the infrastructure, and we were moving forward with  
large-scale renovations, classroom updates, upgrades,  
energy, lighting, roofing, plumbing, psychiatric  
medical suite, and many of those types of  
enhancements. Wanted to know because we know that  
many of the young people, our Black and Brown young  
people that are in our detention centers. Has there  
been any movement or any energy put into cultural  
programming, cultural relevant programming to young  
people in our juvenile detention facilities. Because  
I believe very strongly that so many of these young  
people are so disconnected from their culture in the



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1 sense of understanding who they are. Understanding  
2 everything from where they come from, what are the  
3 accomplishments of the people that they come from.  
4 And their countries, knowing who their great leaders  
5 are from Maya Angelou to our Public Advocate Letitia  
6 James and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. And, you  
7 know, that they come from a continent of Africa with  
8 54 countries and over 3,000 languages spoken there.  
9 Like I feel that they're not connected to it.  
10

11 COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] They  
12 are. They are. I want to assure you that--

13 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: [interposing]  
14 Please.

15 COMMISSIONER CARRION: I want to assure  
16 you that I would love to invite you to come because  
17 that is--all of that is happening.

18 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER CARRION: All of that is  
20 happening, and that's very important to us. And I  
21 think that Council Member Cabrera could attest to  
22 that, as he's been a visitor there many times. But  
23 that is something that we endeavor to do and do, and  
24 realize how important it is for young people--

25 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: [coughing]

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: --to have a sense of self, and know what their heritage is, and who their leaders are. And how they are important, right, and that they need to have a sense of self-efficacy, and that's how we really build that sense of self-efficacy by understanding what the accomplishments of those who came before them are.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Do you do that through partners?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We do that through a lot of partners. Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: I would be very interested to know who some of those partners are, and if you could send me a list of who some of those cultural partners are. Because coming from my background in the arts, I certainly have a great understanding of many of the cultural partners citywide. And would love to recommend some to also be critical partners in this process. Such as Caribbean Cultural Center, African Diaspora Institute, West Indian American Day Carnival Association, and many that are working to bring cultural heritage competency to our young people

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: We'll definitely share our list, and welcome any additions that you have.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Thank you very much for that, and wanted to get to the heart of the matter in my district, but something that happens, and is addressing many of the providers as well. But also wanted to add, too. I noticed that you all are doing a tremendous amount of hiring, and I can't imagine how challenging that must be to bring so many people on staff so rapidly and so quickly. I would say that I feel somewhat disconnected from that process. And there are so many people that come to our offices looking for employment, looking for opportunities. How can we be a part of that process. So that when you are doing this level of hiring, that our offices who are on the ground in the communities with our constituents, how are we able to direct them to that? And how are you all communicating that these opportunities are available?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So we do some outreach. I think that we could do much better in terms of outreach. I think that we should be letting your offices know when there is that call for the

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Civil Service Exam for people to take. Because there are Civil Service positions, and to let you know, and we will do that.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: I would appreciate that--I mean there's--In your testimonies I always hear about all these great things happening. But how we can be interconnected would be phenomenal for our districts, for you. And I noticed that you also had somewhat of a relationship with CUNY in terms of that being a pipeline for hiring throughout ACS. Can you talk to me a bit about that?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, we have a lot of CUNY interns, and we have a deep relationship with all the schools of social work. And I meet with the deans of school social work. They do internships at the agency, which is part of a pipeline. We have fellowships. We recruit in the CUNY schools. So CUNY does training. They're our partner in much of the work that we do.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Okay. My final question goes to what I'm sure you are aware of yesterday. A couple hundred people from my district in Fort Green are grappling with an issue that many communities are facing. Senior citizens came here.

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Children came here that are three and four years old. Hundreds of members out of my community came from the Young Minds Day Care Program. And this is a really very serious issue that many organizations are facing particularly in rapidly gentrifying communities. People often think that gentrification is connected specifically to housing. But it has everything to do with our day care centers, and our schools and many other institutions. So Young Minds Day Care is currently in negotiations with ACS regarding their lease. But they have been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement on the timeframe of the lease. With other city agencies on site that are offering Young Minds a new ten-year lease, and ACS is only offering a three-year lease with the term of opting out in outer years. My question is why is it that ACS does not offer a ten-year lease or some form of permanency for Young Minds and day care centers in which you, ACS, oversee? Because many landlords at this time are not interested in making capital improvements, and going forward with year-to-year leases when they really need that level of long-term lease that would provide our young people with the type of security that they need. Versus having three and four-year-olds

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participating in a budget dance, if you will, on the steps of City Hall just yesterday.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So I understand those concerns. I think that what we are trying to do is to align the leases with the contract terms of Early Learn. And the Early Learn timeframe for re-competition is 2018. So we don't want to get into leases that are beyond that because we really don't know what the landscape is going to look like. This landlord is negotiating with DCAS. They'll negotiate something on behalf of all the city agencies, and so we're hopeful that we will reach an agreement. But we need to align those lease terms with the terms of our Early Learn contracts.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: I hear you. We're at the point right now where the landlord is ready to put a for lease sign on the door I understand Monday. And so, if other agencies are not negotiating in the same way as ACS, it creates a serious discrepancy in terms of buildings that are operating services for either seniors or for children or for other services. If the administration is not working collaboratively in terms of how they understand their lease

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negotiations, it could create a conundrum that we  
have currently.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: My understanding  
is that the agencies are collaborating, and should be  
collaborating and there should be one message.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: What was the  
rationale for accepting the Young Minds Day Care  
expansion for the full-day Pre-K? But ACS had  
already alerted DCAS that the city would not renew  
the lease with the landlord at the new landlord's  
term of lease?

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Do you want me to  
repeat that one. [laughs]

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [off mic] Sure.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: So the way I  
understand it is that the rationale for accepting the  
Young Mind Day Care expansion for full day Pre-Day  
Pre-K. So right now Young Minds Day Care has been  
expanded to provide full day Pre-K.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Right.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: If ACS had already  
alerted DCAS that the City would not renew the lease  
with the landlord at the new landlord's terms of

1 lease, right. So they're already under the  
2 understanding that they're going to be expanding  
3 their Universal Pre-K program, while at the same time  
4 the landlord is looking to put a for lease sign on  
5 the door on Monday.  
6

7 COMMISSIONER CARRION: That's not our  
8 understanding of the landlord and where the  
9 negotiations are in terms of the information that  
10 we've gotten from DCAS. So it's our understanding  
11 that those negotiations are ongoing, and not aware  
12 that the landlord is putting in for rent sign or  
13 lease sign on his door.

14 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Well, my  
15 understanding is that--

16 COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] But  
17 we'll look into it. I mean absolutely we will look  
18 into it.

19 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Well, my  
20 understanding is that that's going to happen, and I  
21 really want to understand how can we avoid the year-  
22 to-year budget dance for organizations that fall  
23 under the Negotiation Acquisition Extension? How can  
24 we avoid that moving forward?  
25



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COMMISSIONER CARRION: But, you know, we have a procurement process in the city, and that's the framework, right and that's what rules. So these contracts really have to have a beginning and an end pursuant to our procurement rules. And so, we're really not in a position to be able to contract for a term that's longer than we can say that we are going to have a contract. Because we're going to have an open competitive process, and we don't know if-- Who is going to receive a contract. And so, I think that's part of the challenge that we have as we try to align. And we will renegotiate each term with the landlord. So we have a three-year term. If this agency or any other agency then receives a contract, we will negotiate for another term that is aligned with the life of the contract.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Okay. So let me understand something because this is-- Is it possible then to look at certain situations differently than others where other agencies are--that don't have your same policy, are willing to negotiate for a longer period of time? Why does this agency have the ability to have-- Why are they the lead in this? Why isn't the Department for the Aging the lead in this?

1 Why are we falling subject to your rules and  
2 regulations?  
3

4 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, it's--I  
5 really can't speak for the Department for Aging or  
6 any other agency. I don't really know what their  
7 policy is. I know that we have--we're working very  
8 hard to align our contracts. I really can't speak to  
9 what other agencies are doing. I understand what the  
10 needs are of ACS and how we are working very hard  
11 with the landlords to renew contracts to meet the  
12 increases in certain cases in rent. We understand  
13 that, but I really can't speak to what other agencies  
14 are doing.

15 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Won't it be highly  
16 problematic that you're not going to be issuing long-  
17 term leases for any type of not-for-profit provider  
18 in the sense that on a year-to-year basis or on an  
19 every other year basis, they will not know if they  
20 will be in the same facility or not. Or that they  
21 could be potentially put out of the facility that  
22 they're in. How can organizations do long-term new  
23 planning, five-year planning, ten-year strategic  
24 plans? How will they be able to have the stability  
25 as providers for the work that they do if the leases

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are up for renewal so frequently? And the contracts  
are up for renewal so frequently?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Having run an  
agency that is the life of an agency, you live and  
die by the length of a contract. That's the  
procurement process in New York City. We can't  
guarantee beyond a contract that an agency is going  
to receive a contract in the City of New York from  
ACS. There is the life of the contract. We are  
required. We have renewals and when we can renew, we  
renew, but it has a beginning and an end. And we have  
to go through a procurement. So there is no  
guarantee. Having run an agency and being  
responsible developing those budgets, long-term  
planning you rarely can do it for more than six  
years, which usually is the term of the life of a  
contract. Three years and then renewal for three, or  
maybe two years and renewal for two. That really is  
your window for planning in the non-profit world. We  
don't have long-term contracts that go on for 10 or  
20 years and, therefore, we need to align the leases  
with that procurement structure that we have.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Okay, and then the  
final question because I know that my other

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1 colleagues have questions. Young Minds Day Care has  
2 been in existence now for 38 years. It's served over  
3 6,000 young people. Over 100 young people utilize  
4 this service in Central Brooklyn. It would be a  
5 tragedy in our community for an institution--and I  
6 say institution in all senses of the word--for them  
7 not to be given that opportunity to continue to grow.  
8 How is it that in previous administrations and  
9 organizations such as that could be in existence for  
10 38 years providing a level of quality care and  
11 service to young people. And now, in this  
12 administration and organization like that three years  
13 may be here. Three years gone the next year. How  
14 could that happen?

16 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, I think I  
17 need to remind you that the prior administration  
18 created Early Learn--

19 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-  
20 huh.

21 COMMISSIONER CARRION: --and the whole  
22 contracting process.

23 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-huh.

24 COMMISSIONER CARRION: And that's the  
25 process that we're living with, and that comes up for

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1  
2 renewal or RFP in Fiscal Year 18. And so that is the  
3 frame. That is the context in which we live where we  
4 have Early Learn. And that was--and that's been in  
5 two years, and that's what's changed and that's  
6 what's different now.

7 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Because the trend  
8 that we see particularly in communities of color,  
9 when these contract agreements and these new leases  
10 are renegotiated, that it's often that the  
11 communities of color that have run these day care  
12 centers for so many years in that particular  
13 transition or change, it often doesn't reflect the  
14 new provider of communities of color. And so that's  
15 the challenge that we're facing right now in a highly  
16 gentrified community that the fact that we're in a  
17 place of we don't know what's going to happen. I  
18 guess my final question to you is what is going to  
19 happen moving forward? Because I as a Council Member  
20 can't go back to my district with an institution with  
21 so much history particularly in the African-American  
22 community closing.

23 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Two things. One is  
24 that in this RFP process that we did for the  
25 negotiated acquisition of Council Member items, we

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took special care to ensure that one of the criteria in the review process of the RFP was really looking at the experience in a community, and the rootedness in a community of organizations that were proposing to provide services. So we are very aware of the importance of having indigenous groups be able to provide the services. But we need to do that in the context of an open competitive process. Those are the City's rules. And so, agencies have a contract. That contract can be renewed for a specific number of years. Then there's an open competitive process. To the extent that we can in part of the criteria for reviewing proposals, make sure that we focus on prior experience, community rootness. Knowledge of the community. Providing services to the community. The quality of services within the community. Familiarity with the community. Coming from the community. That those be factors that be considered. We can do that and we have done that in this last RFP. But we need to do that within the context of the rules of a procurement process.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Could Young Minds potentially win the RFP, but also then lose the

ability to have their lease renewed by the  
administration? Could that happen?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We negotiate with  
the landlord, and certainly the landlord is free to  
use the property in any way--to rent the property to  
whoever they want. But we negotiate with them in  
good faith, and we try to meet what the demands  
within reason are of the landlord. So is it  
possible? Anything is possible. We work very hard  
to prevent that from happening.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: So if Young Minds  
wins the RFP process then the least would be renewed?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's up to the  
landlord. We don't control that, right. We  
negotiate that in good faith. We put forth our best  
offer, and then the landlord decides whether or not  
he wants to enter into a contract with the City of  
New York.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Okay, in the interest  
of time and I know that my other colleagues have some  
questions, I'll be here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Co-Chair, if you  
would like to visit Horizon with me, I would love to  
take you and see some of the wonderful works of art

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1  
2 young people are putting forth. They are really  
3 fantastic. I was really impressed especially the  
4 last time.

5 CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: I'll take you up on  
6 that.

7 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Fantastic.  
8 Commissioner, thank you. I want to take a moment  
9 shortly here, but significantly to point out that you  
10 are doing a fantastic job. And it is very easy for us  
11 to sit here. And, to shoot at you all these  
12 questions why this, why that. You're doing a  
13 fantastic job. You're not just bringing change,  
14 you're bringing transformation, and I see a better  
15 future for ACS. I also want to thank your First  
16 Deputy Commissioner Felipe Franco because he's doing  
17 a fantastic job as well. I appreciate your  
18 flexibility, and also it's a different tone that I  
19 see from previous years where you really do listen.  
20 You take into consideration what council members and  
21 the public at large have to say.

22 I have a few questions. One is  
23 regarding, as you know, the 2015 and 16 New York  
24 State Executive Budget that introduced the \$25  
25 million that was held to place newly sentenced 16 and



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17-year-old youth in the OCFS facility. And my question to you is, is that enough? And if not, what can we do or what should we do?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So we have a commitment from the Governor to fully fund this initiative.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Fantastic.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So--and so we--I take him at his word that he will fully fund raising the age of criminal responsibility. I think the \$25 million is an initial--an initial payment primarily for OCFS who has to start planning the development of additional facilities. But we were recently in Albany to lobby and to raise the age. A number of commissioners went up, and we received a commitment from the administration to fully fund this initiative.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Fantastic. I would like your purchasing--you have a cap-- Let me just talk about your Capital Budget. \$1.6 million for 21 secure passenger vans. Is that to replace or just because you have more children or--?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: That is to replace an aging fleet--

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CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] Okay.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: --of vehicles.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Fantastic. I know Horizons, if I remember right, has \$20 million worth of capital improvement. And if I recall right from my readings, Crossroads is less than a million, it's \$800,000 in capital improvement. When can we see-- what do you see as the--the time span in the renovations that are going to be taking place?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So for Crossroads and Horizons--well, Horizons is \$13 million, and that \$13 million has been already approved by OMB. So we will start the planning process. I will tell you, as you know, we've already started to do some of this work. But these are some major renovations that have to be done. So the planning process has begun in Horizon. We had estimated that it would cost another \$13 million in Crossroads. We have received about \$840,000 approval from OMB to start the planning process to better assess how much really do we need for Crossroads. So we have a sense of urgency, particularly with the air conditioning, the HVAC. Some of that has already been purchased, and we're

1 waiting for better weather to be able to do the  
2 installation.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So for example, so  
5 the one in Horizon I know you already started the  
6 process, but when do you think they'll be finished  
7 with all of the renovations?

8 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Oh, that's going  
9 to take a long time, longer than I have patience--

10 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER CARRION: --quite frankly,  
12 but I'm--I'm very hopeful because we have the money--

13 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing]  
14 Right.

15 COMMISSIONER CARRION: --to do it. We've  
16 already purchased some of what we need like the HVAC.  
17 And I think it will be less than historically it has  
18 taken in time. But it's longer than you and I would  
19 like.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Let's focus on the  
21 process. Is it the Design Commission or--?

22 COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's the design  
23 and then the procurement of contractors, and then the  
24 contractors and the contracting.  
25

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CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] It's  
the Design Commission keeps--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: You know, it's  
the--you know, there are a lot of moving parts.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Right.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So even when--You  
know, my experience has been even when they tell you  
that it's going to take a year, you need to add  
another six months--

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing]  
Right.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: --if you're lucky  
to the process.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: So is all of this--  
so is all of this kind of doubling the time that your  
project is going to take. That goes with it--almost  
every construction I guess. My other question is in  
regards to-- As a matter of fact, let me just change  
gears. Is ACS tracking the number of children that  
receive Juvenile Justice services and other ACS  
services. Specifically to family permanency and  
support services?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We do. We have an  
initiative that we call Crossover Youth Initiative

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1 that we're partnering with Probation with the Family  
2 Court and Georgetown University to be able to track  
3 these young people. But also to introduce  
4 interventions to prevent Child Welfare youth from  
5 further penetrating the Juvenile Justice System. So  
6 there is a lot of data that we collect, and there is  
7 work that we're doing across the City of New York.  
8 We launched it first in the Bronx, and worked very  
9 closely to have a dedicated part, and a judge that  
10 would hear these cases. The interventions are all  
11 Child Welfare interventions. And the next borough  
12 was Brooklyn that we're introducing it. And now,  
13 we're going citywide.  
14

15 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: And are you  
16 planning to report it through the MMR or the--?

17 COMMISSIONER CARRION: So, yeah, we do a  
18 lot, and so it's very limited the things that get  
19 reported to the MMR. If we were going to report  
20 everything we do, it would be a dome [sic]. So we're  
21 selective. We are certainly open to hearing what the  
22 Council is interested in seeing. You know, it's a  
23 citywide. Everything agency is a citywide document.  
24 They've got constraints around pages numbers. You  
25 know, the number of pages and things. So we

certainly are willing to report on any of these  
initiatives directly to the Council.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: The PMMR showed  
that the youth and youth assaults are the altercation  
rates for non-secured placement slightly, just  
slightly increased as to the youth on staff, the  
assault rate. What is your strategy coming in? And  
I know you have-- Well, let me--let me just leave it  
like that. What is the strategy that you do?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: I think that  
always when any of these numbers go up, there's great  
concern. But I want to share with you that  
mechanical restraints have gone down by 23% and  
secure. Youth on youth assault is down by 27%, and  
AWOLs are down by 63%. So the system is really going  
in the right direction.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: That's great.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We're working to  
really create a trauma informed system. To really  
be able to give staff additional tools in terms of  
de-escalation. Working with our providers both on  
our non-secure and secure, and our non-secure system  
with our providers and with our staff in our secure.  
It's an area of focus of great oversight where we

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monitor that, and we work for staff to be able to  
have tools to respond. And really working with young  
people to be able to help them manage their behavior.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay. The percent  
of the inter youth who were referred for mental  
health services, and the percent who were referred  
for and receiving mental health services both greatly  
increased. What caused this increase, and how will  
ACS ensure that this indicator continue to progress?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So I think that we  
as our system shrinks, the young people that are  
coming to the system really exhibit much higher  
needs. And we have to be cognizant of that. We have  
developed a deeper partnership with Bellevue, and so  
we now have psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric  
nurses on staff, on our staff. They're part of  
Bellevue, but in the facility. And really working to  
create a trauma informed environment in our  
facilities. So I think with the assessment tools we  
are able to--they are able to do better assessments  
and to be able to capture better what the needs are  
that the young people present. And then what the  
right response and interventions are. So I think

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that our partnership with Bellevue is yielding some very good results.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Just a couple more questions because I know that we have colleagues that have questions. I wanted to ask you about the dual status that children have at times, and the increased collaboration. And how can we have the increased collaboration in the Juvenile Justice System here and the Foster Care system?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So I think once again the major area where we're focusing this is really on the crossover work. But I think that within ACS, you know, one of the challenges is breaking out of the silos. And understanding the children in Juvenile Justice are foster care youth the way we set up the system in the State of New York. So there is much greater collaboration within our Foster Care system and our Child Welfare system. But more importantly, there is greater collaboration with our external partners like the Family Court and Probation where there's-- And corporation counsel. I can't forget about corporation counsel with the presenting agency. We have partnered together, and there is alignment around a vision that says, Where



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possible, and where young people don't pose a risk to public safety, Child Welfare interventions are better than a punitive criminal justice response. And that's the work that we're doing together to prevent children from going deeper into the Juvenile Justice System, when we're really looking at behavioral challenges.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Commissioner, I want to commend you and the administration for all the new hires that you're going to be having. I know in the last four years I was always told we could do more with less. I never bought that argument, because if you did, why did you have those people in the first place to start with? So, I--we need the staff. You know, I did Preventive Services in a past life. It is very intense. We're dealing with real lives, and I like what you said earlier. We're talking about kids, children who are very vulnerable, who are very scared, who are going through a tremendous amount. Many of them, as you know, through trauma, and they don't have the coping mechanisms. So the ratio that you are creating the internal system I see you are, as a matter of fact, changing some of the structures. I think it's going

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1 to be-- Number one, it's going to be very  
2 encouraging for the staff that is already there. The  
3 reinforcements are coming, and the same time  
4 providing the training. And I think that is so  
5 necessary to provide training, and you have like an  
6 Easter, too, that you're putting together. I think  
7 is just genius. Thank you so much. I'll turn it  
8 back to--  
9

10 COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing]  
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: --my Co-Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Chair  
14 Cabrera. Commissioner, I just have a couple of  
15 questions that I want to ask, and then we'll turn it  
16 over to Council Member Ruben Wills who stepped out  
17 for a moment here. Oh, you're right here. I'm  
18 sorry. I wanted to ask about Early Learn. We had a  
19 hearing in January on the status of Early Learn. As  
20 you may surmise, and I'm sure you've been hearing it,  
21 too, we've been hearing from Early Learn providers  
22 and advocates extensively over the last several  
23 months. And across the board we're hearing a lot of  
24 consistent issues that they're raising. In the  
25 center based programs, first off the rate is

insufficient to be able to meet their obligations.

So, when Citizens Committee for Children did an informal survey, which I'm sure you've seen, the average deficit is over \$200,000 for a program. So we're seeing that that's a--that's a deficit for a small program that obviously cannot afford to run an annual deficit of \$200,000.

That's the average. The maximum was something around \$800,000 deficit. There's issues around facilities. There are issues around covering rent because the rate does not--is the same across the board. So programs that are in high rent areas are not being compensated to be able to meet those rent obligations. One area that has been particularly concerning to me is that in--in the new Early Learn structure, programs were required to go out and purchase their own health insurance. Their own workers comp insurance and the liability insurance. And when it comes to health insurance, individual employees are not purchasing health insurance. So here's a situation where under the previous system they were insured by Central Insurance of the City of New York. Under the new system, they come in. They have to buy their own

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insurance. Because they haven't gotten a raise-- If it's a 1707 worker they haven't gotten a raise in 10 years.

They're making, you know, 30 something thousand dollars a year before taxes. They have to pay 10% of their health insurance. They're opting not to do that. So here we have a situation where people have insurance that they can purchase. I mean it's there for them. It's been acquired for them to take, but they can't buy it because they can't afford it. And then we hear from the providers that they're actually relieved that so many employees are not purchasing the health insurance because they have to cover 85% or 80%. And if--I think it's 85%. And if they--if all of their employees bought the insurance, took the insurance, they couldn't afford to stay in business. So for them it's better than nobody is-- that very few people are taking the health insurance because they can't afford to pay for it out of pocket themselves. So it's not working. That's not working. Health insurance is not working. ACS or the CSA and 1707 don't have a contract.

We haven't seen, as I said a raise--and I have the schedule here--since 2005. We have this pay

1           disparity issue between 4-year-old teachers and 3-  
2           year-old teachers, which is a \$10,000 disparity. So  
3           there's a significant disincentive to become a 3-  
4           year-old teacher right now in the Early Learn system.  
5           So the system itself we're hearing pretty clearly it  
6           is messed up. And it needs to be addressed, and  
7           really the only way that we're going to effectively  
8           address this is with additional funding. All of  
9           these--these issues can't--they not just policy  
10          issues. They have to be fixed with funding. Is ACS  
11          looking to address all of these serious structural  
12          issues that are pretty well established. If you talk  
13          to providers I mean these are all--these are all real  
14          issues. These aren't--they're not making them up.  
15          Are we looking to address those issues in the  
16          Preliminary Budget, and we're not in the Preliminary  
17          Budget why not? And are we going to look to address  
18          some in the Executive Budget?

19                   COMMISSIONER CARRION: So clearly, it's  
20                   not in the Preliminary Budget, right. So let me  
21                   share with you that I understand everything that  
22                   you've said. I think that I would like you, and I  
23                   know that you are certainly aware of this, is that we  
24                   have a serious concern, a problem around enrollment.  
25

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1 And that if we had more of our programs at full  
2 enrollment, we wouldn't be seeing as many of these  
3 problems. I acknowledge that there might be some,  
4 but even at full enrollment we would still have some  
5 challenges. We don't know the depth or breadth of  
6 that, and everything has been pretty anecdotal. So  
7 we don't know. I will tell you that New York City by  
8 far, and probably anywhere in the country, but I  
9 certainly can attest to New York State, contributes  
10 more than other jurisdiction in tax levy dollars to  
11 support early care and learning. And support our  
12 Early Learn system. I would also tell you that New  
13 York State when it set its market rate, set a  
14 separate much higher rate for New York City. So  
15 there is a separate market rate for New York City.  
16 And New York City still pays above that rate that was  
17 set by the State, which is the minimum. We pay much  
18 more than that. So I agree with you, and that is  
19 what the task force is doing is taking a deep dive  
20 into what the issues are in coming up with  
21 recommendations. I don't--I'm not--I'm not sure what  
22 the right answer is and how to address all of those  
23 problems. Hopefully, we will come to some solution.  
24 But we all need to work a lot harder to get these  
25

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1 programs fully enrolled. And I don't think that any  
2 of us want to reach a situation where we're paying  
3 more rent than we are for programs and services.

4  
5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Unfortunately, where  
6 we are in New York City today is that rents have gone  
7 up. Commercial rents have gone up. I mean, you  
8 know, quite frankly you're competing. Your programs  
9 are competing with charter schools. They're  
10 competing with commercial uses that are driving up  
11 the rents, and that's something that's really beyond  
12 the jurisdiction of both his Council and ACS. We  
13 can't control commercial rent. But I'm not--I'm not  
14 convinced, and I think that from what I've heard from  
15 providers across the board that this is strictly an  
16 enrollment issue. Because we've--we've heard from  
17 providers that they are at enrollments of 90% or 95%,  
18 which is-- You know, it's not--it's not easy to be  
19 right at 100% all of the time. And, you know,  
20 that's--that's, you know, there's a--that's a--that's  
21 a challenge that every educational institution has to  
22 face. But we don't--we don't, you know, penalize  
23 schools if they're at 95% enrollment. These are  
24 structural issues. I mean clearly the issue around  
25 health insurance, I don't think has anything to do

1 with enrollment. That is--people are not taking  
2 health insurance. Is there a consideration to go  
3 back to insurance under--coverage under the City of  
4 New York, under a central insurance coverage, which  
5 was the rule for a very long time?  
6

7 COMMISSIONER CARRION: It doesn't exist  
8 any more, and the world of health insurance has  
9 changed substantially with the Affordable Health Care  
10 Act that I think makes that possible. But I'm not  
11 the expert. That's my understanding.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because I mean again  
13 it's not--I mean if people aren't buying--if people  
14 aren't taking the health insurance that's offered to  
15 them, something is wrong. And it's not just the  
16 rate. There something that's wrong with the pay, the  
17 City's contribution to insurance coverage. I'm  
18 afraid that the system itself is--puts an incredible  
19 strain under its current configuration on these  
20 programs, and they're crying for help. And I think  
21 that I would--I would like to see in this budget the  
22 steps that ACS is looking to take to start to  
23 alleviate some of those substantiated concerns. I  
24 mean they're not--again, they're not--they're not  
25 just pulling things out of thin air.



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COMMISSIONER CARRION: I hear your  
concerns.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. I'll turn  
it over to Council Member Ruben Wills who has  
questions and we'll start the clock at five minutes  
and we'll come back for a second round.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Thank you, Mr.  
Chair. Commissioner, can you tell me what the exact  
formula of the Limited Secure Facilities Phase 2 is  
in regards to the City, State and Federal dollars?  
How much does each chip into that?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: There's--the way  
the financing for Limited Secure has been structured  
it's a state block grant--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing]  
Okay.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: --that's set for  
Close to Home.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: So the entire  
expenditure for Phase 2 of the LSP is coming from the  
State and nothing is coming from city dollars?  
Nothing from construction, support, nothing?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
There is city also.

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: There is city  
also.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: And is there any  
federal money in that mix?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Federal dollar?

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: No, is it totally  
State and City.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's State and  
City.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Oh--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing]  
Does ACS--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing]  
That's for--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: I'm sorry.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Not for Limited  
Secure though?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: That's  
limited.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: No, for Limited  
Secure there are no federal dollars. For non-secure  
there are federal dollars, Title 4A dollars.

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COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay. Does ACS provide oversight for the subcontractors of the Limited Secure Facilities contracts. If so, what roles and interactions does ACS provide? What do they provide?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We absolutely provide oversight for the--for our providers. We have a robust oversight where we visit, review their work. They're accountable to us. They have reports to submit. We go on site. So there is robust oversight from ACS, and there is very robust oversight from the State that has a designated unit that has over 30 people that are charged exclusively with the oversight of the Close to Home Initiative.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: So what does ACS or this robust oversight from the State? Would it be done in regards to South Ozone Park facility. Since February it has received two stop work orders. They cited several ECB violations including workers' safety, and it's currently subject to a special audit by the DOB with preliminary findings that resulted in a notice to revoke permit.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Excuse me. I'm sorry. I was confused. I answered your question in

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terms of the program providers. We're talking about  
the contracts for construction?

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: All contracts  
period, architect contracts--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing]  
Well, if you're talking about the construction--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: --the construction  
contracts, everything.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: --you're talking  
about development.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Because the  
contract--the construction contracts I would assume  
are contracted out by either ACS or the provider.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: They're provider  
contracts.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay. So the  
provider's contracts are out for the architect and  
the construction company?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes, and they're  
responsible for that oversight.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: [interposing] And  
ACS provides any support for that?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We--we have  
general oversight because--we have general oversight

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but the relationship is between the contractor and  
the provider agency.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: So why would ACS  
be pushing the Department of Buildings to approve a  
waiver for--a waiver for the People with Disabilities  
Act?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Because those are  
our--those are our providers, and those are  
facilities that would house our young people. So we--  
-

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing] So  
if--if you're pushing them to make sure that this  
facility can gain a waiver-- Okay, let me just back  
up. Are you--are you familiar with the fact that  
architect submitted erroneous information a wrong  
document to the Department of Buildings to receive  
the first waiver in the South Ozone Park facility?  
Or is any of your staff aware of that? Because I've  
written letter to you. So I'm sure somebody has  
received it.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: I'm not aware of  
that.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: You're not aware  
of it. Okay. Well, we have a copy of it fore you

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1 from the Department of Buildings, and it is in their  
2 audit stating that this architect and contract who  
3 submitted this information. He actually submitted it  
4 from a plan from the Bronx, and that's why their  
5 permits went through in the first place. That was  
6 now corrected by your organization pushing for them  
7 to get a waiver for the people with disabilities.  
8 And what I don't understand is if you are providing  
9 all of these services in these facilities, why would  
10 your organization believe that they do not have to be  
11 in compliance with this?

12 [pause]

13  
14 COMMISSIONER CARRION: The way the--the  
15 way it works is that we are required to have one  
16 facility that is compliant with the American  
17 Disabilities Act. So not every single facility has  
18 to be compliant because we have the ability to direct  
19 young people that have whatever disability, mobility  
20 issues to the facility that is certified and meets  
21 all the disability requirements for EGLAS [sic].

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: So you're saying  
23 that the total capacity that you project of anyone  
24 that may have a disability [bell] plus those-- I need  
25 extra time, Mr. Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Thank you. All of the people that may come into visitation or actually provide services would be enough for one facility to house them?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: That's our--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing]  
Even with the age of responsibility, criminal responsibility being raised and that's going to expand your program. You've already taken all of those projections into account?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We're planning for Limited Secure. We're not planning for Raise the Age.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: All right, but you did say that you were preparing for Raise the Age in the budget. So your limited secure facilities--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] But the Limited Secure system is separate from what our Raise the Age facilities, additional facilities we would need. So right now we're focused on what our needs are in terms where-- We're opening facilities in April to a Limited Secure for the current population. So Raise the Age is a two-year horizon

that requires lots of planning and work moving forward.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: I don't understand how that statement can actually be made with making projections, but if that's what you want to say on the record that fine. Also, are you aware that this Limited Secure facility in the class that in your letter to the Department of Buildings as being a Use Group 3 Community Facility? Are you aware that that states that it has to have a not-for-profit that is the owner and operator of the facility?

[pause]

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes, we are aware.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: So if you're aware of that by your letter, are you aware with the copy of the deed that the owner of the facility is not a not-for-profit. Therefore, they're in violation of it? Of the South Ozone Park facility--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: --I'm talking about.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [off mic] Please wrap it up. [sic]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: No, problem.



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COMMISSIONER CARRION: So, Council Member Wills, I think it would be helpful if you gave me the information that you have so we can review it. The General Counsel just came to speak to us. Some of this we know. Some of it we don't know.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: [interposing] You know what--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So that if you want--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: --Commissioner, I appreciate that, and I appreciate the work you're doing. But I think it's disingenuous for the General Counsel to come over and tell you this now, when we've sent correspondence to you. This has already been in part of the Department of Buildings' preliminary findings. These are things that are public documents. So instead of ACS trying to ram a facility down the throat of a community that does not need this because of over saturation, I think that you should just--just work on some of the correspondence that we've already sent you. We've sent you this about the waiver, and then ACS themselves have gone over to the Department of Buildings to force a waiver in so you will be in

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1 compliance. But now, if you sent a letter to the DOB  
2 saying that they're in--that this is a part of a  
3 Class 3 or Group 3 Community facility and it clearly  
4 says that it has to be owned and operated by a not-  
5 for-profit. And the deed that you signed with--  
6 Well, the contract provided that you put up, which is  
7 responsible for over half--well, half of the six  
8 facilities that you're doing is now in contract with  
9 a lease for a corporation that is clearly a not-for-  
10 profit. I don't understand why I would have to  
11 forward this to you again while in the meantime with  
12 me keep forwarding correspondence to you. You're  
13 just pushing this project through. Even if we're not  
14 talking about that, are we talking--do you have any  
15 idea of what oversaturation is? And does ACS take  
16 into account oversaturation for these types of  
17 facilities in the community? Because if it does,  
18 then I want to know why we have one close to home  
19 non-secured facility on the same block that we have  
20 this. That facility is an ALU [sic] on the same  
21 block as this. And then in your testimony you said  
22 that you're working with DHS, and less than 20 blocks  
23 away we have a shelter with 37 Level 2 and 3 sex  
24 offenders. So even if we're going to talk about  
25

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1 process. Even if we're going to talk about you  
2 getting an amendment, we're not attacking you. You  
3 just happen to be the head of agency. Please  
4 understand that. But even if we talk about me keep  
5 giving correspondence to your counsel or whoever  
6 else, the representatives that are here, we still  
7 have some real factors that we need to deal with. So  
8 when you sited this facility in a majority/minority  
9 community again, and we've had town hall meetings  
10 with you, what I want to know is oversaturation one  
11 of the issues that you cited when siting these  
12 facilities there?  
13

14 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Council Member  
15 Wills, this contract was procured two years ago, if  
16 not more, and part of the procurement the agencies  
17 came with site control. ACS did not have a role in  
18 selecting the sites.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Commissioner, you  
20 just said ACS has a robust--

21 COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing]  
22 Oversight--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: --oversight

24 COMMISSIONER CARRION: --over a program.  
25

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COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: --of your  
providers.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Over our  
providers, but the providers--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing]  
Okay, so your providers--Commissioner, with all due  
respect, if your providers--if you have oversight of  
the providers, then somebody should--you should have  
had some type of mechanism to check and see if this  
facility would have been not just acceptable but  
feasible in this community. Do you realize that you  
are going to have a 15 or 12 or 16-foot fence  
heights? You're shaking your head no. So you have  
that information, but you don't have that other  
information? You shook your head no just now. Are  
you saying that you're not going to have those fence  
heights?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We have six-foot  
high fence.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: The proposed fence  
heights for this facility were 12 to 15 feet.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's six feet.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: It's six feet now  
and it's a Limited Secure facility?

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Right, in the  
midst of a residential block around the corner from  
another facility that you have, which you had A1  
youth go from. And less than a mile away from a DHS  
shelter with 30 plus Level 2 and 3 sexual offenders.  
This community--and how much is this program costing?  
I think the contract is between \$8 and \$10 million.  
Yes? No? Or do you know? No?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: I would have to  
look to know exactly how much it is.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay, the contract  
is

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Council  
Member, we do need to wrap up this line of  
questioning. Please wrap up. Please conclude your  
line of questioning. [sic]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: [interposing] All  
right. I do need to know why we have this facility  
being shoved into this community where is so much  
property in and around my district. And this is not  
a NIMBY issue because any time a minority community  
is tired of having crap dumped on them--

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay,  
Council Member--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Wait, wait, wait.  
I'm sorry, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: DHS has scheduled  
particularly at this time.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: This is not a--  
this is not NIMBY and we're going to talk with DHS  
also, but this is not--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: --NIMBY issue. So  
if you could please--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] We have  
budget hearings scheduled.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: --be genuine in  
getting back to my office and my community about this  
community, about this particular project, I would  
appreciate it. And again, this is not an attack on  
you or any individual representation--representative.  
But I believe I mean this is ridiculous. I don't  
know if you guys have heard of unconscious racism,  
but I believe this is a case for it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
Member Willis. Commissioner, I want to get back to

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1 some Early Learn questions. PEN [sic] Child Care  
2 providers that are in the Early Learn system that are  
3 part of networks. We've been hearing significant  
4 concerns from those providers themselves around what  
5 seems to be a wide array of practices between the  
6 networks and the providers themselves. They include--  
7 --let me look at my notes. Let's see. There are  
8 issues around the rates being not standardized. So  
9 providers themselves being paid less than market  
10 rate. Their affiliation agreements that often lack  
11 disclosure of their rates and fees that are required  
12 of them to be paid to the networks over the last  
13 several-- Last year, several networks had begun  
14 raising their fees on providers themselves. And  
15 we've been hearing reports of providers being forced  
16 to sign affiliation agreements on the spot with no  
17 time to review them. As well having trouble getting  
18 affiliation agreements later on. There are also  
19 issues of language not being able to provide  
20 bilingual agreements with providers themselves. As  
21 you, the providers themselves are often, you know,  
22 very small providers. And there seems to be no  
23 standardization across the board with regard to these  
24 issues. Is there anything, which prohibits ACS from  
25

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1 providing clear rules for networks to have--in terms  
2 of their relations to individual providers. For  
3 example, saying that providers themselves must be  
4 paid a certain rate that the fees are set. That  
5 there's a standard contract across the board. Is  
6 there anything that-- Right now ACS does not have  
7 such requirements, correct?

9 COMMISSIONER CARRION: No, we don't. I  
10 really don't. So I'm getting notes here. I really  
11 am not aware of this issue. It hasn't been brought  
12 to my attention. So, the stipend to providers is  
13 standard. It passes through the network to  
14 providers. We don't--we're not a part to those  
15 negotiations. And it has not been brought to my  
16 attention that there is a problem. But if you're  
17 saying that there's a problem, that's something we  
18 would look into--

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER CARRION: --and we would  
21 talk to you about.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, we're--we're  
23 hearing that it is an issue, and would ACS consider  
24 instituting across the board standards to the extent  
25 that they're legally allowed to do so?



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COMMISSIONER CARRION: So, we would have  
to look into that. If there was an illegal  
prohibition or a statutory provision or a regulatory  
provision that limits our ability to do that, we  
certainly would look into that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, I would-  
I would appreciate that because we are hearing these  
reports.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In terms of child  
care vouchers, in the FY 15 Budget there was funding  
added at adoption. I just want to be clear exactly  
what the status is of this. There--there as on the  
Council side \$10 million added at adoption last year,  
but the total amount for non-mandated vouchers is  
around \$12.6, is that correct?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes, that is  
correct.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so the other \$2.6  
million was added--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] Some  
unexpended Council Funds that were in our budget, is  
that--? Yeah.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Unexpended Council  
Funds that were--that were--that were part of the  
FY14 Budget, is it?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: In  
negotiation with the Administration and the City  
Council during the adopted budget, there was \$2.6  
million of unspent Fiscal Year 14 dollars that were  
formerly City Council funded vouchers, which were  
tolled into 15. And so that added to the tally.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So all of the funding  
was then on the Council side of the ledger, is that  
correct?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: That's our  
understanding.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there--because  
there's--because this is restored funding, but it's  
restored from a few years back, there was significant  
ramping up in going through the wait list, and, you  
know, in getting letters to go out. And we very much  
appreciate ACS' willingness to work with the  
communities and this committee to make sure that that  
was happening smoothly. Is there--but because it's  
taking some time to ramp up, and it now seems to be  
ramping up, is there a consideration on ACS' part to

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1  
2 include this in the Executive Budget so that there's  
3 some stability in the system in baselining this  
4 funding. Because obviously, if the funding were to  
5 not be re-allocated in FY16, then we would have gone  
6 through a significant amount of work, you know, for a  
7 very short-lived program. SO is there--is there  
8 consideration on ACS' part to baseline this funding,  
9 \$12.6 million or are we-- You know, or do think the  
10 meat out there is obviously more. But is there a  
11 willingness to baseline this funding at this point?

12 COMMISSIONER CARRION: So as you know,  
13 this is--this is an important initiative both to the  
14 Mayor and ACS. We've worked very closely with you to  
15 implement this. And so we're really open to that  
16 conversation and discussion and we imagine that that  
17 will be part of the negotiations in conversation  
18 around this Preliminary Budget.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you. So,  
20 we've been joined, by the way, by Council Member Inez  
21 Barron. We were also joined by Council Member Corey  
22 Johnson, and we are also joined by the Interexchange  
23 Program from the Philippines that--that was here. So  
24 we want to welcome them very much. They're in the  
25 back. I want to, before turning it over to--to

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1 Council Member Barron, just ask about capital funds,  
2 and additional required funds that would--that are  
3 resulting from the recent Head Start Report, the  
4 Federal Head Start Report. Which we are planning on  
5 conducting a hearing about. But obviously, the  
6 report raised serious concerns about Head Start  
7 programs that are contracted with ACS both in terms  
8 of facilities, and overall oversight. And we're--  
9 we're going to convene a hearing shortly. It's going  
10 to be the next hearing of this committee. It's going  
11 to be on this issue. So I let you know. But, I want  
12 to see if there are commitments that are being made  
13 in the Preliminary Budget or other considerations  
14 being given to the issues around Head Start for the  
15 Executive Budget as a result of that report?

17 COMMISSIONER CARRION: So, no, obviously  
18 not in the Preliminary Budget, but we have already  
19 worked very, very closely with the programs to make  
20 all of the repairs that were capital--you know,  
21 building types of repairs or program facility program  
22 needs. ACS made a huge investment in helping the  
23 programs meet those standards, and we continue to  
24 work with each of the programs to be able to make  
25 sure that they're meeting all the health and safety

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standards of both the City and the Federal Head Start  
Office.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: No, new funds will  
be required to do that because in the budget we see a  
reduction of \$14.4 million in Head Start funding  
that's reflected in--that's part of the UPK, but it's  
the--

COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] It's  
UPK.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --but there's no--  
there's no additional funding in the Head Start  
budget to address these concerns. Is there--do you  
anticipate that there is going to be funding  
required? The concerns that are raised out of that  
report are significant and serious. And do you  
believe that funding is going to be required to  
address those needs?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So I think that  
we're still in the process of reviewing that. We've  
made many--we've made the repairs that are necessary.  
And so that is still for us we're taking a very close  
look as to what are the needs moving forward, if any,  
after we've made the corrections and addressed the  
deficiencies that have been identified.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So we'll speak more  
about this at the--at the next hearing, but with that  
I will turn it over to my colleague Council Member  
Barron for questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.  
Chair, and to the Co-Chairs for hosting--having this  
important hearing. Thank you to the panel for  
coming. I have a just a few questions. The Early  
Learn Contract enrollment is noted here as having  
declined by 3.1% during the first four months of  
Fiscal 2015. To what do you attribute that decline?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So, you know, it's  
hard to be able to look at a trend over a four-month  
period. From last year Early Learn enrollment  
actually has gone up from 86% to 88%. But we always--  
So having said that, we're always challenged with the  
fluctuations in enrollment in Early Learn. We're  
working very closely with Department of Homelessness  
for instance to identify every child that's in that  
system under the age of four to be able to make sure  
that they have access--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
Okay.

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: --to an Early  
Learn program.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I'm on the clock.  
So I'm just going to try to be succinct. You may  
remember last year I asked about the fact that Early  
Learn seemed to have had some very questionable  
practices in awarding the contracts. And I know that  
that there was one organization who had their  
submission rescored so that they fell below the  
cutoff. And I understand that they be pursuing some  
other legal actions in that regard. But those  
contracts that were taken from well established  
groups with successful national recognition, and  
given to other groups that did not represent the  
children in those areas maybe a part of the reason  
for that decline as well. So we have no way of  
tracking that?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And I asked last  
year what outreach had been done to persons who had  
not been given an opportunity to continue to be  
employed. And you told me there was a great  
outreach, and people had been contacted to let them  
know that there's a possibility. Groups came behind

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1 your panel, and said that that was the case. So I'm  
2 very much concerned that as we talk about the  
3 outreach and the work that's being done to make sure  
4 that people are informed that that is, in fact, the  
5 case. I do have a question also about 966 Fulton  
6 Street. I think Council Member Cumbo may have asked  
7 you about that. And, I wanted to know what is the  
8 delay in reaching an agreement with the landlord for  
9 negotiating a lease for that space which has an Early  
10 Learn program as well as a senior program?  
11

12 COMMISSIONER CARRION: I know that what I  
13 can share with you is that the negotiations are  
14 underway. DCAS represents ACS and also the agencies  
15 in negotiating leases.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So DCAS is doing  
17 the negotiations. You're not in any way involved in  
18 that?

19 COMMISSIONER CARRION: So DCAS does the  
20 negotiations.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. Well,  
22 there seems that there's some concerns because DCAS  
23 at this point wants to have a short-term lease of  
24 only three years. But yet still requiring major  
25 plumbing for the landlord to complete in order to



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1 negotiate that. So we're very concerned about that,  
2 and I do have one further question. You say in your  
3 testimony that you have a partnership with CUNY for  
4 professional development. I'm very much concerned  
5 how that's structured because I am the Chair of the  
6 Committee on Higher Education. So I want to know  
7 have you already designed the curriculum? Is it  
8 going to be a required curriculum, or is it going to  
9 be a menu of offerings where each venue can pick what  
10 it is that they want? How is it going to be  
11 structured?  
12

13 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, we have not  
14 finalized the curriculum or how that is going to be  
15 structured yet.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So do you have an  
17 objective going in to structuring it as to what  
18 benefits you want to achieve from that. So that that  
19 can help--

20 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Oh, absolutely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, and what  
22 are some of those?

23 COMMISSIONER CARRION: So I mean the idea  
24 is really to have experts at the community system  
25 that are experts in child welfare help to develop the

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curriculum. We're looking at introducing simulated, and training in different modalities, introducing how we deliver the training. We want to make sure that staff. Yes, staff has different ways of learning, and we want to make sure that the Workforce Training Institute is able to present training in different ways simulated. And we're--we really want to have a menu of different trainings and a catalog that we can provide both to our frontline staff, and the provider agencies.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And what would be the costs associated with that training?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So, overall, it's \$9.7 million that's being allocated for the development of the Workforce Training Institute.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CUMBO: Thank you. Council Member Barron brought up a point that we didn't get clarity in terms of the question as far as the capital improvements that are being asked of the landlord to make major capital improvements that would place a hardship on the landlord in that way. Without him having the stability and the understanding of how long that lease will actually be

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1 in place. So can you talk about that in terms of the  
2 rationale of asking landlords to make major capital  
3 improvements. But also not extending a long-term  
4 lease?  
5

6 COMMISSIONER CARRION: I really can't  
7 speak to the details of the negotiation because I'm  
8 really not in the room. I think that we want to make  
9 sure that every facility that we house children is up  
10 to building code. And is--meets all the safe--health  
11 and safety standards. But I really can't talk or  
12 speak to the details of the negotiation.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. Council  
14 Member Levin also brought up an interesting point in  
15 terms of the cost of commercial real estate. And  
16 your point in terms of spending more potentially on  
17 the real estate than actually on the care of the  
18 children. And, of course, it's a dilemma, and it's a  
19 challenge in that way. But if the lease costs had  
20 been a sticking point, would extending lease terms  
21 help in leveling off some of those challenges. So if  
22 you offered in the negotiations, and you entered into  
23 agreements with landlords for long-term leases, which  
24 is what they are asking for, that would give  
25 particularly in highly gentrifying communities, a way

1 to lock in a certain amount of rent that would be  
2 paid for. Versus every year or every three years  
3 renegotiating that lease where rent costs in my  
4 district are skyrocketing every year, every three  
5 years. What it will be this year will be different  
6 from what it will be ten years from now. So wouldn't  
7 long-term leases give us the opportunity to allow the  
8 landlords to make those capital improvements with  
9 comfort. But also to lock a rate that the day care  
10 providers--excuse me. That the agencies will be able  
11 to afford to actually pay.  
12

13 COMMISSIONER CARRION: You know, I think  
14 that those decisions are made case-by-case depending  
15 on the situation. You know, once again, the  
16 overarching goal is to align these contracts with the  
17 lease--align the lease with the contract terms. But  
18 it really is a case-by-case determination that's made  
19 by ACS, OMB, DCAS as to what the best solution is for  
20 a particular situation.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, I'll just  
22 say that on this case-by-case basis that you'll look  
23 favorably on the opportunity to make sure that this  
24 almost 40-year provider is given the opportunity. As  
25 was announced at the press conference yesterday,

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1 before all of these children, was the fact that they  
2 were at the same time dealing with this issue also  
3 talking about full day UPK. And what a tragedy that  
4 will be if those young people are not given an  
5 opportunity to benefit from that. The last question  
6 I have is if current--if current providers have not  
7 reached the 100% capacity goal, what is the thought  
8 process in expanding to acquire more seats in the UPK  
9 campaign?  
10

11 COMMISSIONER CARRION: You know, it's  
12 about having different choices in a community, and  
13 serving threes and serving fours. There might be a  
14 greater demand in a community for a UPK program. It  
15 really depends on what the needs are in a particular  
16 community.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. Well, I'll  
18 just close by saying I do look forward to coming to  
19 resolve and resolution on this issue very quickly  
20 because we have a number of 3-year-olds and 4-year-  
21 olds who are actively going to be looking towards an  
22 opportunity to have the UPK education that we have  
23 rolled out and touted all throughout New York City.  
24 And wanting to make sure that these young people have  
25 this opportunity, but that a viable institution in

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our community, which is a landmark institution in our community for cultural gathering, for information, for our young people, for our seniors. We have to make sure that this entity stays in our community. And I look forward to working with your agency this week to make sure that this Young Minds program stays in existence, and also thrives. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Commissioner, I just have one last question or comment. It was mentioned already that we have about 1,300 children that are, you know, ready to be adopted. And it's shocking to me that we have literally thousands of Americans who will go overseas and spend \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year to adopt a child overseas while we have all these children here who are looking, you know, for a family. Do you get the sense that maybe some--a lot of people, including myself at one point they don't realize that we have so many children waiting. And if you could share with us what--is there a cost at all to the potential new parents? How does the process work?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: So I agree that we really need to do a better job of publicizing, and we

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1 have an art gallery. There are lots of things that  
2 we do now, but I think that clearly we need to do  
3 more to get the message out that these children are  
4 waiting. And that they need adoptive homes. I think  
5 that we have reasons to adopt a child. If a child  
6 has any particular kind of disability or special  
7 needs, there is subsidized adoption dollar subsidies  
8 for adoptions that are available for families.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] What  
11 is--what is--if you could be a bit--a little bit more  
12 specific. What does that mean? Does that mean that  
13 get a stipend for--?

14 COMMISSIONER CARRION: [interposing] The  
15 get a stipend. They get a stipend until the age of  
16 21 while the child is in--you know, after they have  
17 adopted their child up to the age of 21 to help  
18 support their--that child in their home because the  
19 child has special needs.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Well, does the  
21 child have a disability or not? I'm sorry for  
22 interrupting.

23 COMMISSIONER CARRION: It's a child with  
24 special needs.

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CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Oh, a child with special needs. How many are--Do you happen to know how many are below the age of 5 that are waiting for adoption or--?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: I don't have that number handy.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: But you do have children that are under the age of 5 waiting for adoption?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We--we might.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We might.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: The majority are teenagers?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: The majority are older children.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Okay, and do you use public service announcements. You know, like Channel 74?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: We do and we have a partnership with Wednesday's Child--

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: [interposing] Okay.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: --for instance at ABC--at ABC or NBC. NBC that publicizes that--the



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public service announcements. We're working right now in seeing whether or not we could expand that with other media.

CHAIRPERSON CABRERA: Very good.  
Excellent. Thank you so much, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member Wills, do you have a follow up round?

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: So, we're not going to go back into the Limited Secure area, commissioner. I would just ask publicly that we set up a meeting with myself and your office as soon as possible. I have a couple of questions. One of the Council Members that was here wanted me to ask you about the difference between foster care services and foster care support?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
Does he mean the functional budget?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Do you mean the functional budget?

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Yes. Do you want to answer that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: Yes, I think I think I have it. [pause] So foster care support

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1 is really talking about the staffing. So it includes  
2 family permanency, all placement, and pre-placement  
3 services; parent recruitment contracts; youth;  
4 financial; employment; staff. We have Foster Care  
5 Services. Our contacts are with the foster care  
6 agencies primarily.  
7

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay, so do you  
9 have an agency that is like SCO [sic] that will fall  
10 under foster care services--

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [interposing]  
12 That's right.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: --and direct to  
14 the parents would fall under foster care support?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: Yes, if you  
16 look at the functional, it only has OTPS under Foster  
17 Care Services. So all the staffing related with  
18 monitoring foster care. That's in the direct foster  
19 care area under foster care support.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: So--

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: :  
22 [interposing] Functional.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: --from what I'm  
24 understanding, and this is--I have to premise this  
25 with I don't have the research on it. Another

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1 councilman asked me before they me before they left  
2 to ask this. Some of these services to recruit new  
3 parents has gone down, the amount that you put into  
4 recruiting new parents in certain-- I don't know  
5 whether it's just in Southeast Queens. I'm sure it's  
6 not, but I know this is coming out of Southeast  
7 Queens. Is that true?

9 COMMISSIONER CARRION: SO I think what  
10 you might be referring to is that there are two  
11 contracts that historically ACS has had for  
12 recruitment of both adoptive and foster parents that  
13 I am renewing because I don't think they performed  
14 well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay. Could you  
16 give me their names or is it--this is not secret,  
17 right? This is public information?

18 COMMISSIONER CARRION: No, it's not a  
19 secret. It's I've Got to Believe and it's--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: You've Got to  
21 Believe.

22 COMMISSIONER CARRION: You've Got to  
23 Believe.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Yeah, I got an  
25 email from them. Okay, so that's them.

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COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yeah, it's You've  
Got to Believe and they have a big campaign.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: And the second one  
Council for Adoptive--Adoptive Children. Both  
agencies had a contract with ACS. That wasn't  
renewed and it was an RFP process. They were--were  
granted the contracts again, and when I've come on  
board and reviewed the entire way that we recruit  
foster parents and adoptive parents and how we're  
structured, I'm redesigning that. And so, at this  
point in time I'm not prepared to renew those  
contracts.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay. With those  
were part of these contracts to recruit foster  
parents? Part of the hard to recruit like the ages  
between 10 and 16 or something like that was it?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes, they were.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay, and what  
have we done to mitigate the loss of those two  
providers.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Well, quite  
frankly, Council Member in my estimation it wasn't a  
great loss. Their recruitment numbers weren't all

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1 that great, and so the agency does a lot to recruit.  
2  
3 And I'm not prepared to continue to spend that kind  
4 of money for the performance that I was getting.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER CARRION: And so, that's an  
7 unpopular decision, but I think it's a wise  
8 stewardship of the City's money.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay, thank you.  
10 One of the things I wanted to ask was the State  
11 passed a law that says that there should mandatory  
12 kindergarten for every student. I think that was in  
13 2012 or--2012 or something like that. I know that  
14 our former Speaker pushed a lot of programs that deal  
15 with that. Have we dealt with the fact that a lot of  
16 the children that have been now recruited for  
17 Universal Pre-K will become kindergarten parents--  
18 children the very next year? And if we have, what  
19 are we going to do because I'm under the impression  
20 that we short on space for kindergartens. We're not  
21 going to have enough kindergarten classroom space if  
22 we have 53 to 70 or 80,000 new children in Universal  
23 Pre-K moving up. So are we--are we designing  
24 programs now so that the CBOs will become partners  
25

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with us providing kindergarten also? Because they  
used to provide kindergarten before.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Not to my  
knowledge.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay. So what  
are--are we looking at that, the possibility of not  
having enough kindergarten space?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: I think you need  
to ask DOE.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: DOE. Okay, I  
know. I thought maybe because you being a partner  
with DOE we would have a smooth transition and we  
work together with them. Okay, that's not a problem.  
There are only a couple other questions. Well, one  
other question because I know I'm running out of time  
for ACS. [bell] Oh, I ran out of time. All right.  
Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
Member Wills. Commissioner, thank you very much. We  
just have a couple more questions for you. We do  
have apologies to Commissioner Gilbert Taylor, who is  
set to testify right after we conclude here. But I  
do want to ask a few questions to wrap up. Do these-  
-do all the new needs presented here represent the

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entirety of the new needs presented by ACS to OMB,  
and to the Mayor for the FY16 Budget?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Yes, it does.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So do we--we're not  
expecting that there will be additional new needs  
presented in the Executive Budget?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Not to my  
knowledge, but I have a lot of ideas. [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, new needs may  
arise, but there's nothing--there's nothing that was  
presented up to this point to the Mayoral OMB as new  
needs that--that was not included in the Preliminary  
Budget?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: No, the Mayor and  
the OMB are very--have been very, very supportive of  
the work that we've been doing in our requests to  
strengthen our work.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: A couple of more  
questions here. With regard to Operation Safe, we  
have heard from advocates with concerns about  
cultural competency, cultural sensitivity in the  
overall system. So it's our understanding that ACS  
actually will pay a parent advocate \$40 per--like a  
per diem I suppose for language accessibility in

1 communities where there is a language barrier. But  
2 that seems to be something of a band-aid, if you  
3 will, not truly addressing issues around language  
4 accessibility when it comes to Child Protective  
5 Services, Preventive Services, Foster Care. Is there  
6 a greater effort as part either Operation Safe or the  
7 Child Welfare Reforms that are being currently  
8 proposed for greater cultural sensitivity, language  
9 access, et cetera?  
10

11 COMMISSIONER CARRION: There--so there, I  
12 think two related questions you've asked. One is  
13 around the cultural sensitivity training and  
14 awareness in the agency, and I think that have that  
15 as part of our training and curriculum. We do many  
16 trainings without Child Protective system to make  
17 sure that our staff is culturally competent. We have  
18 a very diverse staff.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Does that include  
20 language?

21 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Also, we have a  
22 language policy in the agency. So there are  
23 different ways that we address that. One is by  
24 trying to where possible to hire staff that is  
25 bilingual. We also have access to translators and



1 interpreters that we hire and we pay for, for  
2 agencies to make sure that agencies have the language  
3 skill set that they need. We also work very hard  
4 with agencies and encourage agencies to hire staff  
5 that has a language capacity. And we also have, you  
6 know, the telephone interpreter service. So, we  
7 monitor that very closely. And, in fact, as a result  
8 of some work that--that we're doing, 311 now will be  
9 able to take complaints about lack of language  
10 access, and be able to report out by agency. So we  
11 think that's important for us to be able to know when  
12 there is a concern or an inability to provide the  
13 services that are needed to interpret or translate.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Does that include  
16 Mandarin and Cantonese, Bengali. You know, the wide  
17 array of languages that are spoken in our city.

18 COMMISSIONER CARRION: We try very hard  
19 to have all the languages that are represented within  
20 our client population. Some are more accessible than  
21 others, but we have access to all of those service  
22 translators.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry. Just a couple  
24 more questions here. In last year's Preliminary  
25 Budget hearing--switching gears here. In last year's

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1 Preliminary Budget hearing you stated that ACS had  
2 paid out over \$8 million for legally owed vacation  
3 time and sick pay under the Collective Bargaining  
4 Contract for former child care workers. We're  
5 hearing that the \$8 million did not cover all of the  
6 funds that were to be paid out. What is the  
7 remainder of the--what is the status on the remainder  
8 of the payment?  
9

10 COMMISSIONER CARRION: So, we have paid  
11 now \$11.8 million. So there has been a substantial  
12 increase in payouts. We await--we could only pay out  
13 based on the receipt of audits. And so, we are  
14 working with the day care. We continue to work and  
15 we have for a number of years with the Day Care  
16 Council to be able to get these audits, and to be  
17 able to pay out these vacation accruals.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you have a sense  
19 of how much more that will ultimately be?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
21 Eighty-six percent came in.

22 COMMISSIONER CARRION: Eighty-six percent  
23 came in.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So the \$11.8  
25 represents 80.6?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NUCCIO: [off mic]  
Eighty-six.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Eighty-six  
percent.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Eighty-six. Thank  
you. At the Early Learn hearing in January, ACS  
announced that it would be partnering with Small  
Business Services to work--provide technical  
assistance around business skills for child care  
providers. Is there going to be a cost associated  
with that out of the ACS Child Care Budget?

COMMISSIONER CARRION: No. Not that we  
anticipate at this point. We've met with them. They  
have identified a set--a series of trainings that  
they have that they think might be applicable to our  
day care providers. And they've also offered to  
create a specialized set of trainings for our  
providers. Because we feel a sense of urgency, we're  
right now reviewing the trainings that they have  
already to see which would be applicable because we  
think that developing a curriculum would take some  
time, a set of trainings geared just to our day care  
providers. We certainly will explore that with them,

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but we're interested in getting these trainings up  
and running as soon as possible.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Commissioner,  
thank you very much. Deputy Commissioners, thank you  
very much for your testimony. We look forward to  
working with you as part of the Council's response to  
the Preliminary Budget, and as you present the  
Executive Budget, we look forward to seeing you in a  
couple of months. It's been very appreciated your  
testimony and your candor, and thank you very much  
for your time.

COMMISSIONER CARRION: Thank you.

[pause]

SERGEANT-A-ARMS: Ladies and gentlemen,  
please find a seat.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good afternoon,  
everybody. We'll resume the Preliminary Budget  
hearing for the General Welfare Committee. At this  
time, I want to acknowledge my colleague Ruben Wills,  
who has joined us. We are going to hear from the  
Department of Homeless Services next. This is our--  
this is the second of our Preliminary Budget hearings  
for the General Welfare Committee. We look forward

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to the testimony of the Department of Homeless Services, Commissioner Gilbert Taylor regarding DHS' Preliminary Budget and general agency operations within its proposed \$1.03 billion budget. As well as performance indicators for Homeless Services within the Fiscal 2015 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report. DHS provides emergency shelter, re-housing support and services to single adults and families with little to no alternative housing options. As the homeless population continues to grow to unprecedented levels in New York City, so does the demand for financial resources required to meet the needs for this vulnerable population.

The Proposed Fiscal 2016 Budget-- Preliminary Budget for DHS increased by \$79 million when compared to the Fiscal 2016 Adopted Budget, which represents an 8.3% increase. This increase in funding can largely be attributed to additional new needs related to the new Living in Communities or the LINC Rental Assistance Program. As well as Preventative Services. Since adoption of the Fiscal 2015 Budget, DHS' Fiscal 16 Budget has grown by \$242.1 million due to 11--\$111.7 million in new needs, and \$130.4 million in other adjustments. I am

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1  
2 pleased to see that DHS' Revised Mission Statement  
3 includes language that reflects a commitment to  
4 transition those in shelter into stable housing. And  
5 providing the tools needed to remain in housing,  
6 which could be seen through the implementation of  
7 LINC in partnership with the Human Resources  
8 Administration and the State of New York.

9           For years the Council has been advocating  
10 for a new rental assistance program for the homeless  
11 after the elimination of the Advantage Program. Last  
12 year, the Council worked closely with the  
13 Administration to advocate for State funding, and for  
14 a change in the State Budget language for a rental  
15 assistance program for the working poor and  
16 chronically homeless. Given that the Commissioner  
17 has recently testified about the implementation of  
18 the LINC Programs, I would like to take the  
19 opportunity today to discuss the budget for LINC for  
20 the remainder of Fiscal 15 and the Proposed Budget  
21 for Fiscal 16. My main concern is if DHS is on track  
22 with LINC placements for this fiscal year, and if  
23 not, how will this impact the LINC budget for Fiscal  
24 15 and 16? Once again, this fiscal year, DHS'  
25 Shelter Census hit historic highs over 58,000

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1 individuals, of which over 24,000 are children. The  
2 agency's 2014 November Plan included an adult and  
3 family shelter re-estimates to accommodate the  
4 growing homeless population. This pattern of  
5 increased shelter spending caused concern. While we  
6 support the provision of shelter services, and making  
7 sure that the capacity is adequate enough to  
8 accommodate everyone who needs, we are anxious to see  
9 at what point the LINC Program and increased funding  
10 for Homeless Prevention Services will have a visible  
11 impact on the homeless shelter population. And to  
12 that end, we want to note that the Fiscal 15 Budget  
13 since adoption has increased so that it is currently  
14 over \$1.1 billion in adjusted for new needs.  
15

16 Before introducing the Commissioner, I  
17 would like--I would be remiss if I did--if I failed  
18 to mention the recent Department of Investigation's  
19 Report on the State of the City's Shelters and  
20 Cluster Sites. The report cited poor conditions at  
21 family shelters including hundreds of health and  
22 safety violations. Violations include vermin  
23 infestation and fire safety issues. The report found  
24 that these violations were not new but, in fact, were  
25 due to decades of neglect at our family shelters. In

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1 addition, the report found that the worst conditions  
2 were at the cluster sites, which are private  
3 residential buildings with units operated by a not-  
4 for-profit that DHS contracts and where their lease  
5 holding tenants also reside. Cluster sites were  
6 found to have lacked security, vermin infestation,  
7 mold, lacked exits and broken fire and carbon  
8 monoxide detectors. While I understand that it is  
9 unfair to lay blame squarely on the current  
10 administration and DHS, as the report period goes  
11 back to March of 2014, the deterioration can be  
12 traced back to the previous administration and their  
13 policies. It is up to the agency to now thoughtfully  
14 and quickly address these violations. I would like  
15 to take the opportunity today to discuss DHS' Capital  
16 Plan, and how the agency will allocate capital funds  
17 to address conditions at family shelters.

19 Before I introduce the Commissioner, I  
20 would like to thank the committee staff for their  
21 work, Donhini Sompura, our Senior Legislative Finance  
22 Analyst; Andrea Vasquez, Counsel for the Committee;  
23 and Tonya Cyrus, Policy Analyst for the Committee in  
24 preparing this hearing. As well as Matt Ojala, my  
25 Legislative Director. I now welcome the testimony of



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Commissioner Gilbert Taylor. And Commissioner, I need to swear you in. Commissioner, do you--do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony today, and to answer council member's questions truthfully?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I do.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much. Actually, can you all affirm as well?

MALE SPEAKER: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you very much. Commissioner Taylor, you may proceed with your testimony. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, good afternoon, Chairman Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. I am Gilbert Taylor, Commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services. Joining me today are Lula Urquhart, Deputy Commissioner for Fiscal and Procurement Operations and Audits; Diana Rodela, Assistant Commissioner for Budget and Revenue; and Donald Brosen, our Deputy Commissioner for Administration. In my testimony this afternoon I will outline Mayor de Blasio's Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget for DHS. Mayor de Blasio's leadership and commitment to homeless issues in this

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city have enabled DHS to make significant strides in the past year. When I came to DHS, it was quite clear that there were challenges ahead. Over the past year, DHS has embarked on an ambitious plan to improve the quality of life for clients within our system. At the same time, we are committed to creating a clear path for individuals to rejoin their communities. Our clients deserve the highest quality of services and we will settle for nothing less. Over the last year we have made substantial advances to reduce homelessness and to improve the lives of our clients. We have increased the financial investment into the Homebase Program. We have increased our funding to do outreach for homeless New Yorkers in the streets and in the subways. And have committed significant resources to helping our clients make the journey from shelter to home.

The Mayor's Preliminary Budget reflects over \$18 million in new needs to support our efforts to reduce our efforts to reduce our census, and to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the system. This includes funding for the LINC support and Aftercare, the PATH community-based model; Permanency Specialists; route site review

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inspections; and the expansion of our hours at our Drop-In Centers. DHS' current Fiscal Year 2015 Expense Budget is \$1.1 billion. For next year, the Fiscal Year 2016, the budget will be \$1 billion. The \$1 billion for Fiscal Year 2016 is comprised of the following: \$518.5 million in City funding; \$132 million in State funding; \$378 million in federal funding; \$4.1 million in CD Grant funding; and \$851,000 in Intercity funding. The \$1 billion budget allocates \$505 million to services for families; \$361 million for single adults; and \$26 million for supportive administration services; and \$141 million to agency wide personnel services. The DHS Capital Plan for the five-year period of Fiscal Year 2015 through Fiscal Year 2019 is currently \$107.6 million. Capital projects for homeless families totals \$29 million. Projects for single adults totals \$56 million. \$12.9 million has been allocated for administrative support services; and \$9.3 million is designated for Council--for City Council funded projects.

As you know, this Administration truly believes that we have a tale of two cities. New York City is facing pronounced economic inequality because

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of low wages, the lack of affordable housing, and the increased cost of living. Today, approximately 46% of New Yorkers live near poverty, and approximately 22% live below the poverty line. The reality of this infinite inequality combines--combined with the drivers of homelessness such as eviction, domestic violence, and overcrowding, manifests itself in the city's shelter system. At DHS we have a commitment to reducing homelessness and improving lives for all of our clients.

On Monday, March 16th, DHS' total shelter census was 57,727 individuals. This includes 2,400--24,000 children under the age of 18 living in shelters throughout the five boroughs. With our \$1.1 billion budget, we have the opportunity to substantially enhance our programmatic efforts, and to develop effective strategies to reduce our census. We recognize that we must use every tool at our disposal to get our clients out of shelter and into permanent housing. To that end, DHS recently introduced its 2015 to 2017 Operational Plan, which will be a road map for how our agency will do its work going forward. The Operational Plan delineates five goals: Prevention, outreach, shelter, housing

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1 permanency, and organizational excellence. The plan  
2 encompasses the entirety of the work that's being  
3 done by DHS, which is to guide clients in their  
4 journey home. The Operational Plan seeks to build on  
5 and refocus our efforts to assist New Yorkers who are  
6 threatened with housing instability and homelessness.  
7 The plan requires us to coordinate services across  
8 the DHS system of care. Using our existing resources  
9 to best serve our clients; improved case management;  
10 and identifying long-term sustainable strategies to  
11 reduce our census; and assist clients to achieve  
12 housing self-sufficiency.  
13

14 As I testified to previously, prevention  
15 is the cornerstone of DHS' efforts to combat  
16 homelessness. We believe that shelter is a last  
17 resort. In collaboration with our partners, we  
18 provide comprehensive services that combat the many  
19 drivers of homelessness. Our Homebase Prevention  
20 Program is nationally recognized and proven to be 95%  
21 effective in helping clients remain stably housed and  
22 out of shelter. In Fiscal Year 15, a \$20 million  
23 investment allowed us to increase Homebase offices  
24 from 14 to 23 throughout New York City. These are  
25 located in neighborhoods where DHS sees the largest

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number of shelter entrants. We know Homebase works, which is why we recently launched our largest media campaign called Imagine, to raise public aware of Homebase, and the prevention services it offers. The Imagine campaign is targeted to the communities with the most shelter entrants, and urges those at risk of homelessness to reach out for assistance before shelter is the only remaining option. We are being extremely aggressive in our marketing efforts for Homebase with ads featured on subways and buses, local establishments, faith based institutions, and community-based organizations. In addition, we have recently launched our 32nd television ad for there to be greater awareness of the program, and what it has to offer.

DHS is also seeking to strengthen our work by pursing a new community-based family shelter intake model. The community-based demonstration project for PATH, Prevention Assistance in Temporary Housing, aims to improve services to families with the ultimate goal of keeping them stably housed in their communities of origin, and making shelter an option of last resort. Instead of using a single point of access for family intake as we do now, we

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will be opening additional family shelter intake offices with emphasis on prevention first in four of the five boroughs. Which will be co-located with HRA and Homebase. Community-based family shelter intake will allow for a more effective diversion model focused on counseling, prevention, and other resources in a community-based context in order to enable families to remain stably housed in their own boroughs and neighborhoods. In addition to the prevention and diversion efforts being made through Homebase in the new community-based family intake model, DHS received \$200,000 in funding to enhance diversion efforts at the front door of the single adult system. These funds are administered through our partnership with Palladia Homebase, who provides on-site diversion services and Aftercare. The clients will continue to receive these benefits if they remain in a shelters, and maintain regular contact with the provider for Aftercare services. We have been able to rapidly return clients to the community, who we otherwise would not have been able to divert.

In addition to prevention, DHS is committed to serving all unsheltered individuals

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1 across the city. This work came into particular  
2 focus this past winter, one of the coldest on record.  
3 Throughout the city we deploy teams around the clock  
4 to encourage people living on the streets and in the  
5 subways to move into transitional and permanent  
6 housing. We have expanded our street and subway  
7 outreach work within the past year, and developed a  
8 network of transitional housing specifically to serve  
9 this population. DHS added more Safe Haven and  
10 stabilization beds to our system in FY15.

11 Stabilization beds provide an alternative housing  
12 option for individuals who are unwilling to enter  
13 traditional shelter. Safe Haven are shelter options  
14 for street homeless individuals who do not want to  
15 enter traditional shelter. Clients are referred to  
16 Safe Haven by outreach teams who prioritize Safe  
17 Haven beds for street homeless individuals who are  
18 the most vulnerable, and who have been outdoors for  
19 the longest period of time. DHS has also increased  
20 its efforts to work collaboratively with community  
21 organizations and religious institutions around the  
22 city to help expand the reach of this valuable  
23 program.  
24  
25



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Similar to the Safe Haven, DHS also added stabilization beds, which are also a low threshold shelter option. Outreach providers are able to place clients directly from the streets into these beds and provide on-site services. There are 545 Safe Haven beds and 326 stabilization beds in the DHS system. Street homeless clients also have access to overnight respite beds, which are linked to Drop-In Centers at houses of worship. These respite beds are usually located in extra spaces at churches or synagogues and are staffed by volunteers who provide dinner and breakfast. Last year, as part of the new contact with the MTA, DHS combined funding with the MTA to invest \$6 million to outreach services to be provided in all 468 subway stations. DHS now has outreach teams working in subways 24 hours a day, 7 days a week ensuring that all subway stations and train cars are assessed for homeless activity on a routine basis. Thus far, we have been able to successfully place 30% of these chronically homeless individuals into shelter, which is a significant increase from the previous year. Our goal is to get as many people off the streets and subways and into shelter.

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Providing shelter and social services for those in need continues to be DHS' core function and mandate. We provide temporary emergency and safe transitional housing to eligible families and all individuals presenting needing shelter. DHS is seeking to improve social service delivery in shelter by creating a new model of practice. Using already established methods, the new model will be a four-layered approach to providing quality services to all clients in shelter. This model of practice will require that going forward all DHS shelter providers use the following things in their work with DHS clients: Consistent and comprehensive documentation in the Client Assistance and Rehousing Enterprise System also known as CARES. Critical Time Intervention Services, Rapid Rehousing Techniques and principles and Motivational Interviewing Techniques and best practices in work with clients.

The CARES system is an electronic case management system that is used by all DHS providers in direct line shelter staff to document all work that is being done with clients that we serve. We will be strengthening case work documentation requirements throughout the system and upgrading the

CARES system itself to keep pace with practice refinements that will be taking place within the agency. All case management services provided to clients are required to be documented in CARES.

Critical Time Intervention is an evidence informed model of practice used to work with homeless clients. New York City will be using two versions of CTI in our practice with clients in shelter. A full intensity version of CTI will be delivered to clients who have the most substantial barriers to housing, and who are most likely to return to shelter after locating permanent housing. A lesser intensive version of CTI will be made available to all clients who are in temporary emergency shelter. CTI is a means by which customized services can be offered to families and individuals so that they can exit shelter into permanent housing faster. An assessment tool will be used to determine the level of CTI that will be required.

Principles and best practices of rapid rehousing will be incorporate in all of our work with clients in shelters. Now that there are more housing resources available to assist homeless New York City residents to exit shelter, we will require that rapid

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rehousing efforts be pursued more aggressively for all clients in our shelter system. Rapid rehousing will include identifying a housing resource, and will being as soon as the individual enters shelter.

Motivational Interviewing techniques will be incorporated into our system wide work with all clients in shelter. This practice of meeting clients where they are at and focusing on collaborative conversations with clients to strengthen their motivation and commitment to change, is at the center of motivational interviewing. As a person-centered counseling style that is not directive, but rather allows the client to identify his or her own need to achieve change. In this case, permanent housing. This method of delivering services has demonstrated success in helping clients achieve goals across many systems. As such, it permeates all layers of our proposed model of practice.

In combination with all four of these elements will strengthen our system wide work, and will improve outcomes for our clients. DHS will also be creating Permanency Specialist Teams within the agency to work with program and shelter staff to support their work of helping clients obtain housing

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independence. These highly trained teams will be compromised--will be comprised of 30 licensed social workers who review cases, offer technical assistance to providers and DHS staff, and will support agency efforts to create independent living plans for all clients in shelter. The Permanency Specialist Teams will also be available to support our agency Aftercare efforts to connect clients to community-bases supports and services to help them maintain housing.

The continue support of the Safety First Teams is a major part of the Administrations vision and efforts to improve conditions in social services. As my staff testified to on February 27th, the safety of all children in shelter is of the utmost importance. Due to the significant number of children in our system, it is critically necessary that our agency be attentive to child safety and wellbeing. These 19 Safety First social workers will engage and assess high-risk families with children to determine an appropriate plan of action and services when needed. The Safety First staff will coordinate with DHS Family Services Division and shelter providers through case conferencing, effective case

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management, coaching and interventions to support the family in keeping children safe with their parents and caretakers while they are in shelter. The Safety First staff will identify necessary services and interventions to assist families who are in need.

Preventive maintenance and necessary repairs are essential components of our agency's work to improve shelter conditions for individuals and families within our system. As such, DHS has expanded its budget for maintenance and repair work. Through Routine Site Review Inspection, RSRI, is DHS' primary tool to inspect and assess the physical plan conditions of our shelters to ensure that they are in compliance with codes, regulation, and laws governing temporary housing. The RSRI's allow our agency to evaluate providers' use of city funds budgeted for maintenance and--maintenance of shelters. The RSRI also identifies problematic building conditions.

Preventive maintenance can be used to minimize larger issues down the line, and has recently been revamped to more efficiently predict the physical plan needs of shelters. Additionally, we recently updated and strengthened our agency's policy guidance for shelter inspections to raise standards across our system. We

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are also in the process of creating a new regulatory compliance unit to ensure that appropriate and safe conditions are maintained at all of our sites.

As part of the Mayor's One City Initiative to reduce energy costs by nearly 30%, expanding our in-house preventive maintenance programs will help further the work of properly maintaining and replacing mechanical systems with new and improved technologies. In doing so, DHS will see a reduction in equipment failures, as well as a reduction in fuel usage and cost. With the investment of capital funds, DHS will be able to maintain its investment in new mechanical equipment and ensure its full life expectancy. We want to also ensure that all viable shelter sites are contracted, and that such contracts contain provisions for active enforcement of any code of regulatory violations.

DHS has reviewed lease and other site control agreements between provider agencies and landlords to ensure that they contain repair clauses and have language consistent to standards promulgated in the Shelter Inspection Policy and Procedure.

During the FY 16 contracting process, DHS will review contract language of provider agencies

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and will ensure that there is a separate allocation for ongoing maintenance and repair. A contract clause will be included prohibiting providers from using these for non-related maintenance expenses. DHS understand that we are judged by the performance of our shelter providers, and we are establishing clear expectations and accountability for all work--for all who do this work.

The LINC Rental Assistance Program helps move individuals and families who need additional assistance from shelter into permanent housing. Our Homebase Program provides additional--provides initial support to all clients who exit shelter with LINC vouchers. LINC I assists families in shelter who are working full time, but who are unable to afford stable housing on their own to relocate from city--from the city shelter system. LINC II will assist families in shelter with multiple shelter stays that need additional assistance and support. LINC III provides rental assistance to families recently affected by domestic violence. LINC IV assists single adults and adult families in shelter as well as in Safe Haven and Drop-In Centers who work--who are working. That includes someone in the



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age of--someone who is age 60 and above. LINC V assists single adults and adult families in shelters, Safe Haven and Drop-In Centers who are working to exit shelter to permanent housing. And LINC VI will assist families with children to exit shelter by moving in with relatives or friends. The LINC I families and LINC V single adults--for LINC I families and LINC V single adults the Human Resource Administration's employment vendors will be available to support these clients with Aftercare when they exit shelter. We have been granted \$2.1 million for LINC II, Family Care Services in FY15, and \$6.3 million in FY16 to support families who have multiple shelter stays to maintain permanent housing.

DHS issued a Request for Proposals and awarded four providers with contracts to deliver the Aftercare services following the Critical Time Intervention model. LINC III families can receive services for HRA's non-residential domestic violence service contracts. for LINC IV, DHS is in discussions with the Department for the Aging to provide Aftercare support to seniors, singles, and adult families through their subcontractor providers. In addition, we are also moving forward with LINC VI,

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as I mentioned, which will be targeting families with children to exist shelter to move in with relatives and friends.

The final goal of our Operational Plan is striving towards organizational excellence in all the work that we do. We are striving to ensure that we have systems in place within DHS to support best practices in all aspects of our work in order to improve outcomes for our clients. This includes training for DHS staff and shelter staff; clear and consistent policies and procedures on the various aspects of our work; and professional development opportunities for all DHS and provider staff. We must invest in DHS staff and provider agency staff to ensure that they have what they need to do their best work. Human service work and specifically work in DHS shelters is difficult and not without complications. Counter-transference and emotional fatigue can take a toll on staff who have worked with clients in shelter. And clients who are threatened with housing instability. We must be attentive and responsive to the vicarious traumatic effects of our system's work on those who do this critically important and necessary work each and every day.

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Organizational excellence must include strategies to support both our system and our staff who are committed to doing the work of reducing homelessness and improving lives.

In conclusion, the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget builds upon this past year's efforts to reduce the census and improve conditions and enhance services for our homeless across the city. This budget invests in the necessary supports to ensure that homeless clients are safe, have access to comprehensive social services, and are able to achieve housing stability, independence and permanency. DHS' partnership with the City Council is vital to ensure--to ensuring we are successful in reducing homelessness and improving lives. I know that all of you on this committee the Council as a whole are equally committed to ensuring our most vulnerable New Yorkers are assisted on their journey home. I look forward to talking with all of you over the coming weeks and months to solicit your input and ideas on how we can improve upon this collaboration. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My colleagues and I will now answer any questions you may have.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
Commissioner Taylor for your testimony. We are also  
joined by Council Members King and Miller, and I want  
to start off with a few questions around the DOI  
investigation and DHS' response to it. As we said in  
our introduction, a recent DOI investigation report  
cited poor conditions at family shelters including  
hundreds of health and safety violations. Including  
vermin infestation and fire safety issues. The  
report found that these violations were not new but,  
in fact, were due to decades of neglect at family  
shelters. With regard to family shelters, how did--  
how did it get to the point where DHS was cited for  
hundreds of violations in shelters that you've been  
working with from many, many years?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, Chairman Levin,  
you know this--the DOI inquiry into the family  
shelter system began last March--March of 2014. And  
this Administration had been in office for some three  
months when it was commenced. At that time, DHS, my  
staff and I we had begun our own inquiry into our  
system as a whole, as an aggregate. Looking not just  
at the family shelter system, but also at the adult,  
the adult system and our adult family system.

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Looking at social service programming, looking at physical plan conditions. Making visits to sites and locations, reviewing information that had been left for us from the previous administration. And what we found was that there was a lot of work that still needed to be done. And particularly to your question about the conditions of buildings, we found that in that particular area there were a number of violations that had been left outstanding that we needed to cure.

And so, we began the work in advance of the DOI inquiry of actually going to sites and taking care of any life safety violations that we came upon immediately. Once DOI began their inquiry, and began going to the 25 sites that they looked at, we went with them. And in going with them as did the Buildings Department, the Fire Department and HPD, we all came upon what they had reported in their report, which were conditions that needed to be repaired. Anything that needed to be immediately repaired, was immediately repaired. And anything that needed some planning to repair, the planning was commenced at that time. And I will say, you know, that we did consider what was the total need of our system. And

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1 just, you know, make reference that the DOI inquiry  
2 was really in one part of our system, albeit the  
3 largest part of our system. But when you think of  
4 the full totality of all of the buildings that we're  
5 using for shelter, single adults, adult families and  
6 families with children, there had been over time a  
7 lot of work that needed to be done. And there is  
8 more work that continues to need--that we need to  
9 continue to do.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Was DHS cited for any  
12 violations? Specifically, was the agency cited for  
13 violations?

14 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, not that I know  
15 that the agency was cited for violations. Any  
16 violations that were found either in City owned  
17 buildings or in private buildings that are provider  
18 owned, they were cured. So, you know, anything that  
19 was brought to our attention we immediately either  
20 addressed or prepared to develop a plan to address.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So I know a lot of  
22 violations were cited at cluster sites. Obviously,  
23 outside of our Tier 2 Network there were some of the  
24 worst violations. When DHS contracts with a--with a--  
25 -a cluster site location and provider, does--does

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DOH--does DHS call on DOB to do a site inspection  
prior to the families moving in.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So there is an  
inspection of any unit, any apartment that's being  
used for cluster capacity before that unit is  
occupied by anyone of our client families.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Who does that  
inspection?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So that inspection  
is done preliminarily by the provider and secondarily  
by staff in Maintenance and Repair. So we have staff  
on site who go out subsequent to the provider's  
maintenance staff doing their inquiry. Once they  
give us a green light and say that it's clear, we  
then go in and inspect before we start using the unit  
for sheltering purposes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Then how was it that  
units within the Cluster System were found to be in  
violation of either DOB or HPD rules?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So many of the  
units that were referenced in the DOI report had been  
unusable-- Actually, let me take a step back. All  
of the shelters that were referenced in the DOI  
report had opened prior to this Administration taking

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office. Many of the families living in those units had been in those units for quite some period of time. And so, when the inquiry was commenced, there may have been inspections that had taken place historically before the families moved into those units. But over time, if necessary repairs were not made in those units to secure whatever conditions were presenting, then when DOI began its inquiry and when we took-- When we came into office as well, and started our inquiry, we would have come upon items that were not corrected that had actually been allowed to develop over a period of time. So we did--so as a point of information, DHS did over the course of Calendar Year 2014 we did dispatch staff, Social Service staff to all of our Cluster sites. So they were out there to actually speak with our clients to get a sense of how they were being sheltered in these units. They were not staff who are, you know, trained in terms of physical plan conditions, but they went out to actually meet with every family to see the units and to offer, you know, feedback to our maintenance and repair site if they saw something that was concerning. That was for all Cluster sites. In terms of the physical inspections,



1 we were able to accomplish 1,600 physical plan  
2 inspections of Clusters last calendar year. And so  
3 we have over 3,000 in our Tier 2 [sic] portfolio,  
4 but we did 1,600 in fair swift order. And we were  
5 able in those instances to be able to do a physical  
6 inspection of each one of those units, and make  
7 necessary repairs or plans for repairs. So we began  
8 looking at Clusters from the day that this  
9 Administration took office.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But there were--there  
12 are DOB violations, for example, and HPD violations  
13 in those sites. Are you working in conjunction with  
14 those agencies so that, you know, that-- Are you  
15 asking, for example, for DOB to do the reviews or is  
16 somebody-- When DOH staff is doing their internal  
17 review, are--I'm assuming you're bringing up the DOB  
18 reports for each building and HPD reports for each  
19 building. If there's violations--

20 COMMISSIONER GILBERT TAYLOR:  
21 [interposing] Uh-huh.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --that are--that come  
23 up, do you--do you not proceed? Do you not proceed  
24 until they're rectified, or does DHS go ahead and  
25

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1 proceed, and then try to get the violations to be  
2 corrected afterwards?

3  
4 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: You mean before the  
5 unit is occupied?

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Correct.

7 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So before the unit  
8 is occupied, if there are outstanding violations, we  
9 do not use those units. We don't use the units. We  
10 actually require that the violations be cured, and so  
11 that is--

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Was  
13 that always the policy prior to this administration?

14 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So the policies  
15 prior to this administration are hard for me to speak  
16 to. As I referenced in my testimony, there were not  
17 clearly-- There was not a lot of policy guidance  
18 that actually oversaw how the work needed to get done  
19 in this particular way. There--

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

21 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --is now, right.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because--well, I  
23 guess because the question would be then if there is  
24 a violation in the unit, you know, an HPD or a DOB  
25 violation in the unit that is a Cluster Site shelter

resident was occupying right. So there are one of two things it could have been. It either was the violation that was there prior to them moving in, or the violation ensued after they moved in. You're not sure which of those cases applied in which instances?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Well, the history that was reported to me was that if there were violations that the providers and the landlords were told to cure the same in the last administration. In this administration in addition to checking the DOB website, I'm also working closely-- To your first question do we work with DOB--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --and FDNY, so we have. We have started working closely with them. We actually want to strengthen our work with those agencies and perhaps more so formalize it than had been the case in the past. Whether it's by MOU or whether it's by some other agreement to make sure that we are working in tandem as we continue looking at this part of our portfolio for shelter and all of our shelters overall. But, you know, the current practice now is that if a unit is--if a unit has

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violations, and it is unoccupied by a client, we will take that unit off line. And so, taking that unit off line means that it will not be used again until such time as the violations are cured. If it is occupied by a client, and we come from the violations, then we will require that the landlord and the provider make necessary arrangements to cure the same. And so, the recent policy guide and set we promulgate in this area would require that they not only structure a corrective action plan. But also submit to us demonstration of their efforts to move forward on that plan. And they are given a tight timeframe to actually complete the repairs. In the absence of them doing so, then we would have to, you know, effectively plan to re-shelter the family. Or, the best option would be to move the family to permanent housing if that's an option that's available to them, and then take that unit off line.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there a cost that DHS has determined that DHS will have to bear on correcting these violations and then is there a specific time table that has been determined by DHS or prescribed by DOI that's going to have to proceed?

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So to your first question about the cost of correcting the violations that were surfaced in the report, in the DOI Report. So for the 25 facilities, that were specified in the DOI report and only for those violations that were spoken to in that report, we've estimated that the total costs to cure the same will be \$12.5 million . That's combined capital as well as expense funding. On average that's about \$500,000 per building. Some buildings will require more less. That's an average number that I'm sharing with you now. So, each violation and corrective action will in some cases need to be bid, and then there will be cost estimates that will be procured and sent into us. And then for private providers, they would have to go about their own process of actually preparing the buildings. As a point of reference, it was spoken to in the report. But I did want to share with you there were two sites in the DOI report that we elected to close instead of pursuing to use them as continued shelter. And we closed those sites, both because of physical plan deficiencies as well as because of Social Service deficiencies in the work that was being done with the

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families at those locations. So those two sites have  
been closed.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Can you identify  
those--those sites?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Yes. One was  
Mike's House and the second was Mike's House Annex,  
both of which are in the Bronx. CHAIRPERSON LEVIN:  
Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: They are Provider I  
locations, and we worked with the provider to close  
down those two locations. W

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Who was the provider?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: The provider for  
those sites was Aguila.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: For both sites?

[background comment]

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: It's Aguila.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, for both sites?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: For both sites,  
yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: It was Aguila.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And in terms of  
timeline, timetables has that been--?

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So the timeline in terms of the repairs, they're being prioritized in terms of the level of seriousness. And so, I will say that all of the life safety violations that have been commented upon in the DOI Report have been cured. The more serious violations that remain outstanding those will be addressed imminently. Some of them, you know, will require that certain corrective actions be taken, and that may require--it may require some investment and some more time to get specific things done. And I'll give you an example. So they coded a serious violation as being a building without a Certificate of Occupancy.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And such buildings--one such reason for why a building may not have had the Certificate of Occupancy is because the fire panel needs to be upgraded. And so upgrading the fire panel and actually getting the fire panel to the levels that it would need to be to pass inspection by FDNY can take some time. But that's work that we had begun planning on. We have a consultant who is working with us, to get a sense of what we need to do to get C of Os for all of our locations. And in

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those instances, while they are serious violations, they've violations that we are actively planning to correct, and it will take some time to cure. All others will be structured in terms of our corrective action process in terms of the due dates that have certain things corrected depending upon the level of intensity in investment to make such--to make such changes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In terms of the \$12.5 million that you cited as the cost to DHS that would be both in the Expense and Capital Budget, and then also in reference to what you just mentioned about things that DHS may be required to do in their Corrective Action Plan. Is that reflected as new needs in the Preliminary Budget now proposed? Is that \$12.5 million for example reflected in the Preliminary Budget as a new need?

[pause, background conversation]

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So part of it will be reflected in the Capital Budget, the Capital Budget request that will be made. And the other part will be reflected in the Expense Budget.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.



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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So we have, you know, gone to each of the sites in response to the report, and really made our best estimates in terms of what repairs need to happen. But I do want to stress that, you know, a number of the sites are not City-owned buildings. They're actually sites that are privately owned and operated.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Like all the Cluster sites, for example.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Like all the Cluster sites, and so the providers and landlords will have to incur the cost and expense associated with making those repairs. And they would have to do it within the timeframes we give them.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. One thing that I as Chair of the Committee for the last year have heard extensively is from the Not for Profit Tier 2 providers, and concerns that they've had about capital needs that they have at their buildings. Obviously, they're under a tremendous amount of strain because it's a capacity, overall capacity issues in the system. You know and where they're having to turn around a unit in a matter of hours--

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Uh-  
huh.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --and, you know,  
those units have been lived in. And they need--they  
need work done in addition to the buildings that  
they're occupying throughout the--you know, the  
common space areas. You know, in addition to roofs,  
you know, roofs leaking or pointing. You know, large-  
scale capital repairs that need to be done. These  
are programs that don't have a capital reserve. It's  
not in their contract with DHS. And they're, you  
know, holding everything together with, you know,  
twine and spit. So, you know, it's a difficult  
situation. Are you exploring how to best address  
these kind of larger capital needs, these things that  
will--that may be at a City-owned facility. May be  
at a not for profit-owned facility in the Tier 2  
system. And, you know, what's the best way of kind  
of getting that overall issue under control? You  
know, what's the best way of kind of getting that  
overall issue under control?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, we are  
addressing that issue. We have 55 City-owned  
buildings that is indeed in this portfolio [sic], and

our plans related to related to capital--capital construction, capital improvement for all of those buildings are being factored into our global planning across the entire system. And what the needs are. What actually needs to be repaired. What needs to be replaced. So for providers who are running shelters in those locations, we are actively working on addressing those needs because the City actually is responsible for capital construction at those locations.

For non-City-owned buildings or non-profit owned buildings or privately owned buildings so the majority of our--I would say all of our contracts actually have line items in them for maintenance. The question then becomes when you have maintenance that is more substantial than what is additionally covered for wear and tear.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So significant capital investments that need to be made either for a roof, as you had mentioned, or perhaps for a boiler. So what we've done historically, and what we continue to do is work with each provider to get a sense of what the need is. In some instances, we have--we

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1 have granted new needs requests that have been made  
2 by providers. We don't have unlimited funding to  
3 actually do that. So we have in some instances also  
4 worked with a provider to find ways in which we can  
5 help them to obtain the funding that they would need  
6 in order to make the necessary repair. But that's  
7 part of our work to be responsive to improving  
8 conditions in shelters throughout the entire system.  
9 We're looking at that group of shelter providers as  
10 well. And there is no one answer for each of those  
11 that are affected in that particular way, but we are  
12 looking at each individual shelter provider to get a  
13 sense of what their needs are and how we can be  
14 supportive of them in terms of attending to the same.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I mean we've  
17 heard traditionally when providers submit a new need  
18 request, you know it's rarely granted. And so, is  
19 that--that process itself of what--what new needs are  
20 going to be granted, what the process is for  
21 interacting with DHS. Is that all being kind of  
22 looked--looked at?

23 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: It absolutely is in  
24 terms of how we are deciding new needs. How we are  
25 allocating funds to be responsive to new needs, and

1 really trying to make sure that it's consistent  
2 across the board. So that there's clarity for all  
3 providers in terms of what we can--what we can find  
4 and what we cannot.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, and is DHS kind  
7 of doing a soup to nuts assessment of it's entire--of  
8 the entire Tier 2 portfolio to try to get an  
9 understanding from DHS' perspective about what the  
10 cost is? I mean, you know, presumably it's hard to--  
11 -it's hard to know what the actual cost would be  
12 unless you do kind of a very thorough top-to-bottom  
13 assessment. Are you conducting that type of  
14 investigation.

15 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We are--we are  
16 conducting that assessment. That assessment actually  
17 began in advance of the DOI Report of the information  
18 that we've gotten from the DOI Report for those 25  
19 locations, now 23, that we are currently still in,  
20 will inform our work looking across the entire  
21 system. So not just Tier 2s, but every place that we  
22 are sheltering individuals to get a sense--

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --of what the needs  
25 are at those sites as it pertains to the physical

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1 plan. We're working closely with OMB to establish  
2 cost estimates in terms of what it will take to  
3 upgrade facilities as necessary. But our staff have  
4 been out. They continue to be out and they will--  
5 they will formulate a plan that will help us be  
6 responsive to whatever the needs are in our system.  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, because I think  
9 it would be an appropriate time and kind of a  
10 compelling case for DHS to go to OMB and say, Look,  
11 here's a DOI report. It's pretty bad. It talks to  
12 the condition in shelters. WE need this. This is a  
13 new need for the agency. You know, it's not good for  
14 the city to have a DI report like that. But I would  
15 think that it would be a compelling case to be--to be  
16 made to OMB. OMB would be-- You don't want OMB to  
17 come back and say, you know, we're not really going  
18 to grant that in light of--in light of this report.

19 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I mean I would say  
20 that this administration is not going to tolerate the  
21 substandard conditions that were referenced in that  
22 report. And while we began the work to cure the  
23 same, we know that we have more work to do.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.  
25

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And like any living environment, there is going to be the need for continuous preventive maintenance and repair, you know, for any one of our facilities this year and in years to come. And so, structuring a plan that can-- that will enable us to be effectively responsive at any of the locations that we're sheltering clients in is what we're intending to do, and we intend to do it with OMB's support and involvement.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great. Just two more questions on this--on this issue. Is--in terms of ongoing monitoring of site conditions, can you speak to how--how the FY16 Preliminary Budget is going to address kind of the issue of ongoing site monitoring both in the Tier 2 and the Cluster System?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So in FY16, we were funding for additional--for additional headcount for inspectors who work within or Maintenance and Repair Unit. I believe there are 19 additional heads that we've been funded to hire, which will help us in terms of--in our bandwidth in sending out staff who can inspect physical plant conditions. Who can help us to, you know, correct--collect necessary information that we would need in order to structure

corrective action plans. And to inform providers or direct them on sites what needs to be corrected and what needs to be changed. And so that additional investment is going to be a really good one for us in terms of helping us to deepen the work in a particular area.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then my last question on this--on this issue is DHS looking at its methodology for emergency contracting for shelters in clusters so that it's better able to address the violations issued. I think that one concern is that because of the capacity concerns in the entire system, particularly in the family system, that when--when you need to open a Cluster site, you don't have a lot of time. And the pressure is on because you have a legal obligation to provide shelter and, you know, we couldn't build--You know, we couldn't build those Tier 2 facilities. Even if every neighborhood welcomed them, it would be difficult to build in an appropriate timeframe. So is that--are you looking at your emergency contracting procedure to better address the issue of violations when they come up?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So we are. We're looking at not only the mechanisms to bring sites to



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contracts. We're also looking at the provisions within each contract to ensure that they include requirements for ongoing maintenance in the tier. To your point, last year when this administration took office, in order to expand shelter capacity, we did so by way of emergency declarations that were granted to us by the Controller's Office. They were deliberate in wanting to only bring on shelters that were under contract. Because we know that if we have contracts in place for providers that you can then better oversee the work that's being done with our shelter system. And also, it supports the provider in terms of them having clear--clear information about what are the requests and requirements of them? And so, you know, we're moving to a place where we're looking at all of our contracts, as I testified to in my testimony. But we want to make sure that there is language in there and provisions in each of our contracts that will have money available for maintenance and repair. And clear accountability of what is required to maintain facilities that we're using for shelter.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you,  
Commissioner. So I'll turn it over to my colleagues.

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We've also been joined by Council Member Corey Johnson, Council Member Vanessa Gibson, and Council Member Inez Barron. And we'll first call on Council Member Ruben Wills for questions. We have the clock running at five minutes. We can come back for a second round of questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Good afternoon, Commissioner. So a quick--a few quick questions. I noticed that you kept referencing your report from DOI as an inquiry and not an investigation as the press had presented it. Which one is it and why?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I was using the words inter-changeably.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Interchangeably.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So it was an investigation by the Department of Investigation--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: [interposing]  
Okay, I wanted to use the right term.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --in which there were many inquiries made about our system and the work that they did.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: All right, so the--in your testimony you said that instead of using a single point of access for family intake, what we do

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now we open additional family shelter intake offices.  
And they will be in four to five boroughs, which will  
be co-located with HRA and Homebase.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: And in Queens, not  
in my district, but in Council Member Miller's  
district I believe it is, we have a HRA facility.  
Are you going to attempt to co-locate it there, or  
build up a new facility and then attempt to work with  
HRA?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So we have found a  
location in Queens. We have not found a specific  
location or building in any of the four boroughs.  
The fifth borough we are not planning to co-locate in  
Staten Island.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: But as we had  
referenced some months ago, we had spoken publicly  
about the value of having a family intake system--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing]  
Right.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --that would afford  
our clients who were threatened with housing  
instability more than one option, right. More than

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1 the old--the only option of actually coming into  
2 shelter. And so we're looking for locations where we  
3 can have Homebase, where they can actually engage  
4 families when they come through the door around what  
5 resources are available.  
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Well, I get that  
8 and I really appreciate that, but I only have a few  
9 minutes. So I just need to ask you-- [laughs] I'm  
10 sorry.

11 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Okay, so--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing] So  
13 are you getting input from the electives or community  
14 groups on the siting of these new facilities?

15 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So right now, as I  
16 said, we don't have specific buildings that we are  
17 considering. We are looking for locations. We're  
18 looking to go into places where we believe they would  
19 be centrally located. Where they would actually meet  
20 the needs of the community. We would welcome the  
21 input from elected officials. You know, if there are  
22 locations that you would want us to consider, please  
23 tell us what they are. But there are certain size  
24 requirements and specifications.  
25

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COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: [interposing]  
That's understood.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: There are space  
requirements that we need in order to actually open  
up these offices. And as we had mentioned some  
months ago, our intention was to begin in Brooklyn.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Okay. 311 is  
trying to improve the location in which a complaint  
is stemming from. If it is discovered that a client  
in shelter is complaining about conditions they're  
suffering from, they are immediately routed to DHS  
Client Advocacy, instead of the complaint being  
reported to the appropriate agency. Does HPD or  
DOB or DOHMH whether it's rats, heat or SROs. Are  
you going to work with 311 to make sure that it not  
only goes to the client advocate but also then the  
proper agency that a response could be a lot sooner?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So actually this is  
the first that I'm hearing of what you're saying. So  
I would actually like to look into that--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: [interposing]  
Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --and get a sense  
of if it's not an immediate building, you know,

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concern I think that should certainly be routed to the agency that can then effectively respond. But as it pertains to any client in shelter, I would want to make sure that simultaneously we would get that information as well. So that we could effectively respond.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Whether it's dispatching staff or contacting a provider or doing whatever needs to be done to mitigate whatever the issue is.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Thank you. You said that Avila was the--

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing]  
Aguila.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Aguila was the provider that ran the two sites that you closed out.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Are they currently in contract with any other programs?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: They are. They have other sites that have contracted. The two sites that have a closed, as a point of information, they were not under contract with DHS.

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COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay, but if  
Avila was the provider for those two locations, are  
we looking into the contract and the other places  
they are providing services for?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So again, for those  
two sites, there was no contract.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Those are non-  
contracted locations. But for all of our sites, for  
Aguila, and for all of our providers, we're looking  
at the contract language to get a sense of exactly  
what is required for maintenance and repair. I also  
mention this flag--flag in response to your question.  
So physical plant conditions is one piece of the  
equation that led us to close those sites, but there  
is a real inquiry on social services that were being  
delivered at those two locations for clients, which  
we found was not in keeping with what we wanted,  
which informed our decision to close them.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay, because last  
year we asked the same question if there is a client  
or if there is a provider that runs a cluster site,  
and a shelter, if one is found to be out of order, do  
you then look at the other side of their services to

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1 make sure that they're in total compliance? So I'm  
2 asking that. Is that being done right now with  
3 Aguila?  
4

5 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Yes, it is.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: All right, that's  
7 what I needed to know. The recent guidelines that  
8 you said were promulgated on the work that needs to  
9 be done-- No, better yet. We had the coldest winter  
10 since for a long time I think 20 or 30 years. Does  
11 your agency--have they or do they plan on doing any  
12 emergency declarations for housing because of this  
13 winter?

14 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So we--we had  
15 [bell] in place a RFP for Safe Haven capacity, which  
16 would help our Shelter New Yorkers come into a Homer  
17 Dudson [sp?] model of a shelter that would have them  
18 actually have a place to be as opposed to be on the  
19 street. And so that RFP had gone out. We had opened  
20 an additional Safe Haven capacity as well as  
21 stabilization beds as I testified to this past winter  
22 to make sure that there were locations where we could  
23 bring anyone who on the street or in a subway into a  
24 shelter--  
25



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COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: [interposing]  
Right.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --out of the cold.  
And we're going to continue to look at that model,  
and get a sense of exactly what the need is and how  
much we need to procure.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you very  
much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
Member Wills. Council Member King.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, Mr.  
Chair. I appreciate it. And to all of my brothers  
and sisters of Irish descent a Happy St. Patrick's  
Day and it's good to see you Commissioner--

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Good  
afternoon.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: --and the team.  
And I appreciate the conversation that we had. I  
want to go back into all the conversations that we  
had in regards to it in addition. But I do have a  
similar follow up because as I looked at the numbers,  
and your testimony, I'm curious to know what is the  
budget for security for all your facilities or  
specifically the facility that's in the district that

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1 Cohen and I are really paying to, which is the  
2 project and its renewal. We want to get an idea of  
3 where it is. You know, just to follow up from my  
4 meeting. We're still waiting to hear about the task  
5 force that was supposed to be created. And doing an  
6 assessment of all your facilities. So we're at a  
7 point right now, where we really want to know what  
8 kind of budget is in place for security. And how are  
9 we going to address that particular site, which  
10 everyone knows-- And just for the record for those  
11 in the 47th Precinct, we're having a real struggle  
12 with that site because of the number of calls that  
13 come in; 675 911 calls since it opened in 2014. And  
14 they're reporting over 90% of those calls yielded  
15 nothing and couldn't--shouldn't have been called. So  
16 it in turn occupies time and takes resources for the  
17 rest of the 11th and 12th City Council District. So  
18 if you can help me with that so that I can share with  
19 Cohen your conversation with us today.  
20

21 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So as to your first  
22 questions to what is the budget of security at the  
23 particular location and project and the shelter that  
24 is in your district-- Do we have that number?  
25

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: [off mic]

I don't have that number with me today. [sic]

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Okay, so we don't have that number for this testimony available, but we will provide it to you for that particular site. In response to--We'll make sure that you get it subsequent to--to our testimony today. But in response to your question about the immediate follow up after our meeting. So the DHS Task Force, which are peace officers--a group of peace officers who actually go from site to site. We dispatch them depending upon where there is a need. Whether they're privately run sites, or whether they're City-owned sites. Because at all of the City-owned sites we have peace officers. So we did go to that site, and part of their work was to get information for us to inform what safety--what safety--what increases in security needed to actually be in place at the location. As that information is still being pulled together because it was also going to be informed by our work with NYPD at that precinct that you had referenced. And so we will get you a formal response to what our conversation had been when we met in my office. But the--the broader question of security at

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all of our locations, just to put it in focus, we're looking at security across the full portfolio for direct run as well as for privately run sites. We want to make sure that all of our sites are safe. We want to make sure that they have--have their staff, security personnel, or security mechanisms in place that would ensure that clients, who are there, can feel safe where they are. That includes the location in your district, and all of the other locations. That has taken some time. We have decided to work in partnership with the NYPD to do crime prevention survey work particularly for all our Cluster locations for all scatter-site apartments. Because it's a bit more challenging to actually deliver security service to some of the residents in those apartments are leaseholder and others are our clients. And so, considering what the need for that employee would look like as part of our overall planning work for security. But it is on our radar. We are structuring and doing a full soup to nuts plan on how we're going to make sure that security is in place at all of our locations at ample levels. In order to ensure the safety of our clients.

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COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Well, thank you. I mean if you can, because I know out of the last meeting that we did have Cohen and I were expecting some communications by the end of February. It hasn't happened yet. But if someone from your office can reach out and let us know where are we? Where should we go from here? Considering that the number of individuals that do come to that site, is not proportionate across the city, which we had in that conversation. So, safety is really an issue for the homeowners who live in the neighborhood. So if we can figure how to address that, and give some relief to the 47th Precinct, it would really be appreciated.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So I'm being told that we do have a response. It will be forwarded to you today.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council Member King. Council Member Johnson, are you ready for your questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Good to see you, Commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Good afternoon.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you for being here. I know that DHS has had an enormous challenge that it's had to deal with over the past 15 months due in large part to many factors. But I think that the previous Administration really left things a mess. And I'm glad that you and your team are there righting the ship. We still have along way to go. I wanted to just personally thank you, and thank Deputy Commissioner Rivera, and also Matt Borden, who I know recently joined the team--[coughs] excuse me--for all of your help with BRC on 25th Street in my district. I think we've seen substantial improvement of the last many months. There are still a ways to go in some areas that are mostly out of your control actually. But it has made a tremendous difference, the peace officers that are there, and the attention that Deputy Commissioner Rivera and Mr. Borden and Heidi Schmidt have paid to the facility. So I really just wanted to thank you for your help there.

I wanted to ask, and I know you touched on this, but I wanted to drill down a little bit more, and forgive me if this was already asked when I

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was out of the room. But the shelter population, as  
you said as of earlier this week was around 57,000--

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Uh-  
huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: --individuals,  
24,000 children. I wanted to understand what--what  
do you think is the biggest cause of why we're seeing  
this increase in the shelter population?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, you know, I  
would--I would go back to last year, and I would  
think about what housing resources were available in  
January of last year. As you know, and as the  
Council knows, there was not rental assistance in  
place. [bell] There was--there was none at the  
time. There was--there was no priority for eligible  
homeless clients who were in shelter to access public  
housing. That was not in place. The prevention  
levels were lower, about half as much then as they  
are now in terms of the investment into Homebase.  
The tools that we now have available took some time  
to create. And so Living in Communities, our rental  
assistance program, didn't launch until September of  
2014. And so for a nine-month period we were working  
actively with the State as well as with other city

1 agencies to come up with a plan. Even though it  
2 launched in September 2014, it took some months  
3 thereafter for the program to actually pick up more  
4 traction with some amendments, some incentives  
5 raising the rent levels. It took a while for us to  
6 actually move our clients from shelter into public  
7 housing. The allocation that was given to us, but we  
8 did it last year. And while we were doing all of  
9 these things, you know, there was still a tremendous  
10 need on the part of New Yorkers who were either  
11 homeless or becoming homeless, which resulted in them  
12 coming into our shelter and the census growing. So  
13 what we've seen over the past few months with the  
14 implementation of our rental assistance programs, and  
15 with the movement in the system, where we have  
16 thankfully a lower number of individuals presenting  
17 needing shelter at the front door. And we can  
18 attribute that to we believe our diversion efforts  
19 are prevention efforts. But we also have more people  
20 who are exiting shelters in the back door.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Have you seen  
23 any populations that LINC populations that landlords  
24 have been resistant to renting to?



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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We haven't though we have--we have had, you know, some work to do over the past several months to actually market the program, market and sell it. And that is what we spent the past I would say four months doing very aggressively. Not so much for clients, but selling the program. It's for landlords to actually understand what living in communities is, what the rental structures will be. What type of support will be provided to clients subsequent to their exit from shelter, and moving into the apartments. And so it's a lot of conversation that's still ongoing. A lot of myth busting, a lot of clarifying, you know what had been in the old advantage days and what is now. You know, making sure that there was some clear delineation that the two programs are different and distinct. That took some time to do, and with that work we've been able to move, you know, move the programs forward.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [bell] I just have one more question, Mr. Chair. Has DHS been tracking if landlords are asking for the maximum rent subsidy under LINC even if it's above the legal rent?

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, we are--we are--  
-we are looking at that, and we are clearly looking  
at what the rent-regulated rate would be for  
apartments that are maybe rent regulated that our  
clients are moving into. And if we come upon that,  
you know, it's something that we've been talking to  
the landlord about. And talking to HRA about, but  
guarding against any, you know, any problems with  
respect to this program. We are looking at it very  
scrutinously to get a sense of exactly how are our  
clients experiencing their housing searches. To make  
sure that what we're able to offer can support them  
in being able to find new homes.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you.  
Thank you again for your help in my district to you  
and your team. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
Member Johnson. Council Member Gibson.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Good afternoon,  
Commissioner Taylor and--

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Good  
afternoon.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: --and to the DS  
3 Team and Deputy Commissioner Rivera. Good to see my  
4 Camille. But I am thankful that you're here. Thank  
5 you for your testimony, for your presence. So I have  
6 lots of questions, as you always know. But I guess I  
7 just wanted to say I truly thankful for working with  
8 you. Since I've been in the Council this past year,  
9 DHS has always truly been very responsive. Even when  
10 I yelled at you, you still respond to me, and I  
11 appreciate that. Thank you. So I saw in your  
12 testimony, and I do want to acknowledge that the PATH  
13 Center in the Bronx is in my district. So all of the  
14 New York City's homeless families come through the  
15 Bronx each and every day. I appreciate the efforts  
16 that DHS is making to open intakes in other boroughs.  
17 I think it's a huge disservice for New Yorkers to  
18 have to travel to the Bronx when they're not Bronx  
19 residents whether they are homelessness or not. So I  
20 appreciate that effort as well as the LINC program,  
21 and domestic violence and how we're looking at that.

22 I just have a couple of questions. Right  
23 now, there is a disparity in domestic violence  
24 victims versus traditional homeless families in  
25 accessing public housing, getting into NYCHA, and we

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1 held a hearing a couple of months ago. So I'd like  
2 to know if there are any updated conversations that  
3 you're having with the Housing Authority on how we  
4 can get some of those families into public housing.  
5 And are we looking at making sure that there is  
6 parity in these category of homelessness for  
7 traditional versus domestic violence?  
8

9 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So we're looking at  
10 all of the parity lanes for public housing access. I  
11 will say, as you know, council member, that a third  
12 of our families who come into shelter are escaping  
13 domestic violence.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: That's right.

15 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: With that being the  
16 reality, many of our families who now are being  
17 afforded out of rental systems, or who are being  
18 called off of the waiting list for public housing who  
19 are in shelter, you know, they are domestic--the are  
20 domestic violence survivors. And being afforded that  
21 housing benefit. But to your particular question  
22 about are there continued conversations, there are.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: They're taking  
25 place with the NYCHA Chair as well as with HRA.

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1 We're at the table and we're looking at how can we  
2 make sure that, you know, that resource, that  
3 precious resource of public housing is available to  
4 all those who would be eligible for the same. So,  
5 yes, we are looking at it. Yes, we are talking about  
6 it. And thankfully, we have other resources in  
7 addition to NYCHA to help our clients who are in  
8 shelter who are escaping domestic violence to find  
9 permanent housing.  
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, and what  
12 about our homeless and runaway youth? When I was in  
13 the Assembly, we always supported runaway and  
14 homeless youth funding for New York City, and I do  
15 know that we're trying to get a lot of homeless youth  
16 into public housing. But not just getting them  
17 there, but also offering supportive services. A lot  
18 of providers are now looking at housing for youth  
19 aging out of the foster care system, which I think is  
20 very important. So I'd like to know has there been  
21 any conversations on that as well?

22 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So there have been  
23 citywide conversations about runaway and homeless  
24 youth. You know, they're being led primarily by  
25 DYCD. They oversee that system of shelter for young

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people who would fall into that category. We are at the table and actively participating in those discussions because we do have a sizeable number of young people in our single adult system who are between the ages of 18 and 24.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [interposing] Uh-huh

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And I have said to you, and I will say to everyone that I believe that for that group, you know, there are. There have to be--there have to be other options available for those clients. Because they are so young and have so few barriers to housing and should have opportunity to exit shelter and to move to permanent housing as quickly as hey can. So DHS is taking on that work within our own system, but we're doing it in partnership and in collaboration with DOSCD [sic] and the other city systems that are working with any young person who may be--who may become homeless.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay. Now, with the fact that we have such a crisis right now in the homelessness system with almost 58,000 families, 24,000 children, are we looking to create a plan of action where we can reduce the number of cluster

1 scatter sites? I've always said to you that I want a  
2 Vision Zero. I want to vision and see zero cluster  
3 sites. They don't do a service to families. There's  
4 no supportive services on site. We waste and spend  
5 way too much money on these clusters. So I know that  
6 we talked about it for many months, and I'd like to  
7 see those numbers to continue to go down. I  
8 recognize that families do have to go somewhere. So  
9 I just wanted to know what's the plan of action for  
10 reducing clusters?  
11

12 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So our commitment  
13 to reducing our reliance on cluster capacity is  
14 spoken to in our Operational Plan.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

16 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And the Operational  
17 Plan itself is the plan to help us to take on  
18 homeless issues in New York City. Prevention  
19 Outreach in shelter, Aftercare, housing permanency  
20 and thinking about how we're doing the work. That's  
21 one component of it. And to your point, I did not  
22 disagree with you last year, and I do not disagree  
23 with you now. But it would be our preference with  
24 those units that they be returned to the affordable  
25 housing market and made available--

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COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [interposing]  
Right.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --for our clients  
to rent using the rental assistance programs--

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [interposing] In  
the long term.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: In the long term,  
but step by step, slowly but sure, we're moving to a  
place where we're talking with our providers, and  
they're talking to their landlords about what could  
be possible, what could be possible sooner than  
later. And also, we're making very intentional  
decisions at the front end of our system around where  
do we choose for the shelter families that are coming  
in? Do we want to continue to bring on more cluster  
capacity, and I would submit to you that we do not.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And so, you know,  
in 2015, we have not brought on more cluster capacity  
in this calendar year. Last calendar year we brought  
on less cluster capacity than had been the case in  
two prior years of the last administration. There  
were significantly fewer units last year, and those  
units that we brought on were units that, you know,



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could accommodate families with very large household compositions. Some families--we had a family that came in it was one person and 15 young people.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Uh-huh. Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So there are not a lot of places that we can shelter a household of 16 or a household of 13, but when they come, we must be responsive and have place to house them. And in some instances, it is the clusters. So we're going to reduce our reliance. We're going to make a deliberate decision to do things differently in that regard because we agree with you.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, and I just had two final questions. I Chair the Committee on Public Safety here, and so I've asked and spoken to the NYPD about subway homelessness. And I know there's a \$6 million contract with the MTA, DHS as well as BRC. I've said to the NYPD, you know, homeless individuals sleeping on the subways are not criminals and we don't need to arrest them--

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: --unless they're violating the law. Many of them need to be in

1                   shelter and for many reasons and I'm glad you're  
2                   making efforts on dealing with a lot of the physical  
3                   conditions of our shelters because many homeless  
4                   individuals choose to be on the streets and the  
5                   subways than in shelters because of those conditions.  
6                   So I appreciate your efforts. And I would like to  
7                   know is there an update when did this contract  
8                   actually start with BRC, and are we seeing any  
9                   results just yet?  
10

11                   COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So the contract  
12                   began on July 1st of year of the 15 Fiscal Year.  
13                   It's actually a venture that's funded by both the MTA  
14                   and DHS, but DHS is administering the contracts. So  
15                   we raised the value of the Subway Outreach  
16                   Programming from about \$800,000 to \$6 million. And  
17                   with that additional investment, we tripled our  
18                   staffing levels. So we were able to actually cover  
19                   all 468 subway stations. Not just the stations, but  
20                   we also have staff who go onto the subways on the  
21                   cars. So looking in the stations, looking in the  
22                   cars, engaging clients that they find, or  
23                   unsheltered subway homeless individuals they may  
24                   find. What we've seen is a tremendous uptick in  
25                   terms of the number of clients who are active

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caseloads with BRC. The program had not been 24  
hours before. It is 24 hours. So when you add more  
money, you add more people, you add more skill in  
terms of where you're going to go. What you end up  
doing is reaching more of those who are in need. And  
that's what we've seen happen. And so almost year  
end. July will be one full year since we've been  
doing this. We've virtually tripled the number of  
clients that we've been able to engage compared to  
the last contract to bring them into shelter and to  
also get them permanently housed.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay. I  
appreciate that, and I would like to keep working  
with you on that. It's very important. I guess my  
last question is on community notification, and you  
and I have had several conversations about the seven-  
day notification. And I wanted to know is DHS still  
under an emergency declaration where we don't  
necessarily meet that seven-day notification to the  
community board and the elected officials if we are  
not able to. But also, a lot of the new shelter  
sitings have been under a temporary status. Which in  
many cases temporary becomes permanent--

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Uh-  
huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: --for individual  
homeless families as well as singles. So I'd like to  
know as far as future sitings, are we making any  
changes? Are we really trying to get to the seven.  
You know in my situation I have five days in one of  
mine in Dolores Heights. But I do see this  
continuing, and so I'm trying to get a sense are we  
really engaging community residents? Are we really  
establishing community advisory boards? Are we  
really doing our very best to make sure that, you  
know, we're not shoving shelters in communities where  
they're not wanted, or where they're not welcome.  
We're really trying to establish a working  
partnership with residents and all the stakeholders.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So in response to  
your question, Council Member, we-- Last year, as you  
know, when we had gotten the emergency declarations  
in order to bring on additional shelter capacity, we  
had to do it very quickly, [bell] which is why they  
were--why the--why the Emergency Declaration was  
granted to us. And so, as part of that work it was  
our intention to give at least seven days notice to

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community board and elected officials that would be hosting our shelters. That--those mechanisms allowed us to enter into emergency contracts. And those emergency contracts were for a finite period of time. So what you're seeing happening now is, as you referenced, those emergency contracts are ending. So now, we're entering into long-term procurements. And many of the sites actually continue to use them for shelter going forward. And that long-term procurement process requires certain notifications as well publication in the city record. So it may seem as though, you know, something new is happening, but those are sites that we have been in when the emergency period is ending. And now the new procurement, the long-term procurement is going forward.

And to your fundamental question, going into shelters using emergency contracting mechanisms is not what we want to do. We want to get to a place where if there is a need for additional shelter that it would come through the long-term, you know, traditional RFP process that has built into it notifications that are required in advance of the submission of any RFP to us to provide shelter. But

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our focus for this year is really on housing permanency. Our focus for this year has to be exiting families and individuals from shelter to the permanent housing. By doing that, we open up more capacity in our system, and hopefully obviate the need for us to have to come to you to say we have another shelter that we would like to open. So we have to be successful in terms of exiting families and individuals from our shelter system. Not just for their benefit, because that's really why we're doing it. That's the fundamental reason, but also the system wide benefit would be, it would help us with our capacity needs.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, great. So I can say don't call me, Commissioner? Don't call me. No more shelters? [laughs] I understand. I just wanted to go on record and say that. But thank you so much for the work that you guys do, and I'm looking forward to continuing partnerships because we do have a lot of work to do, and thank you, Chair, for your leadership as well and all the work you do. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
Member Gibson. Council Member Miller.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you, Mr.  
Chair. Good afternoon, Commissioner and to your  
team. Thank you again--

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Good  
afternoon.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: --for coming out.  
I just--I have some questions, but I want to digress  
a moment and speak to what Council Member Gibson was  
saying as a matter of clarification. And she spoke  
to the value of partnerships in communities and  
elected. And obviously, I have prided myself in  
being one, and that our community understand that  
there has to be shared sacrifice, which means that  
there will be shelters and other supportive services  
that have to be provided throughout the city. But in  
doing so, we have to--there has to be value to those  
partnerships. And we talked about the seven-day  
notice. There was a declaration. In fact, there was  
a resolution that came out in my Community Board 12  
addressing the issues of shelters. And very shortly  
after, there was an article that came out in the  
local paper about a temporary shelter. And it was

1 disheartening that I did not--that I had to find out  
2 from a newspaper article, and that I had no response  
3 to my constituents because of that. And so,  
4 obviously that impacts the relationship, and that  
5 partnership. There was--I was given an explanation  
6 about it being temporary and of what you were talking  
7 about of contracting. But that really doesn't make a  
8 difference when you have to explain to your  
9 constituency, and you don't have the answers. So I  
10 would hope that in the future, that we could rectify  
11 that and go back to the genuineness that it's not a  
12 matter of semantics. Whether it's temporary or  
13 permanent that the notifications comes--the  
14 notification comes because it's the right thing to  
15 do. That we have a partnership and that we want to  
16 continue to work together.

17  
18 So with that being said, there has been a  
19 lot of earlier conversation about violations by  
20 providers and landlords. And I understand that  
21 that's a considerable challenge to provide shelter  
22 and housing. That is often difficult to kind of keep  
23 your arms wrapped around this. My question is that  
24 what kind of background, scrutiny is done to ensure  
25 that we deal with good players? That we aren't



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rewarding habitual violators by allowing them  
contracts?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, Council Member  
to your question, we are looking at existing  
portfolio for shelter. Looking at it in partnership  
with all of our providers to get a sense of where  
improvements need to be made. To get a sense of how  
our providers are working with independent landlords.  
Also, to get a sense of what services are being  
provided, and what do they need in order to  
effectively do their work well? And as we do this  
examination, what we have come up is there are some  
landlords who--who have been hard to work with. And,  
you know, they have been called out by different  
providers who have historically had a relationship  
with them. And I will tell you that some of those  
providers have actually discontinued those  
relationships, and we have worked with them to make  
other choices. And so that's what we're going to be  
doing going forward if indeed we encounter any vendor  
or anyone who is not in keeping with our commitment  
to our clients and our goals and objectives as  
outlined with our Operational Plan. You know, I  
would be remiss if I didn't say that over the year

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1 and three months that I have been in this position in  
2 working closely with all of our providers, our  
3 providers they are doing this work because they are  
4 interested in helping clients. They are doing this  
5 work because they really want to fulfill our vision  
6 of reducing homelessness and improving lives. And  
7 so, their hearts are in the right place, and you  
8 know, they are--there are--they are feeling now more  
9 empowered to make different decisions as it pertains  
10 to what resources are available to them for shelter.  
11 Because we have made different decisions only because  
12 we have articulated different values with how we're  
13 going to do the work. And so they've come along very  
14 quickly and very easily. And we're looking at-- You  
15 know, the question that you posed in terms of if  
16 there is anyone who is not working with us. If there  
17 is anyone who is working against us or at odds with  
18 us in terms of the work that we have to get done,  
19 then we cannot continue that relationship and we  
20 won't.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: I would just--I  
23 would just say and it works both sides with the  
24 providers as well as the landlords. But there are  
25 some landlords that have historically horrendous

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records, and we want to ensure that we are not  
rewarding those landlords for years, for decades of  
abuse to communities. And they're the same folks  
that they have abused, and quite often created this  
condition of homelessness, you know, on the other  
hand. [bell] So thank you for your time. I  
appreciate it.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: I look forward to  
continue working with you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
Member Miller. Council Member Barron for questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes, thank you,  
Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Commissioner for  
coming, and you know, I've got lots of questions.  
What percentage of people who are in shelters are  
working?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So the numbers I  
had-- Do you have the current count? Is that across  
the board? Is that the individuals and families?  
Okay. So we have two numbers. We have numbers for  
families with children--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
Yes.

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2 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --heads of  
3 households, and we also have numbers in our single  
4 adult system. I try not to conflate the two. But on  
5 the family with children system we have about a third  
6 of head of house--a third of our families have one  
7 head of household who's working. Working either  
8 part-time or full-time but working every day and  
9 trying to make ends meet. On the single side of our  
10 system, I'm not sure what the percentage is.

11 [background comment]

12 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: About 15% of our  
13 those single individuals are--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
15 What is the average income that they earn?

16 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So I don't have  
17 that number available right now. I can get it for  
18 you, for both populations.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] I  
20 would appreciate that because, as you know, we are  
21 oversaturated with shelters in East New York. We've  
22 had this discussion many times, and now I understand  
23 that you are looking to expand the PATH, Prevention  
24 Assistance in Temporary Housing to have one in each  
25 borough.

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So I can't imagine that there would be one in East New York since we're oversaturated, but in any event, we know many of the people living in shelters are--do come from that community.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: In light of that fact, and you don't have the figures in terms of what the average income is. But in light of that fact, I would hope that you would support the efforts of the East New York community to encourage the Mayor to have a larger set-aside of the Sustainable Housing Plan that he's advancing than what he's presently advancing. Of the 50% of the housing that is slated to be affordable, because the other 50% is market. So the 50% that is slated to be affordable he at this point has an overall template that says 8% would be for people making less than \$25,000 of the average AMI. And this is my--my push here is that we need to provide permanent housing. Temporary shelter is not housing. It's a very unpleasant situation that people are living in. So I would hope that you would

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support us as we address the Mayor's plan, and say that there needs a significant set-aside portion. So that we can bring people out of shelters and get them into housing. And I believe it says that the homeless families must apply for shelter, but individuals have a legal right to shelter?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Can you explain why that is?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So there are eligibility requirements for the family side our system that were promulgated I believe pursuant to litigation that concluded some years ago *McCain v. Boston*, if I'm not misspeaking. On the single side of our system pursuant to a settlement--a settlement agreement on the *Callahan* litigation, there was a consent decree that was entered into that will allow a single individual--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
Okay, that's okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --who needed shelter to come into the shelter--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
What are--what are the rights that shelter residents

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1 have? Because, as you know, there are numerous  
2 shelter and safe havens, and other housing, temporary  
3 housing in my community. And we often times get  
4 complaints. There was one woman who is--she uses a  
5 wheelchair and her--she didn't adequate storage for  
6 her wheelchair. There was another woman who came  
7 with all kinds of complaints about the disrespect,  
8 which they felt they were being subjected to. That  
9 the staff is not sensitized to deal with very  
10 troubled and a very oppressed population in a very  
11 caring and sensitive way. So what are the rights of  
12 these residents, and how is the training--how is the  
13 training done with the employees. And also, what  
14 would be my abilities to visit shelters in my  
15 community, as I would like to go and see what's  
16 happening?

18 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Okay, so I'll take  
19 each question--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
21 Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --and each part.  
23 So our clients, any of clients who are in shelter  
24 have a right to safe. Have a right to resource rich,  
25 in my opinion, shelters that have services that can

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1 help them to overcome whatever barriers that have  
2 them being in shelter. And have them to move to  
3 housing permanency. They have a right to have staff  
4 who are, you know, who are interested in their  
5 wellbeing, and staff who are trying to help them to  
6 move to housing independence. The formal, you know,  
7 rights and responsibilities of clients we can send  
8 that to your office. But I want to just make sure  
9 that you know, and all the council members know if  
10 you have any constituents who are in shelter, who  
11 have issues they feel are not being addressed, we  
12 want to know about. We have an office of an  
13 ombudsman. We have an ombudsman's office within DHS,  
14 who is actually working with all clients and  
15 providers who have needs. And our ombudsman's job is  
16 to troubleshoot whatever the issues are. Whether  
17 it's with a provider, whether it's with other systems  
18 that families or clients are with, to help them to  
19 have those needs met. To help their experience in  
20 shelter be a good one, and be one that can ultimately  
21 help to get to housing permanency. So we have a way  
22 in which we can flag cases for us. To your point  
23 about--  
24  
25



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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
Visits.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Visits. Oh,  
training--training. So I'm star with training and  
then I'll get to visits. So to your point--to your  
point about training, as part of our--as part of our  
Operational Plan, you know, what I had spoke to in  
terms of organization excellence in considering how  
we do our work. The model of practice that I  
described and the four key elements of what we want  
every shelter provider to do with any individual  
family who is in shelter, those are things that we  
have to train people to do, right. So while the  
training may not have been as robust as we had wanted  
it to be in the previous administration, it is going  
to be robust in this one, right. So having a clear  
curriculum. The only way that you can adhere to or  
implement a model practice is having a curriculum,  
training to it. You know, offering technical  
assistance for any staff who are doing the work, and  
then measuring outcomes in terms of how they're  
performing with what you want them to get done. So  
we believe, we know that an investment in training,  
an investment in staff and support to our staff

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across the full network will be helpful in improving outcomes for our clients. Clients will then experience shelter stays in a better way. Because our staff will be able to more effectively help them with whatever needs they have.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]

And visits, because I know my time is about up.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: As it pertains to visits, I would want to, you know, continue the conversation off line and engage--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]

Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --Deputy Commissioner Camille Rivera to make sure that you know who we are. You know what services we're providing. We have community advisory boards that we want to make sure that your staff are participating on for the shelters that are in your district. And make sure that your voice is heard in the work that we're doing.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. Thank you. I'll have second--in the second round more questions. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
Member Barron. Second round of questions, Council  
Member Wills. And we're--we're on the clock for  
three minutes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Three minutes is  
great. I only have two questions. So, Commissioner,  
I'm sure you are aware that the State Senate enacted  
a bill that had bi-partisan support, S3925 that  
creates the provisions for municipalities or local  
governments to site shelters. They did not have the  
power to do that when it was only a State power  
before, and the assembly is trying to get it done  
now.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I am somewhat  
familiar with that proposed legislation, but not  
entirely conversant with it. I--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: [interposing] So  
I'm not--no I wasn't-- So--so what I'm asking is e  
did a Reso last year asking them to do this because  
every time we spoke about creating fair share  
legislation so that you could only do 13% of the  
entire borough shelters in one community or in one  
district, the answer we kept getting was the State

1 had supervision over anything that had to do with  
2 housing.

3  
4 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Uh-huh.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: So, now the Senate  
6 has passed this legislation in reaction to one of the  
7 districts in Long Island had a lot of sexual  
8 offenders in one of the shelters. So what I'm asking  
9 you is we're now putting forth legislation to expand  
10 the amount of feet that a sexual predator Level 2 and  
11 3 can live from a school or park or daycare center  
12 from 1,000 to 1,500 feet. Now, once the Senate  
13 passes this and the Governor signs it--signs it, the  
14 city will have that ability. Will you support that  
15 type of legislation?

16 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, Council Member,  
17 I would--I would want to review it a bit more closely  
18 so that I can have an informed conversation with you  
19 in your office about it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay.

21 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I don't feel as  
22 though I am prepared to have that conversation--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing] I'm  
24 sorry.

25 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --right now.

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COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: I can appreciate  
that.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: But you are seeing  
my staff taking copious notes, and I suspect that  
it's something we will talking about as soon as we  
get back to the office. So-

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: [interposing]  
And--and Camille, if you could please put for the  
Fair Share Legislation also?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: [off mic]  
Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: All right.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: [off mic]  
This is something we'll do. [sic]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: And I think that  
Council Member Miller is actually-- Isn't he? I  
believe he's actually a co-sponsor. So those two  
pieces of legislation we're--you know, we want to see  
where you're at with those.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We will follow up.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you. Before  
33 minutes--before three minutes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
Member Wills. Council Member Vanessa Gibson.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Council Member  
Wills are you challenging me so that I can beat that?  
You are? It's okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: No, no, because  
you can do all things.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Commissioner, I  
just wanted to ask a quick question. Serving as a  
former State Legislation understanding how important  
and critical Albany's budget is to New York City--

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Uh-  
huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: --and with two  
weeks left of the State Budget-- Thankfully, we have  
a new Speaker in the Assembly, who I happen to know.  
I just wanted to ask about the EAF, the Emergency  
Assistance for Needy Families and that 10% share.  
That's a new proposal? Am I understanding that  
correctly? And if so, how would that impact your  
budget and the level of services, as well as the  
State support that we're getting from Albany?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, it is a new  
proposal, and if it is implemented I believe that it  
will result in some reductions in our budget.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [off mic] Yes.

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: That could ultimately reflect, you know, affect our--our ability to program for shelter. So it is new, and if it does go into effect it could very have an impact on us.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: So the conversations I assume and hope that the Administration is talking to the Governor's Officer. Is OCFS involved in this as well?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I believe they are. We are having conversations that are being led--led by OMB with the State Budget about this, and--

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [interposing]  
Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --you know, it's on our radar, and it's something that's being discussed.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: So, is this something that's just being proposed for New York City or all localities in the State?

COMMISSIONER RIVERA: [off mic] New York City. [sic]

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Just New York City?

COMMISSIONER RIVERA: [off mic] Yes.  
[sic]

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COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Oh, Lord, Okay.

COMMISSIONER RIVERA: [off mic] Our  
locations with special services--

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing]  
Right.

COMMISSIONER RIVERA: [off mic] I really  
have to look. [sic] [on mic] For our Social  
Services districts with a population of five million  
or more the reimbursement rate wouldn't be 100% with  
90%.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, so  
obviously I'm very concerned about this, and I know,  
you know, with two weeks left I just know that if  
that were to be successful, that's going to certainly  
have an affect on us in the city. So I would like us  
to keep having conversations. May of us are going to  
Albany tomorrow to talk to our State friends about  
some of the last minute priorities that we are trying  
to get into the Executive Budget. But we should  
definitely keep talking because if there is a way  
that the City Council obviously can be supportive as  
we have conversation now in our preliminary working  
towards the executive, I would love to be a part of  
that. I know the State has an agenda, and a



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1  
2 priority. And any opportunity to save money, they're  
3 going to do that, but it's at the detriment of our  
4 New Yorkers. And so, I'm very concerned about that,  
5 and I really encourage you to keep being a strong  
6 advocate and making sure that we don't get this 10%  
7 share.

8 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I'll continue  
9 talking.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very  
11 much. Thanks.

12 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Thanks.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So Council Member  
14 Gibson, thank you. Council Member Barron for a  
15 second round.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.  
17 Chair. Commissioner, in your testimony you say, Our  
18 Homebase Prevention Program is nationally recognized  
19 and proven to be 95% effective in helping clients  
20 remain stably housed--

21 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Uh-  
22 huh.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --and out of  
24 shelter. How are you calculating that 95%? What is  
25 that based on?

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So there was a study that was done on the Homebase Program by a group called ABT, A-B-T, I think, Associates where they looked at the work that was being done by Homebase. They looked at the targeting that was being done, the use of the Risk Assessment questionnaire that is applied to all clients who come in seeking Homebase intervention and services. That questionnaire once they target the right level of service for clients. For those who come into the Homebase Program and at its full strength they found that for that group that 95% of the time those clients do not come into shelter. And it is effective in terms of helping them maintain safe housing.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: But do we know longitudinally if that's the case. Might it be that at some point subsequent to that initial contact they don't even come. They may go into a shelter?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So I don't know how far--how far out they follow cohort. That's an-- that's an excellent question, but for the point in time in which they had actually done this study, and-

-

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]

Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --reported their findings, they had included that the effectiveness levels was at 95.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. So that was at the intake and you don't know the length of the following. That's--that's fine. Now, we know that one of the results of income inequality is the instability in housing. So, how are we going to get the other two-thirds of the families to get jobs, and the other 85% of the single people to have gainful employment?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So that's part of our work with respect to independent living planning. So if realize that for everyone of our clients that unemployment is a barrier to them obtaining or maintaining housing, then we have to make sure that our providers are working with them to do what is necessary for them to either become employable or to gain employment. Whether it's job skills training, or whether it's, you know, inventing their education, they're working closely with the employment vendors

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from HRA around what the needs are for our clients in  
that particular--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --area and we do  
all of that, and--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] And  
just to squeeze in one last question.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: What's the rate  
of return in terms of people, either single or  
families that leave and then come back?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So the rate of re-  
entry into our system? I will have to get that for  
you. Wait. Hold on.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROSEN: [off mic] I  
am showing 30%--30%.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Okay, so for  
families with children the rate of re-entry into the  
system at this time is 30%.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thirty-eight?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Thirty--3-0  
percent.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thirty percent.

3 And for singles? Do you have that?

4 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I don't have it for  
5 single adult.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: If you could get  
7 that, I would appreciate it. And I wanted to just  
8 echo what Council Member Miller had said in terms of  
9 making sure that those providers who don't measure up  
10 to the standards, don't find a way to shift the  
11 ownership on paper to their nephew, their cousin,  
12 their brother, and then still be able to reap that  
13 financial benefit. So I don't know how we can track  
14 that, but finding some way that we can make sure that  
15 these poor players don't benefit from the system.  
16 And finally, I just want to say continue to look  
17 forward to working with you as we address this issue.  
18 It's a major issue, and I'm sure that as the Mayor's  
19 plan for housing looks at a larger percentage of  
20 homeless low-income-- And it's interesting because I  
21 believe he's talking about housing for moderate and  
22 moderate goes up to \$100,000. So that's not going to  
23 help the persons living in shelters. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
25 Member Barron. Commissioner, I have a few final

1 questions. I know that Commissioner Banks is  
2 patiently waiting outside, as he patiently waited for  
3 the previous hearing. So I will try to keep this  
4 brief, but we want some--certainly some further  
5 questions to be asked for the record. So I go  
6 through them quickly. The first question, you just  
7 said that the rate of families with children that are  
8 returning to shelter is 30% right now.

10 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What does that  
12 compare--how does that compare to say two years ago,  
13 or a time prior to this Administration?

14 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, I would have to  
15 get that information to you, Chairman, unless my  
16 Deputy Commissioner has it right now.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROSEN: [off mic]

18 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So I'm being told  
19 that it was studied across--it was a study that was  
20 done from 2005 until 2012. And for the 2005 cohort,  
21 it remained at 30%. So it actually has not  
22 increased.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: All right.

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: It hasn't gone  
25 down, but it has not increased.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And that's certainly something that we hope that LINC has the ability to address by keeping the subsidies sustained over a number of years. So hopefully, that will have an impact.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Well, we also believe that Aftercare Services that are now being provided with LINC, which have not been provided in previous years--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: --will help to address that issue as well.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I'm going to get to LINC actually right now. So I have to admit in going through the LINC budgets between your agency and HRA, it's actually a little bit confusing to me what's in DHS and what's in HRA, and where all the-- where all those dollars end up in the various budget lines. Which LINC budgets are in DHS?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Okay, so I'm going to defer to my Deputy Commissioner for Fiscal and Procurement Lula Urquhart.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: For all of the rental subsidy budgets are in HRA's budget/

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: All of them across  
the board?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: All of  
them. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: All five to six  
LINCs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: All five,  
six, yes. [laughs] Will be in--six will be in HRA's  
budget. Five are now in HRA's budget. As far as  
Aftercare is concerned, LINC II Aftercare is in DHS'  
budget.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: And LINC  
II Aftercare.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Now, so how  
much does that total for FY16?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: Are you  
asking all the LINCs for all of the Rental Assistance  
or for Aftercare?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Whatever is in DHS'  
budget.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: The--for  
FY16 for LINC II, it's \$6.3 million for 2016. And  
just a correction, LINC IV is also in DHS' budget--



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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: --and  
that's Aftercare. It's \$2.6 million.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 2.6.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: For 2016/

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, in total we're  
looking at about \$8.9 million in DHS' budget is--is  
LINC related services?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Those are budgeted  
not only for the remainder of that budget team but  
they are in the Preliminary Budget for '16?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: Yes.  
Those are FY16 numbers.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: They're FY16 numbers.  
Where is that reflected in DHS' budget? I believe  
that it's in General Administration currently, is  
that right, as the holding code?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: It is in  
General Administration at this point.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you plan to with  
the Executive Budget to move it into it's--it's own  
budget code?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: Yes, we  
will be moving it the correct budget code after.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. It raises--  
there's a concern that--that was raised as part of--  
Did you have a chance to see the--the IBO Report that  
came out this month very--a two-pager that speaks to  
concerns that they have about the out year funding  
for--for LINC. Basically, for keeping new cohorts  
funded in the out years. So as they have described  
it, there's funding in place for LINC I and II for  
the Rental Subsidies, but LINC II, IV, V--and I  
don't know about VI now---they're not--they're not  
currently in the Preliminary Budget for new cohorts.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that--is that  
something we're looking at addressing in the  
Executive Budget?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: Well, OMB  
is working with us and with the State to see how the  
funding can be in the out years.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And that's a question  
that--Is the issue that it's dependent on the State  
Budget being finalized hopefully this month? Is that  
the concern or--?

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COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So when we began the programs--if I can interject--we wanted to make sure that we could, you know, test the effectiveness of each of the programs to get a sense of what was working, what works well, and what can work better.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so, if it's the IDO [sic] report that you're referring to, I think I saw it today.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I saw it yesterday.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: There's some-- [laughs] There's some question about their numbers, and I think their sources were all public facing documents. So we want to talk to OMB and get a clear sense of exactly the numeric calculations that they had in their report. But in terms of the question as to why the funding is for this period of time, we're still, you know, looking at the effectiveness of the programs to decide how we move forward.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So at the moment I just want to make sure at this part is clear. At the moment LINC's III, IV and V are not funded in the Preliminary Budget for 16?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: So funding is in the budget, but we're still looking for support from the State on the funding. The funding is all city tax levy in the budget, but we are looking for support from the State.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I mean I'll certainly ask HRA as well because if those fundings--if those budget lines are in HRA's budget. I'll take it up with them as well. Is LINC working right now? Are you seeing--is there--is it on track for move outs, for the number of letters going out? Does it vary from various LINC's like from LINC I to LINC II to LINC III?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So LINC is working. LINC is working in that we know, you know, we have over 1,000 families, households who have moved out of shelter with LINC with LINC--the LINC programs that we currently have in place, and--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] In the aggregate?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: In the aggregate. And, you know, when you think about, you know, the benefits to those families who are no longer in shelter who are living independently, who have, you

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1 know, the financial support that they need who--  
2 These are families who have been in shelter the  
3 longest period of time. So really, you know, kind of  
4 holding our--holding that moment, right. And being  
5 thoughtful about what it means to them. Yes, it's  
6 working. Yes, we are on target we believe to make a  
7 reallocation for LINC vouchers that have been issued.  
8 Yes, the processes are in place in terms of HRA and  
9 DHS, in terms of certification of clients. You know,  
10 delivering Aftercare services, and we're looking at  
11 it very closely and pushing it forward. As I had  
12 testified to earlier, we are still working with  
13 landlords. We are still finding ways in which we can  
14 recruit more apartments for the program. Our  
15 provider network is doing that as well as part of  
16 their housing permanency work. And we're going with  
17 everything that we have to have this program be  
18 successful. But, yes, it is working, and we believe  
19 that it will continue to work.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because there was  
22 some ramping up time with the program, there is a  
23 possibility that there may be some funds in FY15 that  
24 were allocated that--that may not be drawn down. Is  
25 that--are you looking at that closely, and if--what's

1 the contingency if all that's in DHS' budget is not  
2 entirely drawn down?

3  
4 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So we're looking at  
5 it very closely. You know, as I said, we believe  
6 that we will complete our allocation of placements  
7 with that funding by the end of that fiscal year. We  
8 have, I think, 15 more weeks. Not that we're  
9 counting, but we are really looking at it to make  
10 sure that we can push it forward, and, you know, have  
11 full--full speed ahead.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there any  
13 particular LINC section that is less appealing to  
14 landlords than others. We've been--we've seen it--  
15 it's reflected somewhat in the numbers that LINC II,  
16 there's--there are fewer move-outs under LINC II. Is  
17 that a concern? Do you think that that reflects  
18 something on the part of landlords' resistance to  
19 taking clients that receive a LINC II subsidy or is  
20 it--is it some other reason that that's happening?

21 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So LINC II had a--  
22 had a slower ramp-up because of the need to have  
23 Critical Time Intervention Services available to  
24 those clients before and after they exit shelter. We  
25 have to go through a procurement process, and enter

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into the contracts with before CTI providers who will  
be delivering services to that group.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Who are the  
providers?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: They are--  
[background comments]

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: The four  
providers are Jericho Projects, CUCS, Bronx Works and  
Women in Need. [sic]

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: But, while we were  
waiting for those procurements to be in place, we  
used existing capacity that we had from other CTI  
providers to move LINC II families through shelter  
prior to finalizing the contracts with those four  
vendors. So it took a little longer, but now we're  
at a place where those contracts are in place. We  
have the capacity readily available to go. And we  
can connect our clients to that service to make sure  
than when they exit shelter they can maintain their  
homes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In keeping with LINC  
II, just this speaks to I think some of those CTI and  
other services that DHS is providing. Given that  
many LINC II recipients are relying on SSI or SSDI

1 for their income, how is DHS working with those  
2 families to ensure that at the end of the LINC  
3 subsidy that they'll be able to maintain their  
4 apartments?  
5

6 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So the work, you  
7 know, begins, as I had mentioned, for that particular  
8 cohort before they exit shelter.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

10 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And so, when we're  
11 thinking about the transition from shelter to  
12 permanent housing and then supporting them along the  
13 way when they move into their new homes, it's a  
14 service that can be--that can be delivered in  
15 conjunction with our Homebase offerings. And really  
16 developing a tailored plan for each family to  
17 understand what their unique needs are. And to  
18 really have them get to a place where beyond the  
19 subsidy there will be some thinking on some real  
20 planning around how they can maintain going forward.  
21 And so, it may--it can look different to each family,  
22 but I think it can't be one-size-fits-all. It has to  
23 be different for each family, and it has to be work  
24 that's ongoing throughout the lifetime of the subsidy  
25 that is being provided. So what may be the



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circumstances now in year one for that family may be different in year three. And maybe there are some opportunity, a way in which they can have sufficient revenue and income in order to maintain the homes that they've moved into.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Is DHS seeing landlords that are preferring to have month-to-month leases rather than long-term leases, or is that not an issue and your intention?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So we have not see that as a phenomenon of the LINC programs.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, I'm going to save the rest of my LINC questions for HRA and then the Executive Budget when we--when we get there. But I just have a couple more questions around the shelter population, and the needs that DHS is going to have in FY16 around budget for shelter population. Do you--do you believe that the current proposed FY15 Preliminary Budget for--for family and adult shelter is--is adequate for the projected need in FY16?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, we do.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We do.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, because it's--  
it's lower than the actual of 20--of FY2015, which  
obviously went up by how many million? Close to \$100  
million or maybe more than \$100 million--more than  
\$100 million from the Adopted Budget in FY15. Are  
we--that was--that was in shelter costs. IS that  
something that we think is going to happen again, or--  
-

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [off mic] Do you  
want to talk to the estimate--to the estimate? [sic]

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: [off mic]  
Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How do you determine  
that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER URQUHART: The  
difference between FY15's budget and FY16 budget  
it's--it's due mainly to grants. We add the grants  
in later during the year. And so \$13 million of  
grant funding will be added for ESG. The other  
difference is that for adult shelters--adult family  
shelters and families with children in shelter, the  
budget--the 2015 budget included one-time funding  
from OMB. And when the re-estimations are done, that  
will be added into the 2016 budget.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you know where you  
may have to--where you'll be locating new shelter  
units that need to come online?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So at this time we  
do not. I mean right now we're just looking. As I  
had made reference to before, we're doing everything  
we can to reduce our shelter census. And we're  
assessing to do some shelter census, and we can open  
up more capacity in our system. So we're using all  
of the resources that we currently have. That is  
really our focal point for this year. We have got to  
find a way to make sure that the resources we have  
available can benefit the families who now have them  
in hand, and are ready to go.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you have a number  
for the number of units broken down by adult  
families, families with children, and single adults  
that--that have been brought on to date in FY15?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: The number of  
shelter units?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We can get you that  
information.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, but there's  
been--I mean it's been something that you obviously  
have had to work through over the past year?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We did. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that--in terms of  
trends is that--is that being relieved at all or is  
that--is it still as pressing a need as it was say  
six months ago?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So we're feeling  
some relief only in that we did bring on quite a bit  
of shelter last year.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We had to, right.  
And now we're, you know, at a place where because of  
the rental assistance programs, and the other housing  
resources that we have available we're seeing  
movement in our system. So we still have 57,000  
individuals in our system, but we're at a place where  
we can at least predict that because of the resources  
that we have, the housing resources that we currently  
have that there'll be some movement. There will be  
some housing--there will be clients who will actually  
move to housing permanency. Which was not the case  
at the beginning of last yea. We didn't have these

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resources available, and we didn't experience it this way. So, things have changed somewhat.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So do you think that we're--we're turning the corner?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We're--we're doing something different. [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We're doing something different than we had done before, and trying to go in a different direction, and we will succeed.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great. Commissioner, thank you very much. Thank you, Deputy Commissioners. We appreciate your--your testimony. We appreciate your time. Council Member Gibson, do you have any further questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [off mic] No.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [off mic] thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Have a great afternoon, and we look forward to seeing you at the Executive Budget Hearing in May. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Thank you.

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[background comments, pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good afternoon,  
everybody.

SERGEANT-A-ARMS: Quiet, please.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you for your  
patience. I want to thank Commissioner Banks and his  
staff for--for their patience. Good morning. I am  
Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of the General  
Welfare Committee. This is the third and final  
Preliminary Budget hearing for the General Welfare  
Committee. At this point, we'll hear testimony from  
the Human Resources Administration, also known as HRA  
regarding--regarding it's Preliminary Budget and  
general agency operations within its proposed \$9.7  
billion budget. As well as performance indicators  
for Social Services within the Fiscal 15 Preliminary  
Mayor's Management Report. HRA provides cash  
assistance, Food Stamps, HIV/AIDS Support Services,  
also referred to as HASA, and many other public  
assistance programs to aid low-income New Yorkers.  
Beginning this fiscal year, HRA expanded its services  
to include the centralization of legal services,  
anti-eviction services and civil legal services  
contracts. Expedited access to rental arrears

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benefits, expanded homelessness prevention programs,  
and created with the Department of Homeless Services  
and the State of New York three new rental assistance  
programs referred to as the Living in Communities or  
LINC.

Since the adoption of FY15 Budget, HRA  
Fiscal 16 Budget has grown to \$181 million--I'm  
sorry. Grown by \$181 million of which \$180.9 million  
are new needs for the agency. The majority of the  
new needs related to HRA's administration--are  
related to HRA's administration of the LINC program  
including providing Aftercare and employment  
services, apartment inspections, landlord and broker  
fee bonuses, and enhanced moving allowances. While  
the Commissioner has already testified regarding the  
administration of the LINC program at an earlier  
hearing, this hearing will focus on the LINC budget  
for Fiscal 15 and the proposed LINC budget for Fiscal  
16, in addition to how HRA will measure success of  
this rental assistance program.

With this new administration and new HRA  
commissioner, I am pleased to see impactful changes  
being made to HRA programs that provide services to  
New York City's most vulnerable populations. In

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particular, HRA is making great strides in reforming its work employment programs, which were heavily criticized under the previous administration. While the Commissioner has already presented his vision in restructuring HRA's work employment programs to the General Welfare Committee, I would like to take this opportunity today to hear more details about the implementation of the proposals that the agency presented to the State for approval. As well as the upcoming Requests for Proposals or RFP for employment vendors.

Federal cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP remain a concern. Monthly SNAP benefits allow more \$250 million in food spending across the city every months. The federal cuts to SNAP, which reduced monthly benefits on an average by \$18 have created a strain on emergency food pantries across the city, which are also under the jurisdiction of HRA. Pantries have been inundated with hungry New Yorkers in need of food once monthly SNAP benefits have run out. HRA's funding for emergency food assistance programs need to be increased for this upcoming fiscal year to accommodate this growing demand.



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Overall, HRA's proposed Fiscal 16 Budget--Preliminary Budget reflects a new vision for the agency, a vision that shows a commitment in helping low-income New Yorkers and providing them meaningful impactful services.

Before I welcome the Commissioner, I would like to thank the committee staff for their work Dohini Sompura, Senior Legislative Finance Analyst; Andrea Vasquez, Counsel to the Committee; and Tony Cyrus, Policy Analyst for the committee for preparing this hearing as well as my Legislative Director Matt Ojala. I also want to acknowledge Council Member Vanessa Gibson. And acknowledge one other thing, which I think is important to know.

That if you look at our Fiscal 16 Preliminary Budget compared to the Fiscal 15 Preliminary Budget, and there are a lot of reasons for this. And it's a complicated agency with a lot of different funding streams. But the budget actually decreases by a modest amount. It's around \$47 million, which out of--over \$9, almost \$10 billion is a small percentage. But I think what--the reason why I acknowledge that is there have been a significant amount of reforms out of HRA under this

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1 administration that have really changed the playing  
2 filed and have undone 20 years or more--20 years of  
3 misguided policy in the city. And what this  
4 administration has been able to show over the last  
5 years is that it's been able to change the agency.  
6 And change the way that the agency implements its  
7 mission without--without breaking the bank. And  
8 without--without creating a massive financial impact  
9 with. Which I think some folks out there might have  
10 thrown out dire warnings that this city under a more  
11 progressive leadership would break the bank. The  
12 fact of the matter is that they've been able to  
13 implement meaningful reforms while being also  
14 fiscally prudent. So I acknowledge that at the  
15 outset of this hearing. And with that, I welcome  
16 Commissioner Steve Banks, and I'll ask you to take  
17 this oath. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
18 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your  
19 testimony before the committee, and to respond  
20 honestly to council member's questions?

21  
22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I do.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Can I ask you can you  
24 all take the oath as well?

25 ELLEN LEVINE: I do.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great. Thank you.

ERIN VILLARI: I do.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

Mr. Banks, the floor is yours.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you very much for your very kind words. We really appreciate it. We want to thank the Chair, Steve Levin and as well as Council Member Gibson, who is here, for giving us this opportunity to testify today about HRA's budget work to move forward with reforms of our policies and procedures. My name is Steven Banks and I'm the Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration. Joining me today are HRA's Chief Programming and Planning and Financial Officer Ellen Levine to my right. Executive Deputy Commissioner of Finance, Erin Villari, who is right beside us, and HRA's Chief of Staff Jennifer Yeaw, who is to my left.

HRA is proud to be in the forefront of the de Blasio Administration's efforts to address poverty and income inequality. HRA is committed to reforming its policies and procedures to achieve these goals by first helping working families stay in the workforce when jobs--when their jobs don't pay

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1 enough to live on by providing supports such as food  
2 aid and cash assistance, public health insurance, and  
3 emergency cash assistance, and eviction prevention  
4 services. By aiding struggling--those struggling to  
5 return or enter the workforce by providing a variety  
6 of employment related services including access to  
7 education; job skills training; help with job search  
8 and placement; and temporary cash assistance. And  
9 providing a safety net those permanently or  
10 temporarily unable to work.  
11

12 While most of the public focus tends to  
13 be on how many people receive cash assistance, it's  
14 important to note that a large number of New Yorkers  
15 receiving some assistance from HRA were already  
16 working, and that HRA's support helps them remain in  
17 the workforce. Living in a very expensive city low-  
18 income workers who are generally struggling to begin  
19 with can be derailed by a variety of emergencies and  
20 unexpected expenses. Among other assistance HRA  
21 provides the key work supports. There are \$2.5  
22 million New Yorkers receiving Medicaid through HRA,  
23 and tens of thousands more through the new State  
24 Health Insurance Exchange. \$1.7 million New Yorkers  
25 are receiving SNAP food assistance and millions of

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meals are served through food pantries in community  
kitchens. Seven hundred thousand New Yorkers are  
receiving home energy assistance every winter, and  
100,000 are receiving one-time cash assistance each  
year to prevent evictions and utility shut-offs or  
provide assistance with other emergencies. For all  
these New Yorkers this support can be critical in  
maintaining employment.

Having health insurances means workers  
can stay healthy and working and avoid the economic  
disaster that severe illness can impose on those with  
no insurance. Food and energy assistance, child  
support and earned income tax credits strengthen  
households and help families survive on low-income  
jobs. Emergency cash assistance and services to  
prevent homelessness can also stabilize families and  
individuals and keep them from losing employment in  
the face of sudden emergencies. Clearly, efforts  
aimed at keeping low-income workers in the workforce  
are much less expensive, and are more efficient than  
having to help New Yorkers return to the workforce  
especially after extended absence. Among those who  
do receive cash assistance, half are children, and  
nearly half of the adults are not subject to any

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1 federal and state work requirements as they--as the  
2 prior administrations had acknowledged because they  
3 are seniors or people with permanent or temporary  
4 disabilities who have a barrier to employment.  
5

6 HRA also helps thousands of the most  
7 vulnerable New Yorkers by providing shelter and  
8 supportive services to families who are survivors of  
9 domestic violence. Support for people living with  
10 HIV and AIDS. Protective services for adults unable  
11 to care for themselves. Homecare services for  
12 seniors and individuals with physical and mental  
13 disabilities, and legal services to address the  
14 harassment of tenants, avert homelessness and help  
15 immigrants. The breadth of our work explains the  
16 size of our budget and our staff. And particularly,  
17 given the hour, we're going to just give you some  
18 highlights of our testimony through Power Point.  
19 You've got the full testimony for the record, and  
20 we're going to start moving through the Power Point  
21 now.

22 First, we'll give you an overview of HRA.  
23 So HRA serves more than three million low-income New  
24 Yorkers through a broad range of programs to address  
25 poverty and income inequality and prevent

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homelessness. The Operating Budget in 2016 is \$9.7 billion; \$7.5 billion in City funds. 78% is for Medicaid payments and cash assistance benefits, and HRA continues to be responsible for much of the Medicaid program, which totals \$29 billion in New York City, although only 20% of those costs are in our actual budget. In addition, HRA administers the \$3 billion in Federal Food Stamps, the SNAP Program that do not pass through the City Budget. So those dollars are directly provided. The next slide gives you a sense of all the various programs that we have. We have education and training and job placement services to assist low-income New Yorkers in obtaining employment. We have cash assistance to meet basic human needs. Rental assistance to prevent homelessness; Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program SNAP Food Stamp benefits, and emergency food assistance to food pantries and community kitchens to fight hunger. Services for domestic violence-survivors of domestic violence. Services for New Yorkers living with HIV-AID. Services for children, including child support and childcare. Protective services for adults unable to care for themselves. Homecare for seniors and

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1 individuals with disabilities. Home energy  
2 assistance. Legal services including homelessness  
3 prevention and anti-harassment and immigration  
4 assistance. Enhanced client services through our  
5 new--through our info line call center and the Access  
6 NYC Online Portal, and IDNYC where HRA administers  
7 the back office and back end eligibility reviews and  
8 approvals.  
9

10 HRA is more than just about cash  
11 assistance. We help low-income workers stay on the  
12 job. And here you see the numbers. Annually, we  
13 provide critical support that helps many low-income  
14 New Yorkers remain in the workforce. There are  
15 500,000 receiving ongoing cash assistance annually.  
16 In a given month, that's 350,000 approximately; \$2.5  
17 million on Medicaid; \$1.7 million on Federal Food  
18 Stamps; \$700,000 on home energy. And this is since--  
19 and I indicated earlier \$100,000 in any given year  
20 receiving the emergency rental assistance and  
21 utilities. The next several slides give you a more  
22 granular review on the numbers, and Mr. Chair, you  
23 have those data before you. In order to save time,  
24 why don't we move through those charts, and onto some  
25 of the additional information. This is the



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information that we have given you before as to the numbers of recipients for each of the various programs.

To give you an overview of the staff, there is a 14,333 budget headcount in FY16 paid for with a combination of City, State and Federal funds. These are public servants who choose to work for HRA to help New Yorkers in need. Many have dedicated their entire careers to public service. It's a diverse workforce. Seventy percent are women; 59% are African-American, and 18% are Hispanic; 15% are White and 8% are Asian. It's a unionized workforce. You can see the breadth of the locals. Many are DC37, CWA Local 1180, Local 371, Local 1549, Teamsters local and so many others.

The next two charts give you a picture of our FY15 Budget as sort of a pie presentation of the different percentages. And you can see again that medical assistance is the largest driver of the budget. The chart for FY2016 continues that trend and you can see the various percentage allocations of the \$9.7 billion budget ranging from homecare, employment services, crisis DV services, and all the other ones that I mentioned. You can see the

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percentages again. Medical assistance is the largest driver of the budget. To walk you through the budget detail, slide 10 shows you the budget in FY15 is \$9.88 billion; \$7.63 billion in tax levy, declining to \$9.7 billion or \$7.56 billion in tax levy in FY16 for reasons that we'll be explaining as we testify. But the basic components of the budget you can see is \$6.4 billion in Medicaid; \$6.3 billion in city tax levy. Sixty-six percent of the total budget is Medicaid costs, and 84% are HRA city funds budget as well. \$1.4 billion and \$584 million in tax levy with public assistance programs. \$81 million and \$55 million city tax levy for the LINC Rental Assistance Program. \$21 million in legal services; \$7 million in tax levy. Additional baseline funding is being evaluated in the Executive Budget, which we'll be discussing with you. \$234 million and \$62 million city tax levy for employment and related support services such as transportation. \$177 million and \$86 million in city tax levy for HIV and AIDS housing and support services. \$108 million and \$23 million city tax levy for domestic violence crisis and adult services. \$11 million and \$9.9 million city tax levy for emergency food. \$789 million and \$232 million in

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tax levy for staff working with clients in the SNAP Food Stamp Program and the Job Centers, Child Support Office, and HIV/AIDS service centers and Medicaid Offices. \$341 million and \$129 million tax levy for administrative costs. Leases, supplies for HRA 68 job centers, SNAP centers, HASA offices and other client serving locations.

The Capital Budget is \$211 million, \$113 million for facilities and construction, which is really renovation expenses. \$78 million for information technology, including development of our benefits re-engineering program, which we'll be talking to you about; and \$20 million for telecommunications and other capital projects.

Overall, our budget increased by \$82 million in total funds and \$76 million in city funds in our November and February plans. And this includes five items totaling about \$69 million related to reducing and preventing homelessness through the rental assistance and eviction prevention efforts, which we will be talking about. The other item is restoring staff working on SNAP Food Stamps program, which is part of our effort to ensure that everyone who qualifies for federal food assistance receives it. Which we'll

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also be discussing with you. In terms of the federal--or the February Financial Plan changes, in summary there's a \$45 million or \$41.5 million in tax levy for LINC Rental Assistance to help families and adults move out of DHS and HRA shelters, which is in addition to the \$32 million, \$13 million tax levy that was already in the Adopted Budget. And there is \$5.6 million, \$4.9 in city tax levy for shelter prevention, and after care programs. And \$9.8 million or \$9.1 in city tax levy to support the LINC program including apartment inspections, moving of furniture, allowance enhancements, and funding for 427 staff to facilitate LINC moves, homelessness prevention and processing of emergency rent payments. \$6 million in total funds; \$3 million tax levy added for additional anti-eviction legal services on top of a million additional dollars that have been added in the Adopted Budget already. \$5 million was added in FY15 for the Anti-Harassment Legal Services Program, and further implementation is going to be addressed in the FY16 Executive Budget. And funding of \$13.8 million and \$6.9 million tax levy was added to restore \$515 SNAP positions that were slated to be

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cute by the prior administration from our Food Stamp Program.

There are a number of new initiatives, which as the Chair indicated, are reflected in--under our underlying budget that are part of the reforms that are underway. We created a new Homelessness Prevention Administration for the expansion of existing creation of new programs to prevent homelessness. We created--we have homelessness diversion units located at all HRA job centers, and now at DHS' PATH facility. They are now utilizing new diversion tools that include short-term financial assistance to help families and individuals remain outside of the shelter system. HRA is now deploying on-site staff at DHS Homebase offices around the city, and at the NYCA Administrative Hearings Office in addition to our prior staffing at the Housing Courts. All of this staffing is aimed to try to intervene and prevent evictions and homelessness particularly important in the Homelessness Offices where previously not-for-profit staff worked with clients. And they had to be sent to an HRA location without knowing what could be done or not done necessarily. And by having staff on site, we--we can

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expedite services, and streamline services, and  
enhance services at the same time. We have  
implemented and early intervention outreach team for  
outreach to families and individuals in need of legal  
assistance or emergency rental assistance based upon  
early warning referrals we're getting now from the  
Housing Court. We have a Landlord Ombudsman Services  
Unit established to address the needs and the  
concerns of landlords and management companies that  
provide permanent housing for families and  
individuals receiving public assistance. We have the  
Rental Assistance Program that we implemented for the  
new LINC initiative. We have the Legal Services  
Initiative Program to manage all of the HRA legal  
assistance programs, which reflect both an expansion  
of programs, new programs, and the consolidation of  
programs that were previously in other agencies.  
And HRA has created during this past fiscal year the  
Family Independence Administration Central Rent  
Processing Unit to centrally process, issue, and  
deliver emergency rental assistance payments in place  
of the old system of having checks issued at centers  
all around the city with delays that were inherent in

that type of a system. And now they're centrally produced in a much more expedited fashion.

I want to highlight some of the new aspects of LINC beyond what we testified about in the prior hearing in January. Since we testified as we continue our efforts to prevent and alleviate homelessness we've created three new LINC programs. So there are now six unique LINC programs for homeless New Yorkers. LINC IV is rental assistance for homeless seniors. It's 1,100 such rental assistance programs. It's \$2.6 million in city funds in FY15 and \$8.7 million in city funds in FY16. We've recently published a rule that will be out this week giving enhancement of this program to include also individuals receiving disability benefits in the single adult shelter systems. In order to enhance our efforts to meet the needs of that population in single adult shelters.

There is LINC IV, which is rental assistance for working homeless adults, a thousand working homeless adults. This is time limited rental assistance for working adults, and adult families without children--minor children. It's \$2.2 million in FY15 and \$7.1 million in FY16, and also there's

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aftercare for working individuals and adult families to assist with employment and maintaining housing after placement in permanent housing. And then there's the LINC VI Program that will pay for rent on behalf of families with children already in shelter who exit to live with relatives or friends. And the budget for that program will be part of the Executive Budget presentation and discussion with you.

The specific November and February initiatives that were touched on earlier, or the Landlord Bonus Enhanced Security Funds, one-time incentive payments for landlords participating in LINC programs, a program to reimburse landlords for potential costs not covered by security deposits or rent grants. The funding for the LINC apartment inspections, the increased broker's fee. As you know from prior hearings, there has been a reduction from the prior administration of 50%, and we restored the full amount, and then in this recent period we've been paying 15%. This comes on the heels of increasing the HASA broker's fee originally, and now we're using it for move-outs from the DHS Shelter system and the HARA DB shelter system as well. Enhanced moving allowances for homeless families, increased furniture



allowances, additional funding for costs as we increased spending as a result of the LINC moves. We've got enhanced program support within HRA, 79 staff to provide operational and emergency shelter support to HRA and DHS as HRA and DHS continues to work on homelessness prevention. And move to provide alternatives to shelter.

There is also the Home Section 8 Transfer. We're working with HPD to transfer Home Section 8 Funds to HRA to implement a new program to help alleviate homelessness. This is subject to approval from HUD. It was in the Consolidated Plan last week. HPD will allocate \$20 million of its Federal Home Grant to HRA for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program to move more than 1,200 homeless families out of shelters and into housing beginning in FY16. This is rental assistance targeted to families in homeless shelters receiving SSI or Social Security benefits. And the program will begin operation during the summer. It's for families in the DHS and HRA Domestic Violence shelters.

In addition, there are the Legal Services initiatives where, as we testified previously, all of the programs have been consolidated that were

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1 previously at DHS. HPD, CJC, DOICD they are all now  
2 at HRA. And the services include anti-eviction,  
3 anti-harassment, tenant protection, immigration,  
4 domestic violence services security federal benefits  
5 and other legal matters. And we're also developing a  
6 study of unmet needs in Housing Court. So that we  
7 can evaluate what programs will be most effective in  
8 preventing Housing Court evictions as we--even as we  
9 continue to expand our funding for legal services.  
10

11 For the Anti-Eviction Legal Services  
12 Program, there was the baseline increase of \$6.4  
13 million to \$13.5, and this is--includes the Housing  
14 Help Program, which is courthouse-based, which  
15 focuses on some of the keys zip code areas, the key  
16 neighborhoods that's producing the most numbers into  
17 the shelter system. And we created a new court  
18 referral system to ensure that high-risk tenants are  
19 referred for these services. As the Mayor announced  
20 in the State of the City, we are also implementing a  
21 new Anti-Harassment Tenant-Based Protection Program  
22 in the rezoning areas, and the communities around the  
23 rezoning areas. This is to prevent tenant harassment  
24 and displacement, and keep families and individuals  
25 in their homes. Maintain affordable housing, and

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1 stabilize neighborhood. \$5 million is in the HRA  
2  
3 FY15 Budget. It was--it's \$36 million program, and  
4 we're focusing on how much money will be allocated as  
5 part of the expansion for the next--for the next  
6 fiscal year. There will be an RFP issued, and there  
7 will be new projects in place by the fall of 2015 for  
8 this program. It's up and running with two existing  
9 providers, and the RFP process will provide an  
10 opportunity for other providers to participate in the  
11 program as well.

12 Immigration Legal Services is baselined  
13 at HRA. There are two programs the IOI program that,  
14 as you know, for many years has been a Council  
15 priority. That's now baselined at HRA. It's a \$3.2  
16 million program, and it's focused on outreach  
17 screening an application of legal representation for  
18 immigrants. And an RFP is to be issued for this at  
19 the end of the month so that new contracts will begin  
20 during the course of FY16. There is also the former  
21 DYCD [sic] program that was federally funded through  
22 the CSBG grants, the Community Services Block Grant.  
23 There are four options: Legal services, domestic  
24 violence, and trafficking youth and worker's rights.  
25 And we're issuing an RFP on that program again for

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new contracts for the fall of this year. There are a number of programs consolidated. As you know, the discretionary programs that the Council has funded for the Unaccompanied Minors Initiative; the Model Program New York Immigration and Family Unification that's now consolidated at HRA. There are a number of other programs, as you know.

But there's a new program that we're going to be implementing, the Federal Disability Benefits Program. We're creating a new service to complete Homebase Federal Disability Benefit applications for homebound clients. And we are creating a new legal services program for clients to obtain Federal Disability Benefits after denials through an administrative counsel review. Or, in some cases appeals to the federal court. The aim is to focus on the 1,000 or so homebound clients who are not receiving Federal Disability Benefits currently. And then, we expect approximate 600 a year as we go forward, and we'll be providing legal services in addition to that applications help to a projected 1,300 clients a year. With the aim of helping clients obtain federal disability benefits in place of public assistance benefits. Slide 23 shows you

again all of the various important Council  
discretionary programs, legal services for the working  
poor; legal services for domestic violence survivors;  
legal services for veterans; the Council's  
unemployment insurance and SSI Advocacy Program;  
Citywide civil [sic] legal services; and the Anti-  
Eviction Act Legal Services.

As you've heard from prior hearings we  
have a major effort underway to make enrollment in  
the SNAP Food Stamp Program easier. That includes  
the restoration of the headcount that the prior  
administration had determined to cut to improve  
services for clients. We are getting waivers that we  
described previously in order to permit on-demand  
telephone interviews. We will be implementing them  
over the course of this year an improved access to  
NYC to make it possible not only to apply for federal  
food stamps, but to recertify and to be able to see  
what's happening with the benefits. And later this  
year, you're going to be able to use a Smart Phone to  
submit documents, which will certainly address  
historic problems in terms of waiting to submit  
documents and problems with documents. So they're  
all part of the reform effort.

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We're implementing extensive outreach efforts. We already conduct extensive outreach efforts in partnership with Robin Hood and the Benefits Data Trust and DFTA. We're conducting outreach to 100,000 seniors, and we're working with NYCHA to identify residents who don't receive food stamps, and we're likely to qualify them. And in Mid-April we're going to be implementing a major outreach campaign to enhance receipt of SNAP benefits. With respect to Local Law 49, we have added 40 new caseworkers in HASA. Twenty-nine new supervisors and 23 new Eligibility Specialists are also being added. That's all in order to ensure our compliance with Local Law 40, and we will continue to monitor--Local Law 49, which as we testified last--last, the prior administration had not staffed the HASA program at the level it should be. And we're adding those positions in order to address that need. Over the course of this past year, we've implemented a 30% Rent Cap, and 7,500 people received retroactive payments in order to be made whole back to April 1. Which was the moment in which the State Budget passed and there were procedures put in place statewide

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1 following that. And we want to make sure that  
2 everyone got the benefits to which they're entitled.

3  
4 As you know, IDNYC is part of HRA's  
5 responsibilities for providing back office functions  
6 and the back end review. In partnership with MOIA  
7 and the Mayor's Office of Operations, we put in place  
8 Security and Confidentiality Protocols to protect  
9 personal information. Protocols with respect to  
10 outside requests for information. Limits on the use  
11 of image search technology, and we've got a full  
12 administrative review of application denials. We are  
13 currently operating at 21 locations including two HRA  
14 locations that were added over the last month, and  
15 two new locations that were added this week. And the  
16 entire infrastructure sits within HRA.

17 In terms of data, if you look at Slide  
18 28, you'll see that the 50,000th card was printed on  
19 March 14th. That's 50,000 cards that have been  
20 issued since the program was implemented in January.  
21 And you can see the status of the--of the program.  
22 There are already 63,000 applications that have been  
23 approved, and 55,000 have been printed. 50,000 are  
24 actually out. As I indicated previously, the next  
25

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1  
2 appointment will be available March 25th in Corona,  
3 Queens.

4 HRA entered into a landmark settlement  
5 with Legal Aid Society week. That's been supported  
6 for court approval or submitted for court approval.  
7 That's designed to significantly reform the way that  
8 HRA provides services and to ensure great  
9 accessibility to clients with disabilities. The key  
10 aspects of this will be approved by the Court over  
11 the next number of months. But suffice it to say  
12 that--and the key elements are on the screen and in  
13 the testimony. Suffice it to say that it's all aimed  
14 at assisting clients obtain access to services in  
15 compliance with federal law including the assistance  
16 for clients to apply for federal disability benefits.

17 We're developing new training for staff,  
18 including training and disability awareness and  
19 effective communications with clients. There will be  
20 a community advisory panel that will be formed to  
21 advise on a range of policies and practices that  
22 affect clients. We are going to be providing case  
23 management services based on the needs of the client  
24 in effort to assist clients with disabilities to  
25 maintain their benefits. And before taking any



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negative action for failure to comply with required activities, HRA will review the case to ensure the client's disability was not a factor in the non-compliance. And that reasonable accommodations, if needed, were provided to enable the client to comply with required activities. In conjunction with an expert consultant, HRA will be developing tools to assess whether clients need reasonable accommodations as a result of physical and mental health limitations or other impairments. And then, provide appropriate accommodations including referrals [bell] to the We Care Program or other services designed to assess and meet the needs of clients with disabilities.

We've set up a new ADA office. Some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers are often clients with disabilities who require accommodations and support to access the benefits that they need. The goals of our work are to improve the methods to capture information to ensure that we're providing the special accommodations. And to ensure equal access to our services. Even before the settlement, we created the office with Jennifer Shaoul, while an advocate, is the Executive Director of Disability Affairs. There are a number of ongoing projects that

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1 we are happy to answer questions about. We've also  
2 set up a new LGBTQI Advocacy Office for Lesbian,  
3 Gay, Bisexual Transgender or Questioning Intersex  
4 people who have been identified as an underserved  
5 community who may be disproportionately likely to  
6 live in poverty, and to have difficulty in accessing  
7 public benefits. To address these clients' needs, we  
8 have created this office with Alana Redfield, again a  
9 well-known advocate, Director of LGBTQI affairs. The  
10 goals of this work is to increase awareness and  
11 visibility of the LGBTQI issues across HRA.  
12 Identify, assess, [bell] implement solutions to  
13 specific obstacles to access participation for LGBTQI  
14 clients in HRA's programs. And to serve as liaison  
15 for CBOs to increase collaboration and transparency  
16 regarding LGBTQI issues in HRA.

18 We also have Language Access--a Language  
19 and Immigrant Access Office, Refugee and Immigrant  
20 Affairs as run by Anne Montesano, an experienced  
21 staff person, Executive Director of that office. And  
22 that office is working collaboratively to advance  
23 language and immigrant access to our public benefits  
24 with a number of projects underway. And the goals of  
25 that work are to ensure and provide proper guidance

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and expertise to program areas to ensure access to  
our services for all clients.

We are also part of the Mayor's Action  
Plan for Neighborhood Safety. We've been asked to  
provide outreach support in 15 targeted NYCHA  
developments. We've already provided outreach staff  
in seven of the 15, and we expect to start the rest  
this spring. We're deploying the staff specialist at  
each development to meet with residents and provide  
guidance on benefits enrollment. Help in navigating  
access to emergency services, and troubleshoot  
existing cases with HRA, and solicit feedback from  
the community.

Last but not least is the Employment  
Plan, and we want to give you an update on that, and  
I know you may have some questions on it. Again,  
there are 500,000 clients that receive recurring  
assistance annually, 350,000 in any month. About  
half are children. Many more are seniors, and either  
permanently or temporarily disabled. And for that  
reason not subject to work requirements. Of the  
approximately 90,000 clients who are subject to  
Federal and State work requirements, 25,000 have  
jobs. However, they make so little that they still

qualify for public assistance, which certainly reinforces the urgency of the Mayor's advocacy efforts on increasing the minimum wage.

A State budget provision, as you know, subjects HRA to a \$10,000 charge back for unnecessary hearings. In HRA's past approach was to attract placements for only six months, but 25% of HRA's reported placements and assistance ended up returning to seek recurring cash assistance again within 12 months. And 23% of the applicants during the first six months of 2013 for DHS shelters had a cash assistance case that closed or a case sanction in the previous 12 months. The new Employment Plan was approved by the State on December 31, 2014. The implementation plans are underway. The goal is to ensure that our employment training programs are effective in connecting and reconnecting New Yorkers to the workforce. The reforms are based on these principles, maximize, education and training, and employment related services. Sixty percent of employable clients on our caseload do not have a high school diploma. We want to allow recipients up to age 24 to participate in full-time basic education. And we want to increase access to targeted training

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1 and jobs in high growth industries, and utilize the  
2 Available Career Pathway Programs, and we are  
3 allowing participation in four-year college as  
4 permitted by the new State Law. We're are replacing  
5 the one-size-fits-all approach. We've improved  
6 assessments in programs that address specific client  
7 needs and abilities. We're creating new employment  
8 strategies for youth. Clients with limited English  
9 proficiency. Shelter residents, those with work  
10 limitations, those with Justice System involvement,  
11 and older clients. And we want to enhance program  
12 participation dispute resolution.  
13

14 As we previously announced, we are  
15 phasing out WEP and replacing with more effective and  
16 sustainable work activities. I can report to you so  
17 far following the approval of the plan on December  
18 31, over the last 2-1/2 months, we've collaborated  
19 with CUNY to implement the Paid Work Study Program.  
20 In January 2015, we began a program to provide those  
21 work study opportunities for CUNY students who are  
22 pursuing undergraduate degrees, and need to meet an  
23 HRA work requirement. As a result of this  
24 collaboration, we've phased out approximately 500  
25 CUNY WEP slots, which is about 10% of the total

1 number of WEP slots throughout the city. We're  
2 developing additional initiatives to replace WEP in  
3 accordance with the employment plan. And after  
4 finishing this phase out at CUNY, we're turning our  
5 attention to 500 WEP slots at HRA itself as we  
6 continue to move forward with the plan to phase out  
7 those slots.  
8

9 The remainder of the Power Point  
10 highlights some of the key reforms that we previously  
11 testified to the committee about. But in the  
12 interest of time, and I know since you have a number  
13 of questions, that I will simply point out that the  
14 last several slides of the Power Point relate a far  
15 range for reforms that have been implemented in just  
16 literally the last 11 months as part of our efforts.  
17 The items that we described in today's testimony is  
18 the next round of reforms that we're pursuing.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you,  
20 Commissioner. I'm going to have to take some time to  
21 thin up some new questions. Because I think you  
22 answered probably most of my questions. I think  
23 it's--

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, anticipation  
25 is always an important think, right?

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So I think if--if  
you're competitive with--with yourself and last  
year's Executive Budget, I think this year you have  
21 pages of new HRA initiatives. I think last year  
it was only about 13. So, you know, you're exceeding  
the expectation--you know, your own standards.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: I just want to  
lessen expectations for the Executive Budget. It's  
only about two months away.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [laughs] Yes, it is.  
But no, obviously this is--this is remarkable and,  
you know, I mean just-- just that if everybody has an  
opportunity to see this Power Point, you know, there  
is going to be a lot of digesting to do here. And  
so, I thank you for such a comprehensive view of what  
HRA has been up to as well as making it user-  
friendly. Because HRA is such a large agency  
sometimes it's difficult to kind of understand  
everything that it is doing at all times. But this  
is--this is very digestible for us.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you and I  
should just not I appreciate the complimentary things  
that you periodically have said about me as the

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Commissioner, but the people in the front row here do all the work.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: If things go well, they deserve all the credit, and they do.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good job everybody. I think we'll--we'll direct most of our questions at the areas where there are need needs that are being put forward. So, I think I'll start with talking about LINC issues. I think first off-- So, if you could just detail exactly what portions of LINC are in HRA's budget. I asked Commissioner Taylor the same with DHS. I know you spoke about that in your testimony, but if you could in a little more detail say specifically in which budget lines and which-- which--how that corresponds to each LINC program.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right, the dollars are associated--the dollars for rent for I, II, II, IV and V--remember, we said VI is still being--going to be dealt with in the Executive Budget in terms of dollars. But the rent allocations, the actual rental assistance totals \$28 million in FY15 and \$81 million in FY16. That is in the HR budget. But Aftercare for several of the programs run--



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COMMISSIONER VILLARI: [interposing]

Three and five.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --three and five.

Is \$2.1 million in FY15 and \$4.1 million in \$4.8 million in FY16. Other support for the program the landlord bonuses, the moving expenses, the broker's fee. The sort of supporting elements, the furniture allowance, the supporting elements that enable someone to actually move out, that's \$20 million FY15 and it's \$10 million in FY16 not representing a judgment that that department is being cut, but representing what Commissioner Taylor testified about earlier. And I'll testify as well that we're still in discussion about exactly what the components will be for FY16. And that's really an aspect of trying to make sure that everything we're doing actually works. Part of--I think the big difference from past rental assistance programs like Advantage is that it's not one-size-fits-all. And it's very careful calibration about what's working and what's not working? Should we continue with this? Should we change that? And then there's also rent arrears that are in our budget. So anything involve rent arrears or rental assistance or the support for the program.

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or the aftercare for the ones that we described is in the HRA budget.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So for LINC'S III through VI that--that the IBO Report identified as-- and we talked about with Commissioner Taylor, that will--that will show up as additional new needs in the Executive Budget or that will--?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, the IBO Report that we received this morning indicated that--that there was only on cohorts for those programs.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Those are--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The current cohort.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right. Those are fully city funded programs. The I and II has stayed in city cost-sharing, and the amounts and the cohorts and whether there should be other cohorts are all the subject of the focus that we're undergoing right now in terms of what's working, what's not work. And what do we need to do in terms of moving forward. And you'll see the plan for FY15 in a fuller fashion in FY--in the Executive Budget. I mean, as you know, these programs were put in place for the most part following the adopted budget. And we've been very

1 transparent about the fact that we're putting them in  
2 place to see which one work and which ones don't  
3 work. And we'll replace the ones that don't work  
4 with other ones, and we'll enhance those that need  
5 enhancements. So I think, you know, focusing on  
6 where we were when we issued the Executive--the  
7 Permanent Budget in January, is just exactly that.  
8 That's where we were at that moment and there are  
9 continuing efforts literally on a weekly basis.  
10 Sometimes on a daily basis to make sure that the  
11 programs are working the way they should.

12  
13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you expect that  
14 the--all the assessments that you're looking to do in  
15 preparation for '16's budget will be able to be done  
16 by the Exec so that it won't--it won't go beyond that  
17 in terms of--

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing]  
19 That's--that's certainly our aim, and as you could  
20 see in our testimony we've got the Home Section 8  
21 program. It will be another--

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: --tool that will be  
24 available to help with shelter move-outs from DHS  
25 shelters and HRA shelters in FY16. So you can see

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the outline of how our planning is already proceeding  
for July 1.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And those are regular  
Section 8 Vouchers the type that--you know, that  
we're all familiar with, but were previously in HRA's  
budget, or is that new federal money coming into the  
system?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: This was previously  
in HPD's budget?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm sorry, HPD's  
budget.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: And it's been moved  
to HRA with the purpose to target the kinds of  
programs that we want to target to address  
homelessness. And it's really focused on a group of  
clients who need the rental assistance, people who  
have--are in receipt of disability benefits in the  
DHS or HRA systems. And, therefore, are not  
necessarily eligible for the existing LIC III  
program--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --that's available  
for domestic violence survivors or the LINC I

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program, which is available for working--working families.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Will that--is that-- is that HPD's entire supply of special needs vouchers or are there--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] No.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: No, there still will be additional vouchers staying with HPD.

COMMISSIONER VILLARI: [off mic] It's in Section 8 let's say. [sic]

COMMISSIONER BANKS: And just to--to be clear, the Home Program is sort of a program that is a term of art developed by--at the federal level

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --that when you-- And I answered your question, yes, and I want to make sure that there's clarity with that. It's a Section 8 program in the sense that it's recurring. It's subject to federal appropriation. Obviously as we've seen over the years sometimes there are challenges at the federal level But it's an ongoing rental assistance program subject to renewal every--on a two-year basis. That's the way the--the federal program is laid out, but it's not a LINC program.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --which has a--has a  
limitation on it, but it's not technically Section 8  
in the way that you and I--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Oh,  
it's not?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: -but it's--it's  
referred to Section 8 Home Funds--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] It's a  
federal voucher.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's a federal  
voucher program.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And how many will  
that account for? I know you said that it was--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] 12

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --12 million.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: 1,200.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 1,200?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yeah, it's slightly  
over 1,200.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, and how much--  
and how much is the value of that?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's \$20 million.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: \$20 million. Okay.

And is that reflected in the Preliminary--the HRA's  
Preliminary Budget or is it--?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] It has  
not actually. It's subject to HUD approval. So it  
hasn't actually been transferred, but again from the  
perspective of transparency, I saw it in the plan  
last week and we wanted to make sure that the  
Committee was aware of it--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --of it in a more  
public way.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then that would  
be reflected as an intercity or a--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] It  
would--it would be.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I see, okay, or a  
federal, one or the other.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: It will be coming  
from HPD to HRA.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In terms of LINC, the  
uptake to date, are you anticipating that all of the  
allocated funds for FY15 are going to be disbursed in  
this fiscal year with regard to LINC or are you--or

1 is that too early to tell, or how are you look at  
2 that? Are you keeping track of it? I'm sure you are  
3 but--

4  
5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [laughs]

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How are you keeping  
7 track of it?

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I should just pick  
9 that question and say yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes, we're keeping  
12 track of it. The--there's been, as you know, a  
13 tremendous effort on the part of multiple-city  
14 agencies with HPD doing inspections, DHS and the  
15 providers doing move-outs and HRA providing the  
16 support that we are to the program in order to  
17 relocate the families as quickly as possible out of  
18 shelter and into homes. And more than 1,000  
19 households have already been moved out from programs,  
20 as we know, just started in earnest. In December IV  
21 and V didn't exist and I, II, and III HRA and DHS  
22 increased the rental allowance in November to reflect  
23 Section 8 levels as opposed to the originally set  
24 level. And it's an awful lot of-- If you--it's a  
25 sufficient number of households in a relatively short



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period of time that have been moved out. And the focus continues to be on making use of every available resource to continue the move-out to the pace that we've been--we've been operating under.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The Administration extended the landlord bonuses and broker fees to the end of this month, March 31, 2015. Is HRA planning on extending those two incentive programs beyond March 31?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, wouldn't it be great if there were just a lot of people who came to offer their apartments in the next week or two? I mean literally this is the kind of analysis that we do. It's been extended previously. When we testified in January, we had an earlier end date, and it's one of those thing if it's working, we want to keep using it. And if it's not working, we'll--we'll use the resources some other way.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: okay. In terms of the maximum rent payment that's made available to landlords associated with LINC, that was increased to align with Section 8 Guidelines?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: After that happened,  
do you have a number of apartments that then became  
available?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, I think as we  
testified in January, very few became available until  
we did that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, the vast  
majority of the--of the move-outs and the numbers  
that Commissioner Taylor and I had given are  
following that increase. And there was very little  
move---move-outs before the increase occurred.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh. So whatever  
is there now minus a handful?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: That would be a good  
way to look at it.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Has HRA seen  
landlords resistant to different LINC subsidies. So  
I asked Commissioner Taylor about LINC II. Is that a  
concern where landlords are--are--have less  
receptive--receptivity to--less reception to LINC II  
than LINC I or LINC III?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'm going to think  
from a--from a perspective of the families and the

1 individuals. There are multiple kinds of programs  
2 designed to try to meet a broad range of needs. But  
3 similarly from a perspective of a landlord, there are  
4 a number of different programs that have program  
5 designs that could be attractive to some landlords.  
6 Each of them has had an uptick. I think that  
7 Commissioner Taylor's analysis of the--of the--of the  
8 trajectory of LINC II is really reflective of the--of  
9 the aftercare issue that he described.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In terms of making a  
12 qualitative assessment, how--how is HRA assessing--if  
13 this is-- Obviously, you're doing this now in  
14 anticipation of the Executive Budget. How is--what  
15 is the methodology that you're using for how  
16 effective the program is?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, it's a  
18 partnership with the Mayor's Office, OMB, DHS, HRA  
19 and, you know, HPD and NYCHA have perspectives as  
20 well given their knowledge of the housing market. I  
21 think our assessment continues to be really focused  
22 on is there-- are there available apartments that can  
23 be rented, and are there landlords interested in  
24 participating? And give the upward trajectory, those  
25 have all been positive signs up to this point.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Are you going to be able to-- In the upcoming Mayor's Management Report, be able to establish metrics to show the effectiveness of the programs.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think again given the fact that these programs are literally brand new, that we'll be developing the metrics once we've been able to take a look at the effectiveness as part of the Executive Budget Analysis. I mean right now the metric is how many--how many move-outs are we achieving? And that's really the bottom line in terms of the families that are involved. How quickly can we move them out.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We've been hearing anecdotally that landlords may be denying housing to FEPS clients because they are more interested in taking LINC subsidies? Is that something that HRA has seen, and if so, what are you doing to address that?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: We have actually not received any reports of that, and we would be very interested in understanding what the facts are, who the landlords are so that we can determine what course of action would be appropriate to take in that

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case. Obviously, given the amount of investment that HRA and the Administration put in to preventing people from losing their home, we want to make sure that there is an opportunity to preserve an apartment that it can be preserved.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In terms of apartment inspections and how, you know, we're moving forward on that process, you know, particularly in light of the DOI Report that showed that cluster sites, those apartments are--had a higher rate of violations than Tier 2s. What is the process that HRA undergoes in terms of inspecting the apartments prior to families moving in. And if there is found to be violations or areas that need to be remediated, what's the process for [bell] such remediation?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, we're funding HPD to do the inspections. So, the--the normal standard of an inspection for habitability is what's applied. And we expect that the items that HPD clears--HPD indicates that are problems are cleared.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So it's--it's being done entirely within--within--with HPD inspectors--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Right.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --the search for  
Department of Buildings violations and--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, because that's--  
actually it's a concern because that doesn't seem to  
be the process with--with cluster sites. So with  
cluster sites it's--there's a DHS inspector that's  
going out. But with--with LINC it seems that it  
would be more appropriate to have an HPD inspector .  
They--they know what they're doing with their--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Right.  
I think--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --the LINC.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --you know, the way  
the LINC Program is operating is HPD does--does an  
inspection, and they indicate what needs to be fixed  
in order for the apartment to be habitable. And for  
DHS move-outs, DHS is verifying that those things  
have been fixed before move-outs are occurring. But  
you have a baseline that's set by HPD. In terms of  
the situations with the clusters, you know, that's--  
that's not permanent housing as we know. So it's a  
different--a different process.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I want to  
change topics.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I want to ask about  
the recent situation that we've been seeing with one  
of the larger providers throughout the--the not-for--  
not-for-profit providers in FECS, which announced  
that it's closing its programs. FECS is the largest  
provider of job--job placement for the We Care  
Program or was. Can you speak a little bit to how  
that closure of programs has affected HRA's FY15  
Budget and how you're dealing with the contracts that  
the FECS had with HRA? First off, I guess what was  
the scope of the--of the contracts that FECS had with  
HRA?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: I mean there were a  
series of contracts that--that FECS had. FECS had a  
\$33 million annual contract for We Care. The annual  
number of clients would be about 40,000 with a  
monthly number as of October of 17,000. FECS managed  
two Back-to-Work Contracts, \$14.5 million annual  
contract value for two boroughs, Bronx and Manhattan.  
Our annual number of clients served in calendar year  
2014 completed employment plans that 10,860. The

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1 monthly number of clients as of January 2015 was  
2 2,470. There was also a million dollars annual--a  
3 million dollars annually for a Jobs Plus Program, and  
4 there were also some home care programs. And they  
5 had recently won an award from a prior bidding  
6 process for a DB Contract. So, when this matter came  
7 to light in December, clearly our first concern was  
8 for our clients. An equal concern for the staff, and  
9 it's a very long and venerable organization. But it-  
10 -we were confronted with the need to move very  
11 quickly to address the very serious needs for  
12 clients. There are client needs. The are federal  
13 and State participation registries that were  
14 affected. Under their procurement rules, our options  
15 were limited to choosing other vendors that had like  
16 contracts. And I can lay out for you how we then  
17 proceeded.

18  
19 So in the We Care area, there were two  
20 contracts, FedCap and FECS, and so FedCap agreed to  
21 assume 100% of the work, and they're on track to do  
22 that in April. Before Back-to-Work, two of the other  
23 contractors agreed to take over the work: American  
24 Works in the Bronx and in Manhattan DB Grant. And  
25 they're also on track to be in place to do that in



1 April. The Jobs Plus programs there was a  
2 subcontractor East Side Houses, and they are going to  
3 simply take up the work. So there are--that's pretty  
4 seamless in terms of moving from a contractor to a  
5 subcontractor. The DB contract we hadn't actually  
6 proceeded with it. So we've moved to the next  
7 contractor for these nine residential DB services.  
8 And in terms of the home care operations, those  
9 appear to be separate operations that they're going  
10 to continue to operate.  
11

12 You know, having described that to you,  
13 though, the background, of course is that we are  
14 moving forward to rebid all of the employment  
15 contracts including We Care, and that's going to play  
16 out over the course of the next year as part of the  
17 employment plan.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So would have been  
20 in a position to bid out the contracts--

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yeah.

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: --anyway. Certain  
23 providers made judgment that they're going to keep  
24 providing services, and presumably they're going to  
25 bid in that--in that process. And that will be the

outcome that it's going to have as the process proceeds. But this is a very short-term--short time in which we had to move to get services in place, comply with federal and State law. And also, meet the requirements of the procurement rules, which didn't give the ability to just go out and choose whoever--whoever you wanted. But the pool of potential other alternative contractors were those that were existing contractors.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there any indication that there was an impact on--on clients, on We Care clients or other HRA clients?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, I-- Again, the transition from FECS to these other providers is well underway and is moving forward. So we believe that the transition will--will avoid the kinds of problems that we all were concerned about at the beginning of this.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I guess what I was asking is, is there any evidence-- Clearly, there is significant mismanagement of some kind. And has HRA kind of done an audit to see--a quality control audit basically to ensure that FECS clients over the last, you know, certain period of time whether it's a year

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or two years, haven't been negatively impacted. You know, kind of going--looking back.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right. I mean between December and now, frankly all of our effort has been focused on trying to make sure the current clients--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --are able to be transitioned to another service provider, and that we can keep meeting the federal and State law obligations that we have. But, you know, as we move forward we'll certainly take a look at the kind of issues that you're raising.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Moving over to the Employment Program.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You spoke a little bit about the efforts of HRA has already undertaken to phase out the program. Is--what--what is--as that process is moving forward, what is HRA looking to replace those positions with in terms of those positions that are at City or State agencies, not-for-profit agencies. What are the alternatives for that--that population?

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2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right, as--as we  
3 indicated at the Employment Plan hearing back in  
4 October, there are a number of moving parts to be  
5 able to move forward over this. We have to put a  
6 better assessment process in place. In the best of  
7 all worlds we would wait to make any of these other  
8 changes until we had that in place, but there is an  
9 urgency in terms of addressing the WEP program. And  
10 we've had concerns about how--how--in terms of  
11 outcomes for clients from that program. So,  
12 therefore, waiting until all of the pieces are in  
13 place is not really an option for us. We have the  
14 benefit of the Jobs for New Yorkers Task Force  
15 recommendations to talk about Clear Pathways. But we  
16 wanted to take it piece-by-piece as we testified in  
17 October. And the first piece was we were able to  
18 fund work-study placements at CUNY to eliminate that.  
19 And before we get to other agencies, we want to  
20 complete the process for the 500 HRA--the 500 slots  
21 at HRA. That will essentially get us about 20% of  
22 the total--total number of placements that have been  
23 in existence in HRA in the system. And then we'll  
24 just keep moving, you know, process by process as we  
25 go forward. Participation in education, and in

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particular four-year college, participation in high school equivalency type activities. Those are going to also be rolled out.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: And so, many of the kinds of changes that are going to be happening all at once as we move forward, and it's like the LINC experience. We're going to see what works as we proceed.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: And I think we--we don't want to replace the one-size-fits-all approach with just another one-size-fit's all approach. I think as we go along with some of the reporting to the committee about the progress that we're making in the next levels of changes. That we are going to be able to find alternatives to replacements that are currently operating at the different city agencies and do them, too. [sic]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In terms of the timeframe for an RFP on employment programs--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Uh-huh.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --what--when is that--  
--when does HRA anticipate that that will be?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Over the next  
several months, we're developing concept papers now.  
We're going to take some input from different--  
different perspectives. Obviously we are constrained  
by the, you know, by the procurement rules.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: We can't, you know,  
issue drafts, and take comments in that way, but we  
are certainly in the process of consulting, you know,  
Community Voices Heard. Others or our own staff  
they're all very important groups that we want to  
consult with. That is--those were the key  
stakeholders that participated in the original  
creation of the Employment Plan in terms of the input  
we got. I think I had said to you we took a survey  
of our clients. We took a survey from key community  
groups and client groups like Community Voices Heard,  
Housing Works and others. And we surveyed our staff,  
and we found at the end of the day that you could  
have--you could have--- If you didn't know which  
survey was which, you would find that the results

from both staff and clients about what was needed  
were exactly the same.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, nonetheless,  
we're going to take the same approach to some  
approach as we proceed with the other parts of the  
plan.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that a formal  
process, or-- I mean in terms of are you--are you--in  
terms of like comment period is that the same as the  
rules of the rule making process or is it--?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, the concept--  
when the concept papers are out, that is a comment--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --process. So, we  
can't, you know, we can't put out draft concept  
papers and put them out. But we can put out a  
concept paper before we put out the RFP and that's  
what we're--that's what we're going to do.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: So to the extent  
that people think we're going in the right direction  
and want to encourage us, that's great. To the  
extent that we've overlooked something, and you

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1 people want to point that out, that's--that's good,  
2 too. And to the extent that people are concerned  
3 about things that we believe we have to do under  
4 federal and State law, it will give us an opportunity  
5 to make it clear why we've made certain choices. So  
6 we see the concept paper process as a very positive  
7 one.  
8

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you have an  
10 overall anticipated budget for what that RPF would--  
11 would ultimately look like?

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: The existing budget  
13 for our Employment Plan--for the prior Employment  
14 Plan, I should say--

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: --is \$200 million.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: And in the approval  
19 process that we have pursued, we are going to  
20 repurpose that \$200 million for this same--same  
21 program.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh. So you don't  
23 anticipate it growing? You think that you can do an  
24 employment program with the same amount or--?  
25



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COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, we appreciated your opening remarks at the beginning of the hearing about our ability to make use of the existing resources and repurpose them. And that's really what our--what our aim is here. You know, there will be some additional funding that we need to implement the settlement that affects the needs of clients that have work limitations.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: But the basic employment programs that we're going to be operating is the same \$200 million allocation that prior administrations had.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Now is that the RFP will incorporate transitional jobs, or is that something separate?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: The aim of the RFP is going to be to move people off of the HRA caseload that can be moved off of the case load by connecting them to employment. So if you go back to the statistics that I gave you, it's 60% of our clients don't have high school equivalency who are required to pursue work. And the data is very clear that

shows that if you don't have a high school equivalency, you're going to earn about \$20,000. If you have a high school equivalency, you're going to earn about \$30,000. And if you have two years of some sort of associate's degree or a full college degree, you're going to earn \$40,000. You can see that a key aspect of our employment plan is going to be focused on getting people on a career pathway.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: And so focusing on is they transitional jobs, is they not? How much? Is only part of the puzzle because we're looking to give people the ability to be able to move out of poverty. The fact that we've got 25,000 people working on our caseload now is an indication that we need better programs to help move people out of poverty because we don't want to move people into programs where they're going to be working full-time and still be on our caseload.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right. In terms of the green job sector--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Uh-huh.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --are you looking at opportunities within that sector for partnerships?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: No, nothing is--no stone is going to be unturned. There are--in the past HRA was sort of in a--in a silo of where to look for jobs. And I think one of the good things about being part of an overall city approach to fighting poverty and income inequality, is it opens up other possibilities to be able to connect our clients to other kinds of employment.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In--in terms of benefit--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] If I--if I may, frankly, that's the reason why we're phasing out WEP is because it wasn't leading people to--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Of course.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --things. So we want to create a pathway that leads people to--off the caseload.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right. In terms of public assistance, the--the PMMR evidence that there was an increase of 21% in individuals in the first

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four months of FY15 receiving one-time benefits,  
Primary Emergency Rental Assistance from HRA, and you  
speak to what accounted for that 21% increase?  
Projecting is a good things and we like it.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: As we have been  
reporting, we've been very focused on ensuring that  
rental assistance to prevent evictions is available.  
And so, we've been providing an enhanced amount, an  
increased amount of rental assistance to individuals.  
We've been providing--we've had an increase of 23% in  
the numbers of people who have been getting rental  
assistance in order to keep people in their homes.  
So that's really reflective of that changed approach.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member Gibson  
asked Commissioner Taylor about the State Executive  
Budget proposing 10% local share for New York City's  
support of the EAF program. That could have a  
potential fiscal impact of \$22.5 million on the city.  
And HRA receives grant funding through EAF for  
emergency service and rental arrears. What--what is--  
-how are you approaching that as the--as you kind of  
approach a final state budget right now? Is that  
something that you're concerned about, and are you  
making contingency plans? What's the plan of action?

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COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, as the Mayor testified at the Budget hearing, this is a cut that we are urging not be implemented. And it is certainly City priority to not have it be implemented. In terms of contingency plans, we're keeping focused on--on the conversation to avert it being implemented

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In terms of budget efficiencies--and this is what we've been discussing so far--has HRA identified areas for efficiencies within its budget? Are you continuing look through your overall budget to find efficiencies? And what have you been able to identify for FY15 thus far?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Those are conversations that we're having with OMB. I think as again you indicated in your opening comments, although you can see very transparently what was added in terms of program dollars, you can see that our headcount has been largely, you know, essentially stable with the addition of the--putting it into the baseline of that staff that had been our headcount. But had been subject to a peg [sic] from the prior. So I think we're finding a lot of efficiencies not because our staff was inefficient previously, but

1 because there were a lot of transactions that were  
2 thought to be important in the past that we think  
3 aren't as important now. So for example, if we  
4 provided a robo calls, as we have been, we're going  
5 to close fewer cases. That means that staff don't  
6 have to then spend the time reopening the case, and  
7 we don't have that \$10 million charge back and all  
8 the other issues. So there's a very active  
9 conversation that we are having internally with OMB  
10 about how to recognize those kinds of things. But as  
11 you indicate, we're making an awful lot of reforms  
12 with--essentially for that budget.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With regard to the  
15 chargebacks and the Fair Hearing--

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Uh-  
17 huh.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --rate. Can you give  
19 an overview of how that reform has proceeded over the  
20 last 12 months. And if you could provide some kind  
21 of points of measure.

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, I think the  
23 most--the key measure is that the chargeback was--was  
24 developed against the background of a large HRA. A  
25 large backlog of HRA fair hearings because so many

1                   hearings are being requested, and we have been able  
2                   to essentially eliminate the backlog. And that's  
3                   been a focus on the pending cases, and also a focus  
4                   on avoiding unnecessary case closings. And other  
5                   actions that only would have resulted in hearings,  
6                   which would have been reversed by the State and then  
7                   subjected us to the penalty. So I think the key  
8                   metric is where do we stand in terms of the backlog?  
9                   And we have essentially eliminated the backlog.  
10                  There were 70,000 pending cases when I became the  
11                  Commissioner.  
12

13                         CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 70,000 pending, and  
14                         this point there's no pending cases?

15                         COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's--it's--it's  
16                         almost to zero. Obviously, cases keep coming in, and  
17                         a certain amount builds up. There are never going to  
18                         be no cases pending, but that was a large backlog of  
19                         pending cases that were reflect of a substantial  
20                         number of hearings that were being requested.

21                         CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there--has there  
22                         been a change in the percentage of fair hearing cases  
23                         that HRA is--or that the City is winning? Because I  
24                         know in the past it was 90% of fair hearing cases HRA  
25                         was losing, and the City was losing. And obviously

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1 that--that goes into I think the State's reasoning  
2 for the chargeback is that--is that--I mean I'm  
3 assuming that if--if the number of unnecessary cases  
4 comes down dramatically, then the percentage of cases  
5 that the City would win would--would increase. Is  
6 that faulty reasoning?  
7

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, I don't think  
9 I want to answer the last question? [laughs] It's  
10 not as linear as that.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think the primary  
13 motivation in the change--in that change to State Law  
14 was that there was a backlog that reflected too many  
15 hearings. And then--and then on top of it that the  
16 HRA was losing a lot of hearings. The primary focus  
17 of our work over the last 11 months has been to  
18 prevent a backlog from developing, address the  
19 pending cases and put processes in place to address  
20 unnecessary hearings. We haven't been focused on the  
21 metric of how we're doing in the ones that actually  
22 end up being held, But that will eventually be a  
23 metric that will be relevant because it will reflect  
24 how many--how many hearings we've been able to  
25 eliminate from even being requested.



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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So you don't have--do  
you know the percentage now is it--?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Honestly, I don't.  
It hasn't been--our focus has been on backlog and--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yeah.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --preventing new  
cases adding to the backlog.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I don't mind if you--  
if it's not--you know, obviously, it's not the, you  
know, a point of focus or anything. That's--that's--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing]  
Right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --a good thing. If  
it, you know---

COMMISSIONER BANKS: We're--we're going  
to keep focusing on processes to avoid--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: --unnecessary  
hearing. There will be hearings requests. There  
will be hearings that HRA will win. There will be  
hearings that HRA will lose. The problem is we don't  
want hearing that are unnecessarily requested  
because of processes that didn't work.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It does have a fiscal impact, though, because of the State chargeback. Is the--is the state instituting a chargeback at this time?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Through the first three-quarters of the year, we were able to meet the baseline to not have the chargeback.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Got it. So that's good. Very good.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: But as you eliminate the backlog, the ability to avoid the chargeback given the way the statute is written becomes more limited.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: The statute was--was written to address a backlog, but then when you have no backlog, your ability to escape is--is difficult if not impossible.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The PMMR states that in the first four months of Fiscal 15, 97.4% of families that are--individuals and families that are at imminent risk of homelessness were diverted. Do you have a raw number of the number of individuals or

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families that came to HRA for homeless prevention  
services during those first four months of FY15?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'll have to get  
back to you, but essentially that's a metric, and I'm  
going to paraphrase it and we'll get you a more  
precise answer. Essentially, that's a metric that  
shows did those particular people end up on an  
shelter application?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: But we can get you  
the NY Data for that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Just a few  
more questions--

COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --and then I promise  
to get you out of here by 5:00.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you very much  
for doing that. I appreciate it.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With--I want to talk  
about HASA for a minute.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So in Fiscal 15, as  
you noted, the 30% rent cap went into effect. Do you  
have a number of HASA clients who--who have qualified

1 now for the 30% rent cap, and is this--is this on  
2 target for how many that you had estimated at the--at  
3 the outset?  
4

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: The 7,500 clients,  
6 as I said, received the retroactive payment, but, you  
7 know, the questions is what--where do you draw the  
8 line from the outset. The outset was at the point in  
9 time which we--there wasn't a statute that finally  
10 passed. And the statute that passes is the one we're  
11 implementing. So, the number of people who are  
12 receiving the benefit is in line with that statute  
13 says. As opposed to earlier versions there were  
14 different projections about what the statute might  
15 say or might not say. So there were early  
16 projections that reflected that.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How is HRA measuring  
18 the impact of that--that change? What metrics are  
19 you using?

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We're looking at the  
21 numbers of people, for example, we can move out of  
22 the--of shelters or transitional housing. And,  
23 that's an ongoing effort that we're looking at.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Any other measures  
25 that you're able to identify?

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COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, that's--that's sort of the primary one. People that have come to. How many can we--how many people were we able to move out? It is also, you know, the other metric of how many people come to us who are able to stay in their homes because they didn't come to us to begin with. But that one is much more focused on somebody's got a home. They want us to provide the 30%, and we wouldn't have been able to do it before. And so those people would have been likely to lose their home. It's sort of a reverse metric. So it's a metric that exists because the statute exists and we are able to provide them the benefit. Without the statute, without the benefit that's a very large number of people who would have been at risk of becoming homeless.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you have an opinion on--on the issue of expanding HASA to everybody living with HIV and AIDS?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, I think that there's a task force in Albany that's focused on implementing the goal of ending the epidemic by 2020. And we are, you know, as anxious as any entity or any person to see what those recommendations are, what

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1 they're going to mean for our clients, and what  
2 they're going to mean for the agency. So, our focus  
3 is really on what's the recommendations going to be  
4 ultimately from our task force, and what--what does  
5 that mean for our clients in the city. Since most of  
6 the cases are in the city, the recommendations could  
7 be very helpful to us in terms of providing client  
8 services.  
9

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In terms of the HASA  
11 Budget, there's decrease in the Preliminary Budget  
12 of \$330,000 from the Adopted Budget in '15. That can  
13 be attributed to one-time Council funding. Is there--  
14 -is there a plan to address--making--your making  
15 that--that budget whole to the Executive Budget or  
16 how would you actually approach that?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's like all of the  
18 budget processes between the agencies and the Council  
19 were always interested in conversations about  
20 programs that--are programs that should be run as  
21 demonstrations that could then become baselined and  
22 they would be subject to our fees. The particular  
23 dollars here are a number of very limited types of  
24 spending. But we would be happy to talk with you  
25

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about any particular programs that you think we  
should be running as demonstration programs.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And there was a--  
there's a--the HASA Running Management RFP. Can you  
give us a status update. I know that that RFP is  
supposed to be going out as we speak. Is that--is  
that out yet?

[background comment]

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right, there are--  
there's a soon to be released Employment RFP. We run  
a demonstration program with GMHC. We thought that  
it really demonstrated that there was a need for  
programs, and so we'll be issuing a program for that.  
And that's in part of the baseline. The Financial  
Management Program I know predates me by a number of  
years. It had been funded at a particular level in  
FY11, and as I understand it the thought of the  
agency was that some of the services could be claimed  
through the claimant process through Federal and  
State government. It turned out not to be the case.  
And so the dollars are at the level that they're at  
now. And, you know, it will certainly be part of any  
analysis that we're going to do about what--what  
should develop over that program.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, and then just the final two questions. With regard to emergency food programs, first off, the--in light of SNAP benefit cuts on the federal level, we are seeing an increased demand at pantries across the city. How does HRA plan to address that issue within the Emergency Food Networks?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, one of the issues we want to see is how is the--you know, how does the State budget turn on these issues since there are dollars at play in the State Budget. And that will be factored into our analysis in conversation with the development of the Executive Budget.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then one thing that we heard from our network of pantry providers is a preference. There's two distinct models that emergency food pantry programs are funded through. One is a Council--the inclusion of the Council funded model for one-half the year, and one-half is baselined at HRA. And as a result of the November 2013 baselining, it appears that for the Council portion of--of the pantry program it cannot continue to operate in that same way. And during Council



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side, it was--there is a model in which the food bank did the purchasing, and pantries were able to pick and choose what they wanted buy from the food bank itself. And that doesn't exist under the baseline model. How do you want to approach that issue as we look forward to the potentially a single approach in FY16?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, in the approach to the Preliminary Budget and now soon to the Executive Budget, we've had a series of meetings with providers about the kosher provider about the particular issues that were once that we could address in terms of purchasing and providing of kosher food. And meetings with the whole community--representatives of the whole community of food providers. And that has been a good exchange, and there is some additional information that we are awaiting. And that will be part of our analysis to see whether we can make any changes in what has been a traditional model. And it really stems from a--the ability to purchase more with the dollars in effect through the City purchasing program. But having said that, we had some productive meetings with providers. And we're anxious to see the information analysis

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1 that we'll be getting to see if that gives us any  
2 ability to make any changes.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Well, Commissioner,  
5 thank you very much for your time. I thank your  
6 entire staff. I thank you for your patience. Our  
7 hearing is running a little bit late today, but I  
8 think as I said before, this is remarkably,  
9 impressive document here. We're going to have to go  
10 through it, and fully digest it over the next couple  
11 of weeks. But this has been remarkable changes. I  
12 think that this is on our end a real appreciation for  
13 the work that you've done so far. And the gusto with  
14 which you are doing it. So, thank you and all of  
15 your staff, and we look forward to seeing you again  
16 in may at the Executive Budget Hearing.

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you very much  
18 for your compliments for the great work of our staff,  
19 and we appreciate your support and advice frankly as  
20 we go forward, and as you have in the past. Thank you  
21 very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you  
23 Commissioner. So I want to thank the public for your  
24 patience. We're going to take a 10-minute break, and  
25 resume with public testimony. Thank you.

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[pause, background comments]

CLERK: Ladies and gentlemen, be advised  
if you'd like to testify during the public portion,  
make sure you see the Sergeant-at-Arms and fill out a  
witness slip. Thank you.

[pause, background comments]

SERGEANT-A-ARMS: Ladies and gentlemen,  
can I have your attention please. Please find your  
seats and turn your cell phones into vibrate or into  
the sound positions. We are ready go.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Hi everybody.  
Welcome back. If you had taken a break, and thank  
for staying if you had stayed through all of the  
agency testimony. So, the time is currently 5:23.  
Thank you very much for your patience. I know this  
has been a long day for a lot of us. We are eager to  
hear your testimony. That being said, there are very  
many people that have signed up to testify. I think  
we have over 40 people. So, yeah, to keep this, you  
know, to keep it-- You know if we want to get out of  
here before 9 o'clock tonight, then I think we're  
going to--we're going to keep it to two minutes per--  
per speaker. If you could adhere to that as much as

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possible, we would greatly appreciate it as would all of the people that are scheduled to speak after you. So we thank you very much for your patience. This is great. A very exciting day with a lot of new information from the three agencies in the Administration. And we thank them for their candid testimony, for answering all of our question. But this is the part of hearing that we get to hear from--from those of you that know what's going on, on the ground that are in the centers, the HRA centers in the DHS shelters. In the programs and the childcare programs working with parents and children as part of the preventive and protective services system, and the foster care system. And we look forward to hearing what you have to say. So with that, we are going to call up our first panel here, and--

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Representatives from our Labor Unions David Keye from Local 372; Trina Pryor from Local 372; Jeremy Hoffman from UFT. If there is anyone else here who is representing a labor union, you can please come to the front table as well.

[pause]

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Actually, I want to  
also take this opportunity to thank Regina Padera-  
Ryan[sp?], who is here as our Deputy Finance Director  
overseeing our agencies. Thank you, Regina for doing  
such a great job.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry, Regina. I  
mispronounced your name, Pareda-Ryan. Better.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You can go ahead.

DAVID KEYE: Good afternoon General  
Welfare Committee Chair Levin and Finance Committee  
Ferrerias, and distinguished members of this  
committee. My name is David Keye, and I am the  
Secretary-Treasurer here on behalf of DC 37 Local  
372. However, I am here to testify under my capacity  
as the Panel Coordinator in District 79. I would  
like to thank you for the opportunity to provide  
testimony on the Mayor's Proposed Budget for 2016.  
Local 372 represents close 23,000 New York City  
Department of Education employees. Our members are  
dedicated and hard-working support staff in New York  
City schools. They are school crossing guards,  
school aids, health aids, substance abuse and

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1 prevention and intervention specials, panel  
2 professionals, panel coordinators, annual [sic] lunch  
3 employees, and hourly lunch employees. These are  
4 some of the lowest paid municipal workers making less  
5 than \$15 an hour and are working less than five hours  
6 a day. With the cost of living continuously rising,  
7 housing has become a major hardship for our members.  
8 Low wages, too few hours, loss of spousal income, and  
9 the rising cost of housing are what our member  
10 struggle with in the city working poor.  
11

12 Every week our office receive members who  
13 live in shelter or staying with family members, and  
14 other are sleeping on the subways while they are  
15 reporting to work each day in the New York City  
16 School System. They come to our office, the city's  
17 working poor, to ask for help to keep them in their  
18 homes. They city's lack of affordable housing with  
19 the rising cost of rent, and their low wages are  
20 causing our members to become homeless. According to  
21 the Coordination for the Homeless, homelessness in  
22 New York City has reached its highest level--Go on?

23 [bell]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Summarize, please.  
25

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DAVID KEYE: Okay. Summarize. Okay.

That's going to be in there. Okay. Okay, well, I'll give you an example. It is unfair to uproot these hard-working municipal employees who are doing their best to get back on their feet. We have members in School District 27 in Queens, a family of powerful professionals, cooking school aids who are homeless. However, they are making every effort to make it to work everyday if it means sleeping on the trains in an effort to hold onto their jobs. All right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much

DAVID KEYE: You welcome.

Hi. Good evening. My name is Jeremy Hoffman. I'm the Director of Childcare Policy at the United Federation of Teachers. We represent the city's nearly 20,000 home-based family childcare providers. [coughs] I'm going to summarize very quickly. You have the written testimony. I'm going to skip the platitudes, but Council Member and Chair, you're doing an amazing job of keeping track of all this information today. Real briefly what I wanted to say is I think we need to really begin to focus on childcare policy in the City of New York on the entirety of early education and care, and be equally

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respectful of all the different modalities and setting where parents choose to send their children. Whether it be a childcare center. Whether it be a public school Pre-K program or whether it be family childcare. Those all exist jointly, and a parent who has a child in a public school or a CBO based pre-K program also very likely have a two-year-old child in childcare, and has that child quite likely enrolled in family childcare. So when think about moving the sector forward, and you think about developing policies that are family friendly and help parents in their multitude of needs, we need to be building up both systems concurrently. Not building up the investment in childcare concurrent to our increasing investment in Pre-K is only doing a disservice to both achieving the educational child development goals of Pre-K as well as meeting the needs of working families. Since 2006--fiscal year 2006, there were 23,000 less children enrolled in family childcare. The system as a whole in childcare is about 16,000 children smaller than it was in FY06. This is a problem. We know that 27% of income eligible families qualify for childcare. We need to be doing more to build out that funding. We need to



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1 be doing more to work jointly and align programs to  
2 really need and facilitate the needs of families.  
3 There's a lot of information in here that you can  
4 review in your own time. [coughs] The one final  
5 issue that I'll try to mention in five, four, three  
6 seconds is--

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I'm  
9 going to actually add a minute for everybody so keep  
10 going. [bell]

11 JEREMY HOFFMAN: --is the issue, and you  
12 raised in the hearing earlier today, and I appreciate  
13 you doing this. The issue of the market rate that  
14 networks do not pay--currently are not paying the  
15 family childcare providers, which is documented,  
16 which is understood. It's been articulated to  
17 various levels of City and State government is of  
18 critical, critical importance. And I appreciate and  
19 have a tremendous amount of respect and sympathy and  
20 stand solid with my brothers and sisters in 1707 and  
21 CSA who are dealing with the salary parity or lack  
22 therefore for the three and four-year-old  
23 instructors, a lack of parity in the public schools.  
24 And these are all problems I think we understand we  
25 need to fix for the sake of the health of the system.

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1 That lack of salary parity for an independent family  
2 childcare versus a childcare provider who's  
3 affiliated with a network, is as important to the  
4 overall health of the system. An increasing share of  
5 infant and toddlers, children under the age of three  
6 seek and get to a home-based setting. If we do not  
7 figure out how to deal with the complexities of the  
8 economic and financial restructuring of early care  
9 and education and really deal with these issues of  
10 lack of parity in salary and rates that insufficient.  
11 And everything you've spent a tremendous amount of  
12 time talking about today, ultimately, if we don't fix  
13 that we're going to create a crisis and inability of  
14 families to access childcare. The programs need  
15 whether it be a center or a home-based program, needs  
16 to be financially viable. And I think we need to  
17 begin to proceed and deal and address these issues.  
18 We can see that it warrants not so much for the sake  
19 of our members. It's really about maintaining access  
20 and content of important childcare services that  
21 improve later academic learning and help families  
22 find, seek, and maintain employment.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sir, you can, if you  
25 want to go for another minute, you're welcome.

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DAVID KEYE: Okay. In closing, I want to draw your attention to the desperation, homelessness, low wages and hardship Local 372 many endure. Yet, they continue work everyday with pride and dedication to their job where it is to protect and serve and feed over 1.1 million school children in New York City. Affordable housing for our members should not be viewed as a luxury, but it's a human right issue that we must address, not next week or next year but right now. We at Local 372 stand ready to join hands and minds to help remove the homelessness and the lack of affordable housing experienced by our members and the city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much. I appreciate very much both of your testimony for the work that your members do. It's the life blood of the entire system, and without their contribution, I think our system would not function. So we thank you very much for your patience, and for your testimony. I very much appreciate your being here today. Thank you.

DAVID KEYE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Next panel Sandra Killet [sp?] from Child Welfare Organizing Projects;

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Stephanie Gendell, Citizens Community for Children;  
Sarah Fajarado, Coalition of Asian-American Children;  
and Gregory Brender, United Neighborhood Houses.

[pause, background comments]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So, we're  
doing three minutes.

GREGORY BRENDER: All right.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Whoever wants to  
begin.

STEPHANIE GENDELL: Good evening. I'm  
Stephanie Gendell. I'm the Associate Executive  
Director of Citizens Committee for Children. We're a  
multi-issue independent child advocacy organization  
so we cover all three agencies that testified today.  
But I'll probably end up focusing most on ACS. With  
regard to--just to get childcare out of the way, I'll  
just reiterate everything with reiterating it.  
Everything that I said at the hearing January with  
regard to Early Learn in terms of the rate and the  
salary parity and the facilities, et cetera. But  
what was disturbing to hear today, and over the past  
few days is the issue has come up about directly

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1 these sites. And that the leases aren't being  
2 negotiated, and we're at risk of losing centers where  
3 we might want to keep children, and we just had one  
4 close last week. So I feel like this is an issue we  
5 really need to work on, and make sure we don't lose  
6 actual sites because once they're gone, they going to  
7 be gone especially in some of the communities where  
8 they're located.  
9

10 On child welfare, I appreciate you  
11 reading into the record the Child and Family Service  
12 Review findings where New York has essentially failed  
13 almost all of the federal measures. And particularly  
14 as they relate to permanency, and how long children  
15 stay in foster care. I also think that the new data  
16 that's applied is part of the last 46, 48 and 49 show  
17 that youth in care struggling. And that we need to  
18 do much more to help them find families and achieve  
19 permanency in the system. We were intrigued to hear  
20 the Commissioner talk more about her new program, a  
21 resident one-year home, but it's the next version of  
22 one-year home, but getting home. And we just urge  
23 the Administration and ACS to be more transparent and  
24 collaborative about what they're doing in child  
25 welfare so we can have more information about the

1 status. And also lend our expertise where  
2 appropriate. We also once again urge the city to  
3 consider investing in primary preventive services so  
4 that they can target programs and services in places  
5 where children and families are at risk before  
6 opening a case. When the Commissioner was asked  
7 about the McDonald's case, she talked about it like  
8 ACS couldn't be involved unless the case had been  
9 called in or the child had been arrested and gone to  
10 detention. But there are services that could have  
11 been out in the community engaging those young people  
12 and no warrant. [sic] And they could have been  
13 without having a case open. We also think we need  
14 more services to prevent youth from aging out, and  
15 also to help those who do.  
16

17 With regard to DHS, I just want to say we  
18 are very pleased to hear about the upcoming plans for  
19 LINC VI. We think that this reflects the reality of  
20 many families who leave shelter, and live with  
21 friends and relatives. The other issue, though, is  
22 that while we are pleased that DHS is investing money  
23 into inspections and repairs for the 25 sites that  
24 were in the DOI Report, there are many, many more  
25 sites. And we would want them to be investigated or

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at least inspected. [bell] And then any additional  
money put into the Capital Budget for the rest of  
Tier 2 and cluster site shelters as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you and we have  
your entire testimony?

STEPHANIE GENDELL: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Thank  
you, Stephanie.

SARAH FAJARDO: Good evening. My name is  
Sarah Fajardo and I'm a Child Welfare Policy  
Coordinator for the Coalition for Asian-American  
Children and Families. CAACF has been working the  
fields of health, education and child welfare for the  
last 30 years, and we work with the Pan-Asian  
community of New York City. We have over Asian led  
and serving members that work directly with our  
community members. APA is by personage the fastest  
growing community in New York City. Over 70% of  
Asian-Americans in New York are foreign born. They  
have the highest rates of linguistic isolation, and  
the highest rates of poverty in the city. These are  
huge barriers to accessing services, and we encourage  
ACS to consider a number of recommendations to  
improve access to services for our community members.

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The first recommendation is to increase education and outreach to the Asian-Pacific American community about the services and programs available.

We encourage ACS to develop a public education campaign utilizing multiple languages. Our community members speak over 40 languages and dialogues. It's very hard to outreach. We're happy to help as a member organization. We have a number of partners in the community. So the second recommendation is to increase capacity in partnerships with member organizations that serve community members. We also encourage ACS to provide linguistically accessible child welfare services in language, and to ensure that cultural competency trainings include Asian-Pacific American cultural information and perspectives. We're really pleased to see that ACS is proposing a budget allocation for cultural sensitivity training for the coming year, and we encourage that these trainings are inclusive of all of New York's extremely diverse community members. And finally, we'd like to thank you for your support of a City Council bill to disaggregate data collected by ACS, and this is just really an extremely important way for ACS to target services



effectively, and to get community members the  
resources that they really need. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

GREGORY BENDER: Hi. I'm Gregory Bender.  
I'm from United Neighborhood Houses. We are New York  
City's federation of settlement houses and community  
center. I'll also submit the whole testimony with  
everything, but I just wanted to talk a tiny bit on  
the issues around salary parity and benefits parity  
for the Early Childhood workforce. Our member  
agencies have been really excited to be part of the  
historic expansion of Pre-K, but understand that to  
truly take aim at equality--at inequality, we really  
need to address the comprehensive system for working  
families, which is the ACS system. And you know that  
ACS has heard from you. They've heard from the task  
force--the task force that they've convened and  
they've heard from providers. And we really hope  
that the Administration uses its Executive Budget as  
an opportunity to address these long-standing issues  
of instability and inequality with the Early  
Childhood system. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. And thank  
you very much to this panel. On behalf of the entire

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committee, we appreciate all the work and insight and the collaboration that we've had with your organizations for--for a long time. So we appreciate it. Thank you.

SARAH FAJARDO: Thank you.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, next panel, Gretchen Bedell from You've Got to Believe; Sharif Griggs from Foster Care Alumni; Anthony Turner, You've Got to Believe; Jessica Marcus, Brooklyn Defenders; Valerie Lynch and Amy Ellenbogen.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, whoever wants to begin can go ahead.

SHARIF GRIGGS: Hi, my name is Sharif Griggs. I'm an alumni of foster care. I aged out at 21 and I came in at 13. My life is good because I had--was offered the chance of permanency prior to aging out of foster care. But I have here a letter from someone, one of my colleagues who did not have that option, and I'm just going to read a little bit of her letter to you guys. Dear Chairman Levin and distinguished members of the committee. I am speaking to you today in hopes that you can assist

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1 older youth in care just like me who in just two  
2 weeks are about to lose a critical resource that  
3 helps us get forever homes, families, love and  
4 respect, You've Got to Believe. I entered foster  
5 care at age 15 due to a PINS warrant. My mother said  
6 she had washed her hands of me, and before I knew it,  
7 I was immediately placed in foster care. I'm still  
8 in foster care to this day and pending exception to  
9 policy. For the seven years that I have been foster  
10 care, no caseworker has ever told me that I had the  
11 possibility of having a forever family or an actual  
12 parent who makes me feel safe and wanted forever.  
13

14 I first got connected with You've Got to  
15 Believe at an award ceremony at ACS. I was there  
16 with a non-profit organization called Voices  
17 Unbroken. I remember the staff from You've Got to  
18 Believe being so welcoming and embracing. One of  
19 them, a woman who already had provided forever homes  
20 to several foster children, wore her heart on her  
21 sleeve, and I would never know how much of an impact  
22 she would have on my life today. If it had not been  
23 for her and a few other staff at You've Got to  
24 Believe, I wouldn't have two dedicated women willing  
25 to love and be fully committed to me. I also

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wouldn't have a group of adults that I look to as mentors that were also there to mold me into the young lady I've grown into. It waters my eyes to just learned that the Administration of Children's Services is stopping work with You've Got to Believe and other agencies that have worked to find loving forever homes to older youth in foster care throughout New York City.

This could only happen at a worst time when thousands of youth, such as myself are about to age out of foster care right on New York City streets with no permanent family as a safety net. I've also learned that ACS might possibly reconsider working with older adoption agencies some time in the near future. But by this time, it will be too late. Because from this day on there will be another child that goes hungry. Another child that struggles in the streets, and another child that goes homeless, and is denied their right to a forever family. How can we continuously see members of the homeless foster youth grow? It hurts to see my fellow peers panhandle money on the train just to eat. My last dollars goes to them every time. Please ask ACS to reconsider cutting off older youth in care from

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forever homes that they so deserve. Please ask them to extend the YGB contract. Young lives will be even more and more at risk each day. No one should be alone, nor should they age out alone.

ANTHONY TURNER: Good afternoon, committee members, I'm Anthony Turner.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much. thank you for your testimony.

SHARIF GRIGGS: Thank you.

ANTHONY TURNER: So my name is Anthony Turner, and I'm a Peer Specialist You've Got to Believe, and I'm just going to be speaking on behalf of one of my colleagues as well. Her name is Bizanne Gulley. [sp?] So I'm here to-- No. I entered foster care at age 16 due to unspeakable abuse inflicted upon me by my parents. I was immediately placed in care, and remained there until I aged out at the age of 21 last year in September. Through my own perseverance, tenacity, and optimism I began college at 17 at Mercy College. And, I'm now just two semesters away from graduating. I was merely given independent living--independent living training with the hopes that simple--that simple gesture would aid me on a young adult living on my own without a safety

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net in this world. But last August, just one month before I aged out it was my therapist who told that I was not too old to get a parent.

My therapist learned that I could have a parent regardless of my age because she wants to adopt a foster child, and began attending training classes to get certified at YGB, You've Got to Believe. She learned through her training that You've Got to Believe not just parents with youth at any age. Once I learned this from the therapist, not any New York City caseworker, I quickly contacted YGB on my own. Shortly thereafter YGB contacted Genise Huff and had me appear on Wednesday's Child. From that appearance, and my continuing relationship with YGB, I not only had a prospective family, but also met other adults who are now serving as resources to alleviate the feeling of isolation aged-out youth have once they are removed from the system. In the very short time I had been in contact with YGB, my life has substantially changed, which is why I'm writing to you now.

Although I am in college and working as a home health aid and trying to keep my head above water, I also know that I am one step away from

homelessness, and public assistance dependency.

Because if I lose my job, I would have no one to help me. But it is with YGB, and now have--and now having prospective parents for the rest of my life and other YGB adults who care about me. That's more than I had just a mere seven months ago. I just learned that ACS is also saying that maybe they will possibly reconsider working with older adoption agencies one day in the future. That is too late because every day until then there will be thousands of fellow foster youth who will be denied the opportunity of a forever home. And, unfortunately, I am all too familiar with where they may end up, back in the system as a statistic. And before I just conclude, I want to leave you guys with a quote-- I'm sorry. Okay. Yeah. "Everyone needs a--everyone needs a house to live in, but a supportive family is what builds a home." Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much for your testimony.

VALERIE LYNCH: Good evening. My name is Valerie Lynch. thank you for having me today. I'm nervous.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Don't worry about it.  
You're doing good.

VALERIE LYNCH: I entered foster care at the age of 13 years old because my adopted mom would abuse me. Until one day her friend called ACS on her, and they one night to take me away. I then remained in care from age 13 to 21 moving through 12 different fosters homes in many different boroughs of New York. The only goal that I saw for myself was independent living because returning to family was the only option that they offered me, and it didn't feel safe or comfortable enough for me to stay there. For as long--for as long as I was in care, no worker had ever explained the possibility of having a forever home, actual loving parents, a safe environment to put my head down for the rest of my life. Like around those that I knew that they truly cared or loved me. Not for who they wanted their ideal child to be. I was merely given independent living training, and I believed that I didn't need anyone to help me, nor did I want any help, After going through what I had been through, I thought that I could do it all by myself and I would. Even now as a young adult trying and wanting to live on my own,



1 without understanding the needs of some sort of  
2 safety shield in this world. That someone, some  
3 family out there could take me, care and give me what  
4 I needed which was more than just \$40 or \$80 that  
5 like they give us a month or that I receive for an  
6 allowance. And a family who would make me feel that  
7 I was saying at-- That they wouldn't make me feel  
8 like I was staying at a temporary hotel, who would  
9 keep remind me every day-- That wouldn't keep  
10 reminding me everyday that I was part of the system.  
11 Who actually showed me affection and treated me like  
12 I was their own child, I was human. Instead, I  
13 wounded up aging out of foster care, and in 2013 I  
14 was often hopping from one friend's house to another  
15 struggling to find a job of my own, and making sure I  
16 wouldn't go hungry or wind up wandering on the  
17 streets with nowhere to stay all the while-- [crying]  
18 I can't--I can't, but hank you so much.

19  
20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Keep going. You're  
21 doing good.

22 VALERIE LYNCH: [crying] All the while  
23 waiting for the Housing Department-- I can't.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Just take a second.  
25

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VALERIE LYNCH: --to call me and tell me  
that I would finally going to get to move into my own  
apartment. Not until the end of January of this year  
did I finally get notified that I was able to move  
in. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. You can  
take more time if you want. That's fine.

VALERIE LYNCH: I'm fine.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
for your testimony, and thank you for your courage in  
coming out and telling your story. And for speaking  
out on behalf of many that--that will benefit from  
this. So you're being very brave in taking a lot of  
responsibility for this. Thank you for being here.

VALERIE LYNCH: Thank you.

[pause, background comments]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You have to--you have  
to speak into the microphone.

JESSICA MARCUS: Thank you. My name is  
Jessica Marcus. I am from the Brooklyn Defender  
Services, Family Defense Practice, and thank you so  
much for this opportunity to address you today.  
Brooklyn Defender Services is the largest Brooklyn  
based legal service provider representing 40,000--

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45,000 low-income Brooklyn residents each year who are arrested, charged with abuse or neglect of their children or face deportation. And our Family Defense Practice, the FDP, is assigned to represent parents, and caregivers in 1,000 new child welfare cases each year. That's the majority of the respondents in Brooklyn Family Court. Using an interdisciplinary model, the FDP has advocated for the safe return of over 6,000 children to their families. And over 90% of the child protective cases filed by the Administration for Children's Services are based on allegations of neglect and not abuse. And the majority of these cases are caused by or exacerbated by the family's poverty. Most of these cases represent a failure of the city's safety net system for poor children and families. Public and other subsidized housing, public assistance, healthcare, mental healthcare systems to truly support families in need. The City Council, ACS and the Department of Homeless Services should address the barriers that exclude families who need these services. Which would result in fewer families entering the Child Welfare System, and save the city's scarce dollars.

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I'm just going to briefly mention my recommendations, which are elaborated on in the testimony, entered in testimony. First, we strong support the idea that increased training for ACS case handlers and supervisors is a critical piece of an overall strategy for improving case work practice. But we believe that in order to create a training program that actually achieves significant change in culture, ACS should be partnering with community-based groups, parents, children and advocates for parents and children to better understand the problems faced in case work practice. Which go far beyond the tragic fatalities that we hear about in the press. If the city invests substantial funding in ACS' Enhanced Training Program, a key metric for success must be public accountability to those most impacted by the child welfare system.

We also firmly believe that case workers--ACS caseworkers and supervisors need to be trained to help our clients navigate the systems that they have to interact with on a daily basis. Including the shelter system, public assistance, SSI, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, Medicaid and mental healthcare systems. And should

be better trained on the rights of people with disabilities and mental health problems.

We are grateful that in 2013, ACS promulgated principles to inform Child Welfare decision making regarding mental health issues, but we continue to see many problems with ACS' interaction with families who experience mental health problems, particularly improper reliance on mental health [bell] assessments, which don't meet the minimum professional standards. And don't provide useful information about parenting abilities. And are then relied on inappropriately to mandate treatment and make decisions about families being separated. We also are concerned about ACS not being properly trained to work with people with intellectual disabilities. There's a very large number of parents who have cognitive delays. ACS should not be filing neglect cases against these families because of their disabilities. But, should be getting them the proper services through the agencies that have expertise in working with parents with disabilities. And ACS workers should be better trained in working with parents with disabilities effectively. And also in assisting them in accessing

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the proper services through the Office for People  
With Developmental Disabilities. We strong believe  
that ACS needs to re-examine its focus on parents  
simply because of marijuana use. As a separate  
recommendation that cases should not be brought  
solely for marijuana use. Marijuana possession is  
now legal in New York, but ACS still prosecutes  
parents solely for using marijuana, even if there is  
no evidence that they are under the influence while  
caring for their children. And this practice also  
leads to children staying in foster care for longer  
because sometimes the only thing preventing children  
from coming home from foster care is that they are  
testing positive for marijuana. Even though there is  
no evidence that they've used in the presence of  
their children. We believe--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Please  
summarize.

JESSICA MARCUS: Okay. ACS should stop  
illegally removing children without coming to court  
first. That's an issue that we've been working on  
with them since 2010, and we strongly believe that  
ACS and the Department of Homeless Services need to  
better--work together better to prevent the situation

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1 that we see very often, which is ACS telling families  
2 that they have to go into shelter. And then the  
3 Department of Homeless Services telling families that  
4 they're eligible for shelter, and should go back to  
5 where ACS told them that they couldn't live because  
6 it was dangerous for their children. And that  
7 obviously is a situation where two city agencies are  
8 shirking their legal responsibilities to families to  
9 provide services to prevent children from going into  
10 foster care. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

13 GRETCHEN BEDELL: Hi. I'm Gretchen  
14 Bedell, and I am a foster parent through You've Got  
15 to Believe. And I'm here to ask you to believe help  
16 us continue that funding because permanency is what  
17 makes a difference for the kids who are in care.  
18 There's been a lot of talk about homelessness today,  
19 and how to address that. One thousand teens age out  
20 every year in New York City, age out of care.  
21 Twenty-five percent of them experience homelessness.  
22 That's an enormous statistic, and in some cities 80%  
23 of incarcerated people came up through the city--  
24 through the system. 80% of incarcerated people.  
25 When you give kids stability, you prevent

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homelessness. You prevent crime. You prevent incarceration, and there's the moral answer and there's the financial answer in giving them permanency. You've Got to Believe focuses on permanency not just until a kids is 21, and that is homelessness prevention. A lot of foster parents foster because they need the money, and we're grateful for them.

But, when a kid hits 21, they need that kid out so that they can put another kid and get the funding that they need. That's what make You've Got to Believe families different. They recruit families who want families, who want permanency, who want forever. And, I'm a foster parent. I have four teens that I am a forever resource for. Fifty percent of foster parents quit within the first year. Fifty percent because they don't get the support they need. You know, the kids need the support. The way to get the kids the support is to support the foster parents. You've Got to Believe staff is made up of foster parents. They're the ones who understand what it's like to have a kid in a home. Caseworkers have a huge job, and an important job, but when you need advice about how to handle a situation you've



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never been faced with before, you need someone who's been there. And that's what You've Got to Believe provides.

The only way to have a successful permanent long-term placement is to have the kind of support that foster parents need. I will tell you I have four kids. I would have failed. My husband and I would not be foster parents today were it not for the support that You've Got to Believe has given us. And that's not true just for me. That's true with any. And, you know, I understand that there's a concern about You've Got to Believe recruitment numbers. And I would sit here and say, yeah, their numbers probably are lower than other agencies. And the reason is because it's a lot harder to find someone up to step up for permanency than it is for temporary. That's a very different recruitment process. [bell] This isn't--this isn't just about getting kids into a home. This is about getting them into permanent homes so that they're not carted around from home to home. Some of my kids have been 17 homes. Seventeen homes.

We've got to focus on the permanent ones, the ones who want to be there forever. Not the ones

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1 who give up because they don't have the support they  
2 need. And it's hard being a foster parent. I'll  
3 tell your right now it's hard. You've got to have  
4 support. So, you know, for every dollar spent on  
5 agencies that find adoptive forever homes, about  
6 \$60,000 is saved every year on those kids. Three of  
7 the kids I have came from residences. Those are the  
8 highest level of care. And so, the savings by  
9 bringing them into my home is huge for the City, you  
10 know. And, now you have a productive member of  
11 society who's--who's able to have the love and  
12 support needed to go out and get a job, and to have a  
13 healthy family themselves. As opposed to a teen  
14 pregnancy where that kid ends up in care as well.  
15 It's a vicious cycle. Permanency is the way to go.  
16 That's the way to change the cycle. It's the way to  
17 address--address homelessness and crime and drug  
18 abuse and teen pregnancy.

20 There are so many things that permanency  
21 addresses. And the money--because I know you've got  
22 to deal with the money--the money that is saved is  
23 enormous because this is about ever single year of  
24 that--that person's live not just when they're in  
25 care. So I'm asking you to please continue to fund

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1 You've Got to Believe. They're the only agency--  
2 I've been at CASA and I've been a foster parent.  
3 I've dealt with a lot of agencies. [bell] They're  
4 working really hard. No one does this. No one  
5 focuses on permanency. We can't start looking at  
6 temporary again, and give up on permanency. It's the  
7 answer. It's what will turn things around. So,  
8 please, please talk to the Commissioner Carrion, and  
9 please ask her to continue to fund You've Got to  
10 Believe.  
11

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

13 GRETCHEN BEDELL: Thank you.

14 AMY ELLENBOGEN: Good evening. My name  
15 is Amy Ellengbogen and I'm a Project Director of the  
16 Crown Heights Community Mediation Center, which is a  
17 project of the Center for Court Innovation. I'm here  
18 today to urge you to support the Center for Court  
19 Innovation's groundbreaking efforts to promote and  
20 expand the use of community-based alternatives to  
21 incarceration. Divert young out of the criminal  
22 juvenile Justice Systems, improve services and  
23 outcomes for victims of crimes, and increase equal  
24 access to justice for vulnerable New Yorkers. The  
25 Center for Court Innovation has a deep commitment to

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improving outcomes for young people impacted by the Justice System. Working with more than 2,300 youth each year, our alternative to detention programs includes Staten Island, Harlem, Red Hook and Brownsville serve to critical off-ramps for the Justice System for young people. They also serve as vibrant neighborhood resource centers helping youth build core skills and competencies; promoting accountability; offering support and encouragement. Nurturing positive connections to family and community, sparking civic engagement and offering participants new pathways that lead away from system involvement and towards academic social and vocational success.

Our Youth Futures programs offer wraparound case coordination for Justice involved young people who need mental health services. Programs like Make it Happen in Crown Heights, Brooklyn provide culturally appropriate counseling and strengths focused support to help young men with color manage trauma arising from violence they may have experienced in their neighborhood. And all of our Youth and Community Justice Centers engage participants in community benefits projects that

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combine service work with education. Training kids to be leaders and promoting a lasting investment in overall community wellbeing.

The Center for Court Innovation also works hard to improve the lives of women and youth trapped in the world of prostitution and trafficking. In 2013, New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Whitman announced the launch of New York State Court's Human Trafficking Intervention Initiative to ensure that individuals caught in the cycle of exploitation and trafficking are treated as victims and not as criminals. Instead of jail time, Center for Court Innovation clinicians identify and address each person's complex needs and shape a plan to stop the cycle of new arrests and new victimization.

The Center also helps children involved in sex trafficking. A recent study by John Jay and the Center found that there are approximately 4,000 commercially sexually exploited children ages 18 and younger in New York City. In response, we are testing a new initiative in Family Court called Creating Change for Children, which works to promote ongoing identification strategies among legal stakeholders; sustain ongoing training of judges and

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1 legal staff; increase services for exploited child  
2 victims; and successfully engage young people in  
3 services that can help them gain a foothold on a  
4 safer and healthier future. You can read the rest of  
5 my testimony.  
6

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
8 for your testimony, and I thank this panel for your  
9 testimony, and I thank this panel for all of your  
10 important work and advocacy. I appreciate you very  
11 much staying until 6:00 p.m. to deliver your  
12 testimony. I know it's been a long day, but we  
13 really appreciate you taking the time, and we commit  
14 to you that we will take all appropriate action in  
15 working with you to ensure that there is a  
16 continuation of services. Because this is a vital  
17 need, and it needs to continue to be funded. So,  
18 thank you very much for your time. Thank you. Next  
19 panel, Christy Parque from Homeless Services United;  
20 Jeff Foreman, Care for the Homeless; Jeremy Reese and  
21 Raysa Rodriguez from Coalition Bronx Works Can by  
22 Henry Street Settlement. Richard Lewis, Community  
23 Board 12, and Kisha Shek-Umono Veras [sp?] from the  
24 Electric Amp and All Homeless People.  
25

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CHRIS PARQUE: Hi, I just think that Jeff  
Foreman submitted testimony. He had to leave so--

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And my apologies to  
this panel. Whoever wants to begin.

CHRIS PARQUE: As I was saying, Jeff  
Foreman, my colleague and member from Care for the  
Homeless I believe he submitted testimony. So he  
really wanted to be here, so his apologies for not  
being able to stay. My name is Chris Parque. I'm  
the Executive Director of Homeless Services United,  
which is the Coalition of the New York City Non-  
Profit Homeless Service Programs. You've heard me  
testify just recently--as recently as a month ago  
about some of our feedback on the great work that the  
de Blasio Administration and also with HRA and HRS  
has done. You can refer to that testimony regarding  
things on LINC, and other great innovations at HRA.

So today, I just want to focus on the  
financial starvation of non-profit agencies, and the  
program they operate as well as the staff that serve  
our homeless brothers and sisters in New York City.  
In regard to the DOI Investigation, we welcome any  
opportunity to increase the quality of the programs

1 that we operate, and increase the quality of the  
2 buildings that we operate them in. So, I want to  
3 focus just on the last page of our testimony, but  
4 just by stating that, we know that homelessness is  
5 one of the most complex and tragic manifestations of  
6 poverty, but it is solvable. The solution requires  
7 facilities that can provide a stabilizing  
8 environment. The solution also requires staff that  
9 can provide the support and caring that helps clients  
10 tap into their own unique strengths and identify a  
11 path to a permanent home. The solution also requires  
12 staff that can understand and adapt to the complex  
13 and rapidly changing systems, and rules involving  
14 health, housing, and other public benefits. And the  
15 solution requires an administrative infrastructure  
16 that provides the support that any program needs to  
17 succeed. By failing to invest or even maintain its  
18 low levels of support, which includes things like  
19 capacity of buildings and capital needs, the City is  
20 working against itself in resolving the crisis of  
21 homelessness.  
22

23 Just a couple of areas that I want to  
24 focus on is that we believe that in order to serve  
25 our clients we need to have as many services that are



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as diverse as the people that we're serving. So we really want to get back to the day when New York City was providing client-centered services that means jobs, education, physical and mental health services, a robust system. I was happy to hear the Commissioner state that, that he was interested in robust services. It's been a long time since we've heard that. So I'm very excited to hear that. To that end, we're happy to support our colleagues who will be testifying after me. The last page focuses on our Call to Action for the Mayor and the City in order to invest in the non-profits that help our neighbors. So if we are truly the solution as the DOI Report made it seem, then we really need some support, and we're asking for your help today.

So we're asking for some immediate measures. I know there's a lot of little arrows there, and normally I like to come with three, but really it's been 20 years, and we have more than three arrows of areas that we need support on. But the most important, as we heard from DOI, is immediate budget increases for the maintenance and repair of the portfolio--the City's portfolio of shelter programs and services. And what that means

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1 is that it isn't enough just to hire folks that will  
2 look at what the needs are. We actually need to put  
3 the money in the budget to repair all those programs.  
4 Not just the 25 that DOI assessed. We also need a  
5 thorough assessment of the other programs not  
6 included in that 25. And also making sure that we're  
7 in alignment with the funds for that. [bell] We  
8 should also support DHS to include in their budgets--  
9 present and any new budget. As I see, they're  
10 bringing folks under contracts--cost escalations  
11 related to rent, real estate taxes, transportation,  
12 utility, sewer, insurance and all other fees that we  
13 have to pay related to operating our programs. And  
14 we should also make sure that we protect shelter  
15 budgets. Should the day come and we have implemented  
16 PEGS or budget cuts again, so that we have a baseline  
17 of sufficient funding to operate our programs. And,  
18 lastly, we think it's really important to support and  
19 reward our heroes who work in the shelters every  
20 single day with appropriate salaries and benefits,  
21 and that includes we'd like to see a 10% living wage--  
22 a 10% COLA, as well as provide for a career ladder  
23 and living wage for our folks who are operating and  
24 working in these programs.  
25

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And the last final thing is to ensure that DHS as an agency and its partners, the non-profit partners, receive parity as far as administrative overhead. Currently, we have the lowest administrative overhead of the Human Services programs in the City, and we think that it's fair and right. Now is the time to change that, and make sure that it comes into parity with other programs. And maybe look at increasing some of the other programs because it's very low in most programs. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

RAYSA RODRIGUEZ: Hi. Good evening. My name is Raysa Rodriguez and I'm the Vice President of Policy and Planning at WIN, an organization that strives to transform the lives of women and children who are homeless. I apologize. My colleague from Henry Street Settlement, Jeremy Reese had to leave earlier, but we're here to represent a coalition of providers that includes Bronx Works, CAMBA, Henry Street Settlement, and HSU to really urge the City Council to fund a new citywide initiative. Combined, our coalition serves over 2,000 families across the city, and over 4,000 children. We already know that

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24,000 kids in our system call shelter home often times for more than a year. And we urge there's a incredible need to fill the gap in specialized services of the needs that we see day and day out. So very simply, our request is for the City Council to consider and invest in a citywide initiative that focuses on four critical areas. The first is building resiliency of children through trauma-informed services. We know by age 12, 83% of our kids in the system have experienced some level of trauma. The second area is to invest in staff capacity around evidence-based home services to better engage clients. And it was really great to hear Commissioner Taylor today express commitment on motivational interviews, for instance. The third is to reduce recidivism. We know that families who need shelter are at risk of returning during the first two years after they find placement. So how do we support them through the appropriate comprehensive services beyond shelter. And the last component equally important is to prevent child maltreatment. We know that 25% of the kids in or system have some level of open ACS case. And there are proven methods and interventions that can prevent maltreatment. So

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we look forward to working with the Council on this important new initiatives, and we hope to partner with you. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

KISHA SHAKAMONA VERAS: Hello. Thank you. My name is Kisha Shakamona Veras [sp?] and I'm actually a humble homeless artist. I've lived in adult family shelter in the Bronx at 963 Prospect with my husband for over two years now. We lost employment due to excessive appointments that DHS and the shelter was requiring us to meet. I have severe emotional problems due to the circumstances of living in poverty. I grew up in Detroit, Michigan and was homeless twice. Being in a shelter with the excessive mice, the mold, the dust, and the lack of resources to obtain food and toiletries has caused me to really be shattered. I've have to literally go on the trains to ask for help, and panhandle in the street and try to sell my artwork just to survive. \$268 a month for two adults in Food Stamps is not enough to sustain. We don't have a refrigerator. So the food goes faster, and the cash assistance is not enough to maintain cleaning products, transportation.

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On my way here today I was almost arrested by the police because I had to hop the train because it's very imperative that I come here to speak. My husband has never had breathing problems, and I am afraid of losing him. The dry heat in the shelter is overwhelming. He has rashes. I have rashes. The steam poles in the building are old and rusted, and the maintenance people spray it with some type of silver spray. They are not trying to get us out of the shelter. I've literally provided my case manger with every document they've requested for supportive housing, and not one application has been filled out on my behalf. The only application filled out that was on my behalf was when I did NYCHA over a year ago. No one is helping me. I can barely keep up with documents and papers because of my mental problems, and I went to college to avoid becoming an African-American statistic.

And I refuse to allow my education and my family heritage as native Americans to be crushed into a prison. Which in my opinion, it is a coffin waiting for someone to die. I have had to kill mice, and the only thing that they give us is a mouse trap. Which if you know nature like I know nature from a

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1 spiritual aspect, they know how to avoid the traps,  
2 the different traps. No one is helping us. Not with  
3 food, not with toiletries, and definitely not with  
4 transportation. I feel for the amount of money that  
5 HRA and DHS is paying to shelter landlords, they  
6 should put us in housing. We do not deserve to live  
7 in shelters that are just filthy just because we're  
8 homeless. I have been a working class American since  
9 the age of 17, and I have been denied Social Security  
10 benefits. And I cannot tell you how walls I've  
11 punched. How many holes in walls I've punched  
12 because of frustration. Because I feel like there is  
13 no hope for people like myself. Now, they have this  
14 LINC program, which I appreciate. But I'm trying  
15 desperately to find a way to work throughout my  
16 mental issues because I'm that desperate to get out  
17 of the shelter.  
18

19 I refuse to sit back and watch my husband  
20 suffer another night of insomnia, and the lack of  
21 ability to breathe because of people and their greed.  
22 For \$2,573 a month I can live on 14th in Union  
23 Square. I figure I have created a program with my  
24 art and my husband performing music, and that is the  
25 only thing that I can focus on. Focusing on my art,

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1 my music and finding a way to fight back against this  
2 wretched system. There is a flaw in every sector of  
3 its being. And to incriminate--to criminalize people  
4 like myself because we're poor. I'm poor because  
5 minimum wage is less than it was 60 years. I am  
6 homeless because whoever founded this system took the  
7 land from my native American ancestors, and now the  
8 majority of the people who are in poverty are either  
9 African-Americans or of Native-American descent,  
10 which includes Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Cubans and  
11 everyone else. I stand for every person in this city  
12 who has helped me, who are also homeless and want  
13 change.  
14

15 If you want to change the situation, take  
16 into consideration what each individual needs. If  
17 you're going to put me in a shelter and pay the  
18 landlord \$2,000, then you should increase my welfare  
19 benefits so that I can eat properly. Instead of  
20 giving me \$268 for two people, why not give that  
21 amount for each individual? Instead of giving me  
22 \$145 every two weeks for two people, why not give  
23 that for every individual ever two weeks. And  
24 instead of making me mandate to go to a freaking--  
25 excuse me--We Care Program, which does nothing but



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1 increase my mental agitation for waiting hours just  
2 to show up and give a person a person a piece of  
3 paper to show that I've been exempted from work. I  
4 do not want to be in this situation any longer, and  
5 I'm asking my country, my city, my state to take a  
6 stand and not put these corporations over our needs  
7 as the people. As Carl Sandberg said, We the people  
8 make up the government. Well, I speak for the  
9 people. The funds are being mishandled, and the  
10 system who is keeping this in place should be  
11 ashamed. We are construction a non-profit  
12 organization on our talents in music and arts because  
13 that's the only thing that's helped us to keep our  
14 sanity. And we ask that you guys open up your table  
15 to our advice and our expertise as healers, natural  
16 healers. Not pharmaceutical, natural healers or  
17 creativity and sheer love. Thank you.

18  
19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
20 for your testimony. Thank you.

21 RICHARD LEWIS: My name is Richard Lewis,  
22 and I'm here [coughs] representing today the  
23 testimony of Community Board 12 in Manhattan on the  
24 Mayor's Fiscal Preliminary Budget for DHS and HRA.  
25 You have our testimony. So I'll just briefly go over

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1 it so that in the essence of time. I'm also here at  
2 the request of our Chairman George Fernandez who  
3 couldn't be here today. And so, I also serve as  
4 Chair of the Housing and Human Services Committee.  
5 So we're happy to testify on these Preliminary  
6 Budgets. Let me state that our Community Board has  
7 not passed any resolutions yet on the Mayor's--on the  
8 New York City Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year  
9 2016. The is premised on some \$78 billion, but  
10 really in the four-decade history of our board, we've  
11 taken very consistent positions in our resolutions,  
12 some specific and some general, as regards to budget  
13 rankings of DHS and HRA services in our district.

14 So this testimony will just briefly  
15 summarize one position, which we feel is in critical  
16 need. And that is the expansion of legal services  
17 and the right--the right to legal counsel in addition  
18 to the new LINC services that we just heard today.  
19 So, those agencies in several fiscal years have had  
20 some similar programs with funds to prevent some form  
21 of homeless. We've heard about the rental assistance  
22 programs, the Homebase programs, HASA and agency  
23 legal consolidations for a variety of outsourcing  
24 with legal services contracts for anti-eviction  
25

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1 service--efforts. Yet, in 2013, some 30,000 families  
2 have been evicted from their homes. Two-thirds of  
3 those families earn less than \$25,000 a year. It  
4 costs the city \$36,000 a year for a shelter bed, and  
5 about \$250,000 if you were to build an affordable  
6 unit. These are--there are many other costs we just  
7 can't calculate like days lost from school, days lost  
8 from work stress, instability for families.  
9

10 And full representation in housing costs,  
11 cost about \$2,000 to \$3,000 per case. We've heard  
12 reports that there have been long lines in Housing  
13 Courts throughout the city waiting to receive agency  
14 attorney help. And many of those are also turned  
15 away by contracted legal service organizations, and  
16 community-based organizations. Clearly, these HRO  
17 and DHA programs, although they're well-intended and  
18 provide some relief, have not been either efficient  
19 or effective in reducing unjust eviction rates. And  
20 we have no metrics on the newer programs that they  
21 have also initiated. So we believe that this  
22 litigation [sic] to prevent homeless centers stem the  
23 loss of needed affordable housing for families in our  
24 district is the right to housing court appointed  
25

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1 legal counsel. And just let me briefly go over that  
2 and I'll be done.

3  
4 In two successive budget cycles including  
5 this one, Community Board 12 Manhattan has  
6 recommended and ranked as the number one expense  
7 priority legal assistance and heavy legal counsel.  
8 HRA and DHS and DR--DHS can only currently handle  
9 about 10% of the case brought to Housing Court.  
10 That's very few. Attorneys of our association,  
11 judges, CBOs, electives, and tenant advocates contend  
12 that nearly half of these cases with direct legal  
13 counsel could be averted. Thus, cutting the eviction  
14 rate to a minimum or virtually in half as I said  
15 before. Since many tenants are losing their housing  
16 mainly because they could not navigate the maze of  
17 Housing Laws and Regulations or court proceedings or  
18 afford legal counsel. There is every need to level  
19 the playing field in Housing Court as tenants--as  
20 landlords are almost always represented by counsel.  
21 The right to a court-appointed tenant attorney has  
22 become a necessity in Housing. And Community Board  
23 12 will be discussing this matter in April with the  
24 possibility of passing a resolution in support of  
25

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City Council's Bill 214. Our concern here, and why  
we are testifying, is the following:

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: If you could  
summarize, I'd appreciate it.

RICHARD LEWIS: That's what I'm about to  
do.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

RICHARD LEWIS: If Into 214 is passed by  
City--by the City Council and signed into law by the  
Mayor, will there be sufficient funding on Fiscal  
Year 2016 to allow for this large increase for  
direct--for direct funding of attorneys, best  
practices and will this funding adequately provide  
for multi-lingual services. That is Community Board  
Manhattan's testimony, and are there any questions?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
for your testimony. I think this entire panel was  
very helpful and informative, and we look forward to  
working with everybody on--as we move forward. This  
is a--there have been strides made today, but we  
still have a lot of to do in the city. So we  
appreciate your help. Thank you.

RICHARD LEWIS: Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, so we have  
three panels left. We appreciate everybody's  
patience. They're all HRA related panels. The first  
one is around WEP and job-related programs. I would  
like to call up Ann Valdez from Community Voices  
Heard; Joseph--

JOSEPH WIMPA: [off mic] Wimpa.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --Wimpa, Community  
Voices Heard; Melinda Nimmons, CVH; Michael Hentz;  
and--

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The last name Ortiz  
from--I don't know the first name.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And whoever would  
like to begin.

ANN VALDEZ: Good afternoon. My name is  
Ann Valdez. I'm a leader at Community Voices Heard.  
We thank the Mayor, Commissioner, and City Council  
for the announcement for the phasing out of the Work  
Experience Program. Students at SUNY have mostly  
been offered work-study positions at \$10 an hour  
instead of WEP, and they are thrilled. Some are  
finding places that they can work that will also

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1 supplement their educational goals. We are glad that  
2 the Departments of Education, Fire and Aging have  
3 stopped taking in WEP workers. But we would like to  
4 see a pathway to those jobs for the lowest income  
5 Americans--New Yorkers. [coughs] The Parks  
6 Department has also stopped accepting WEP. Parks has  
7 a Parks Opportunity Program, we are glad they are  
8 working to improve the training provided in the  
9 program. One career pathway from Parks could be to  
10 the New York City Department of Environmental  
11 Protection positions, which will be hiring thousands  
12 of people to maintain new greenways, and storm water  
13 management systems.  
14

15 While this progress is good, according to  
16 HRA's own website, every week 11,854 people are being  
17 mandated to a WEP assignments. We know that  
18 Commissioner Banks has a plan to create a clerical  
19 training program at HRA, but there are still close to  
20 500 WEP workers there. There has been an increase in  
21 people assigned to the Department of Sanitation.  
22 While some people who are doing WEP assignments, are  
23 told about a test to apply for a permanent position,  
24 many were not aware of this or do not want to work in  
25 Sanitation. The Department of Sanitation needs a

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1 plan for how to shift relying on over 1,000 unpaid  
2 workers. The MTA and DCAs are the other two agencies  
3 with the largest number of WEP workers. The DCAS  
4 Commissioner said at a hearing a couple of weeks ago  
5 that she is waiting for HRA before making a plan.  
6 There are almost 1,000 WEP workers at her agency.  
7 There needs to be a plan of how to replace those  
8 workers with paid positions, and the people who have  
9 been doing the work deserve a chance at those jobs.  
10

11 MTA in the past has hired a small number  
12 of the WEP workers, but many people have worked  
13 cleaning trains and platforms without pay believing  
14 that after sometimes years they will be hired. Some  
15 discovered that missing one day for being sick or a  
16 mistake by HRA can cost their chance, when the  
17 reality is they were not going to be hired. This  
18 exploitation must stop. HRA could and should stop  
19 sending people to WEP assignments tomorrow. Yes,  
20 they must create new systems, but there will be more  
21 pressure on these agencies relying on the workers if  
22 they were not there. And people needing help could  
23 be reassessed to determine what would actually help  
24 them obtain permanent employment instead of being in  
25



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an exploitive waste of time program of WEP. Change  
is coming, but how long must we wait? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

MALE SPEAKER: Good evening, Chairman  
Levin and everyone else who is left. First of all, I  
to, too would like to commend Commissioner Banks and  
his staff for the monumental job that they have done  
in terms of affecting positive change. However, I  
think now at this time we are at a critical time  
where we are confronted with the opportunity to  
influence and to bring about something that can  
immediately affect the lives of thousands. And  
ultimately lay groundwork by creating the steps  
necessary to alter communities and the consciousness  
of sense of loss and dignity and hope. To give  
people and opportunity to provide for their families,  
for themselves and to be contributing members in good  
standing to society, reflects the inner most desire  
of so many immigrants, the poor, and middle-class.  
Who look for the freedom to stand where others have  
stood, and to become self-sufficient, educated,  
healthy and prosperous. Right now, that opportunity  
exists, but we need not only Commissioner Banks'  
efforts, we need the effort of the Mayor, of the

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Office of the Mayor. We need the Mayor to indicate to all City agencies that it is a preference that should be preferred or extended to those people who have been providing services in their agencies for many years, and have yet to be recognized or really paid. We should create pathways in City agencies for people who are willing and capable of doing the work needed. And have already proven it with years of non-paying WEP assignments. People who are good enough to labor for free at DCAS, Sanitation, MTA and multiple other city agencies, should have access to those positions. We need the City to support workers' cooperatives, small businesses, entrepreneurial activities, and job training programs that leads to meaningful employment. The City can use its billion dollars of purchasing power to incentives--incentives and leverage of corporations and unions to help with apprenticeships and entry level employment opportunities. That's what we're looking for.

So just to, you know, sum it up because it's also in the rest of my testimony, once again we're looking for pathways to employment. We're looking for people to be provided the opportunities

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1  
2 that have already been in some of the agencies to be  
3 given a change of getting real jobs. And when we're  
4 talking about if they're qualified going thorough an  
5 interviewing process, we're not talking about  
6 bypassing. But we're talking given the opportunity  
7 to prove themselves. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

9 MELINDA NIMMONS: Good evening,  
10 Commissioner Levin and everybody else on the panel.  
11 I'm sorry I didn't have a print copy for you. I just  
12 wrote it up right quick for you. I'm work with CVH,  
13 Community Voices Heard, and we are trying to get  
14 employment for the people that are on public  
15 assistance and get salary in the place of a WEP  
16 Program. There are a few basic issues that I would  
17 like to highlight my concerns as briefly as possible.  
18 I appreciate what little help and/or assistance that  
19 I'm receiving currently from the HRA. I would--I  
20 would have absolutely nothing besides three degrees  
21 in the field of business. My previous job experience  
22 working in law offices, and several administrative  
23 business settings. I have been faithfully searching  
24 for stable. I have--excuse me--I have been  
25 faithfully searching for stable--a set stable source

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of income. Trying to obtain a job is a job within  
itself. I have been practicing with any and all of  
the sources and programs that are available.

I am still unemployed after six years of  
losing my job with the Bronx D.A.'s Office. And  
attending college--currently attending college to  
obtain my bachelor's in the business management and  
HRA fields. I decided to continue my education for  
several years: To get out of the congested and  
stressful situation that I have been--that I have no  
other choice than to live in because I would never be  
able to survive in a shelter. I visited a shelter  
the other night, but to be in a shelter is like being  
in the subway. everybody looks like a panhandler and  
a homeless person. And it's not a beautiful sight  
and I can't live there. I go to the college show the  
individuals that I reside with that I'm attempting to  
improve myself in my situation and give them their  
space. My attending school is also another way to  
relieve and try to avoid stress. [bell] I must  
endure as the stress as a--the stress that I must  
endure as an HRA recipient. If there are positions  
for the WEP workers 9:00 to 5:00 in the city jobs,  
why can't we get salaries?

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY  
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AND THE COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE 389

1                   They love me when I'm working for free,  
2  
3   but when I start talking about salaries then there's  
4   issues. I'm always working hard to find living  
5   quarters on my own. It's impossible to be able to  
6   afford an apartment without a job. I have been  
7   searching and applying for affordable housing. I  
8   received one response stating that working applicants  
9   are their priority. If you have a job and you're  
10   working, you should be able to have an apartment..  
11   And I think people that don't have a job should be a  
12   priority. To make a long story short, without a  
13   source of income, and nowhere to live makes it  
14   difficult for me to study, and obtain my bachelors.  
15   Thank you.

16                   CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

17                   JOSEPH WIMPA: Good evening. Thank you  
18   for your time. Excuse my voice. I had surgery and  
19   they removed my voice box. I'm a member of CVH and  
20   also a WEP worker. [coughs] I hurt on a WEP  
21   assignment standing a 12-foot ladder. I fell against  
22   the wall and smashed my spine. I had three surgeries  
23   front and back and so did I tore my rotary cuff.  
24   Nothing is in place if you get hurt. But they tell  
25   you to do whatever they--whatever they want. When I

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1 got hurt this whole--and they probably lying--because  
2 I saw eight people do it because I brought in the  
3 documentation. They just gave me the runaround,  
4 excused me, and then go back to a WEP assignment.  
5 And they find out I can't use my hands, and I can't  
6 walk. Oh, well, maybe you've got a different type of  
7 doctor. I'm living my own personal horror story.  
8 The problem is there are thousands of others that  
9 have got their personal horror. Every which way I go  
10 it's no. I was in school for three days, and the  
11 center too me out because they said no this is back  
12 to training--I mean back to work not training.  
13 Basically, I didn't get the money if I'm going to  
14 school. I had a lawyer, which was basically no good,  
15 but when he found out that I was entitled to  
16 compensation time ran out. Because people look me  
17 dead in the eye and oh, you're a WEP worker. You're  
18 not entitled to compensation.

19 I'll be quick. What was heard today and  
20 said today sounded really good, but I'm at the  
21 bottom. But, I'm at the bottom. I'm at the bottom  
22 of the barrel. People on top don't come down to the  
23 bottom of the barrel. People say, Oh, the system is  
24 broke. I laugh because if you think the system is  
25

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WITH THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES  
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1 broke you're delusional. The system is designed to  
2 do what it's doing. People like me no voice. People  
3 like me you do what you're told, and that's it. That  
4 system need to be vamped and redone over. People are  
5 hurting like me. What I got? I ain't got a damn  
6 thing to live for? Yet, people keep pushing me,  
7 stepping on me. Well, I'm trying hard to get under  
8 their foot. I need help. Not just me but there are  
9 thousands of others. We're here today to try to find  
10 a way. The things that were said earlier, oh, that  
11 sounded good, but let's see if it's happen because  
12 I've been lied to so many times. People looked dead  
13 in my eye, and I'm just saying pray to God this man  
14 is a man of his word. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, sir.

17 MICHAEL HENTZ: Good afternoon, honorable  
18 members of the Council. I apologize for not having a  
19 prepared presentation. I promised Council Member  
20 Levin that I would have some documentation, and I--  
21 I'm going to, you know, fulfill that. About this  
22 time of the day in 2007, I would be getting ready to  
23 board the train, Metro North, to head up to my--the  
24 parking lot up in Cortlandt Manor in Westchester to  
25 get in my car and drive to my home up in Westchester.

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY  
WITH THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES  
AND THE COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE 392

1 I found myself in 2011 living in that car. Due to  
2 circumstances beyond my control, I found myself  
3 homeless. And that's when I started to become  
4 political. Until then I was living a casual life,  
5 and I was never political. But as most of these  
6 people here have testified, the--the programs the  
7 grandest programs and the testimonies that we've  
8 heard from the Commissioners of DHS and the HRA, they  
9 sound very, very good. But, the perspective is from  
10 the top. They--and what I'm trying to make aware to  
11 the Council Members is that there's another  
12 perspective. There's a perspective from the bottom  
13 that should be addressed. I was impressed  
14 particularly by the Commissioner of the HRA Steven  
15 Banks' statements that they were eliminating the  
16 backlog of the fair hearing requests. I found that  
17 very, very impressive, but not in a positive way. I  
18 plan to mount a legal challenge in Federal Court to  
19 the means and message by which they're eliminating  
20 this backlog. I find that I'm repeating the same  
21 challenges that I--that I brought to the courts back  
22 in 2011 when I also ordered to join one of these work  
23 programs in order receive public assistance. That's  
24 not what the law reads. That's not what the law



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1 says, and today I find myself in the same--the same  
2 situation. I'm quoting the Supreme Court that ruled  
3 on the Due Process Clause in the Fourteenth Amendment  
4 to the United States Constitution. It requires an  
5 evidentiary hearing before receiving of certain  
6 government benefits, particularly welfare, can be  
7 deprived of such benefits. If the court has denied  
8 offering benefits to an eligible applicant they may  
9 deprive that person of the very means by which to  
10 live.  
11

12 Tomorrow I have to attend a fair hearing.  
13 [bell] Prior to this I had a fair hearing on the  
14 same issues that I am going to attend to--to try to  
15 address tomorrow. I received a letter notifying me  
16 that the fair hearing had been--I forgot the--had  
17 been disposed of because the agency found no-- I  
18 could read it, but I'm not going to tie--tie up the  
19 Council and the other people's time. The fair  
20 hearing had been disposed of. My rights to due  
21 process, the Constitutional right to due process had  
22 been just totally dissolved. And this seems to be  
23 the solution that HRA put in place to clear the  
24 books. I don't think that this is going to solve any  
25 problem. It's not going to solve the homeless

1  
2 problem. It's not going to solve public assistance  
3 problems. It's not going to help people transition  
4 from homelessness to public assistance back to a  
5 productive member of society. I've been through  
6 every one of the programs, the DHS programs, public  
7 assistance programs. And I've been on the  
8 adversarial side since day one. I'd like the City  
9 Council to sort of look at the bottom if they would  
10 take the time to. The glowing reports and policies  
11 that we saw in the Power Point presentations are very  
12 attractive, are very seductive, but they don't  
13 reflect the reality of life in the system. Thank you  
14 very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Hentz.  
16 Thank you to this entire panel for your insight and  
17 constructive testimony. We greatly appreciate your  
18 patience--

19 MICHAEL HENTIZ: [off mic] [interposing]  
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --as well as the time  
22 that you've taken to present a very compelling case  
23 to this committee, and we look forward to working  
24 with all of you in the--in the months to come. So  
25 thank you. Folks, we have two panels left. I just

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have to step out for one moment to make phone. I  
have to call my mom and I'll be right back.

[pause, background comments ]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: All right, thanks  
everybody. Mom is doing fine. Okay, next panel. I  
appreciate everybody's forbearance. We're closing in  
here. Rachel Sabella from the Food Bank; Lisa Levy.  
Lisa is--Lisa is here from New York Coalition Against  
Hunger. Eric Munson, Met Council; Yakima Pena,  
Community for Healthy Food, CHLVC. And then, just so  
you guys know, the next panel is Lynn Frederick,  
Holly from Mount Sinai, Sexual Assault and Violence  
Intervention; David Eng from Human Services Council  
of New York; Mallory Nugent from FPWA; and Marianne  
Yang from Brooklyn Defenders. I remember that  
Brooklyn Defenders and FPWA and Mount Sinai and Human  
Services Council got called up last this time. So  
I'll make sure that it won't happen again. So we're  
going to rotate you guys to the front of the next  
hearing. But we appreciate you--your patience. So,  
okay. Hi, everybody. Lisa, you're up.

LISA LEVY: Okay. Hi. I'm Lisa Levy,  
Director of Policy Advocacy and Organizing at the New  
York City Coalition Against Hunger. [mic static]

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Sorry, I'll scoot this over. I'm testifying on behalf of the city's more than 1,100 soup kitchens and food pantries, and the approximately 1.4 million New Yorkers who live in households that can't afford enough food. I want to first thank Chair Levin for his work on behalf of people in need. As well as to the committee for allowing me to testify here today. One in six people in New York City is hungry. Nearly one in four of those is a child, and one in ten is a senior. Nearly every day I speak with people who rely on SNAP, and they tell me they run out of money before the end of the month, and they are forced to turn to food pantries and soup kitchens to make ends meet. These are people with jobs and kids in school. Some of them are disabled. They are of all backgrounds and races. Some of them grew up in New York and some didn't. But not one of them deserves to go to sleep hungry. They are not numbers, they are people. New York City's food pantries and soup kitchens faced an increased demand of 7% in 2014 on top of increases of 10% in 2013. Yet, 58% of these agencies suffer from cuts in combined government and private resources. Making matters even worse,

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federal nutrition assistant programs are suffering  
from the worst attacks in decades.

Even before the most recent SNAP cuts  
kicked in, our annual hunger survey provided hard  
data to prove what we see everyday, still soaring  
hunger. 92.7% of New York City's food pantries and  
soup kitchens reported that they were being impacted  
by SNAP cuts. Taken together the Healthy Hunger-Free  
Kids Acts and cuts FONDO [sic] cuts reduced SNAP by  
nearly \$14 billion with many reductions going into  
effect as of November 1, 2013. In New York City, the  
average household SNAP benefit were cut by \$19 a  
month equaling a \$228 in groceries per year. The  
amount of SNAP benefits per meal in New York City was  
reduced from the paltry level of \$1.70 per meal in  
August 2013 to even smaller \$1.60 per meal in August  
2014. Partially because the benefits were less  
adequate, fewer New Yorkers applied or re-applied for  
SNAP. The rolls declined by 125,487 people in the  
City during that year. As a result of both  
reductions and average benefits amount, and the drop  
of overall caseload, low-income New York City  
residents will receive an estimated \$426 million less  
in Federal SNAP funding in 2014 than 2013.

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Since his appointment, Commissioner Banks started making massive reforms providing exactly the competent--the kind of competent progressiveness that Mayor de Blasio promised. The agency is now treating low-income New Yorkers and the advocates who represent them as trusted partners, not feared adversaries. Unfortunately, there were 1.87 million recipients of SNAP in New York City last year. According to the New York City Coalition Against Hunger Estimates, there were approximately 600,000 eligible New Yorkers not receiving SNAP. While we recognize this prediction is difficult to be precise, we also are aware of that there is a gap between the number of public assistance recipients and those who receive SNAP even according to HRA's own fact sheets. Which means that HRA must do a much more effective job in outreach.

Here are some--we recognize that a bureaucracy of HRA's size change needs still to come. Here are some suggestions. We encourage the continuation of the HRA engineered update that they have begun. We recognize--we specifically recommend that HRA continue to improve their on-demand interviews for re-certifications. We request

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expansion for easy access, Access NYC Mobile Document upload program and other methods so that claimants can submit documents and reduce the chance that documents are lost as well as expedite application re-certification process. And we also request that the Drop Box system be improved.

In order to support organizations that NYCAH works with, food pantries and soup kitchens that fill the gap when SNAP runs out, we request that the City Council Baseline funding for EFAP. Over the last year, New York City has made progress in the fight against hunger because we have made a concerted effort to do. New York City Coalition Against Hunger acknowledges that effort as it is society's duty to care for the most vulnerable. Though continued effort--through continued effort, New York City will continue to be more effective at assisting those in need. Thank you.

RACHEL SABELLA: Good evening. My name is Rachel Sabella, and I'm the Director of Government Relations at Food Bank for New York City. I know it's been a long day, but I especially want to thank Chairman Levin and the staff here for ensuring that every single person was able to share their story. I

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think we heard a lot of powerful messages, and we're really grateful for that opportunity. You have my written testimony. There's a lot of policy recommendations in there. There are some good facts. There is even a map. I look forward to meeting with you about that, and sharing that information with more of your colleagues. But the one point I want to leave you with today that approximately 1.4 million New Yorkers rely on emergency food programs. They have to go to a soup kitchen. They have to go to a food pantry. We want to see improvements to that program. I appreciated your questions to Commissioner Banks. We are encouraged by some the-- by potential changes in the movement that can happen. We are asking that the baseline food funding for EFAP be increased to \$14.4 million. I think it's really important to recognize that when the pantry shelves are bare, there is no other food for somebody. And we want to make sure that that doesn't happen. And I was especially encouraged by his comments regarding changing the system. We very much advocate for the system of choice for providers, and we hope to see that moving forward. So thank you very much for your



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time. We look forward to working with you, and I  
think I did pretty good on time. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I think you did. It  
jus beat you by a couple of seconds.

RACHEL SABELLA: [off mic] Well, it's a  
quirky day. [laughs]

YAKIMA PENA: Good evening. Thank you  
for considering this testimony for Community for  
Healthy Food request for City Council citywide  
discretionary funding. My name is Yakima Pena. I  
work for Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation  
as a Senior Project Manager. And Community for  
Healthy Food New York is a new and innovative  
approach to expand access to affordable healthy food,  
and for New York City's neighborhood who have a  
really challenged internal food access. And also  
those communities are really vulnerable to  
preventable diseases related to food eating behavior.  
The program is implemented for community-based  
organizations, which are Cypress Hills Local  
Development Corporation in Cypress Hills, East New  
York. Also New Settlement Apartments in Mount Eden,  
Bronx, as well as Northwest Brooklyn Housing  
Development Corporation in Bedford-Stuyvesant in

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Brooklyn, and West Harlem Group Assistance in West  
Harlem.

Also, we serve some of the Queens  
neighborhood as well. These program partner as are  
embedding healthy food in their community development  
work through resident outreach, nutrition education,  
cooking education classes as well as creating and  
improving healthy food outlet, and generating food  
sector jobs. Through Cypress Hills Healthy City  
we've helped on several work-related to each  
community residents how to grow their own food  
through community workshops--community gardens.

Also, we help provide budget and education sessions  
for people in order to teach them how to use and  
stretch their food dollar. And also, we provide some  
health screening to city senior center affordable  
housing and building and local schools. And the most  
important, we work with this platform of Cypress  
Hills Shelter [sic] which provides service to 500  
children and their family. And basically, we  
increase healthy food options that is served in those  
childhood facilities and also to teach their parents  
how to provide meal improvements. Thank you very  
much.

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AND THE COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE 403

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

ERIC MUNSON: Thank you, Chair Levin and Committee for inviting me to testify today. My name is Eric Munson, I'm Chief of Staff at Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty. As you know, for more than four decades Met Council has supported and championed families, seniors and adults living in poverty and near poverty. Met Council provides immediate assistance to New Yorkers in crisis, and also pathways to self-sufficiency both directly and through grassroots Jewish Community Council Network in client's neighborhood right where they live. In the fight against poverty we serve immigrants, seniors living on fixed incomes, the un and under-employed and all others in need. And as an organization founded on Jewish values, we serve everyone regardless of race, religion or ethnicity. Support from New York City Council enables our case workers to assist the City's poor and near poor in addition to individual member items for food, social services and Metropair programs in Met Council were supported through the following three City Council initiatives: First, ACES or Access to Crisis and Emergency Services, which supports our social

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services program. Handyman services, which supports Project Metropair at Met Council, through which we provide handyman services in senior's homes to enable them to age in place. And finally, \$268,000 for the Dove Initiative for our Family Violence Program. So we respectfully request that the Council sustains these funding streams from the Council in Fiscal 16, and in addition as part of our Holocaust Survivor Networks, we've also requested a million and a half dollars to start a new survivor initiative in the Council. So, I'm not going to read the pamphlet that was attached to my testimony with all of our service numbers. You can read those yourself. I would say despite the small font that the numbers are really big and we're really, really excited with our staff.

And I won't read the rest of my testimony here, which basically describes all of the major changes that we've made in the Council to improve service delivery. But I will just add that when it comes to improved service delivery at Met Council, it's all boiled down to the increased staff and staff time that we've spent out in the community. We've hired really the best direct line staff in the city and I think you've heard from many of them already.

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1 But in our Social Services Department, we've created  
2 an Ombudsperson to deal with Geriatric Services,  
3 Susan-Moritz. It's a name you should get to know  
4 because she's really incredible. Holocaust Services  
5 we've also hired someone to do that focused work at  
6 our agency. Two people in our Family Violence  
7 Program; additional handymen for Project Metropair,  
8 and we're currently in the process of populating yet  
9 another affordable housing development in the Bronx  
10 with 1,777 units of affordable housing in the city.  
11 So, we're really excited about all these things.  
12 Thanks.  
13

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.  
15 I though you were going to say something. How many  
16 units did you say?

17 ERIC MUNSON: 1,777.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So I thought  
19 you were going to say that's how big the development  
20 was. So that's--

21 ERIC MUNSON: [interposing] No, it's  
22 1,777.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --a big development.

24 ERIC MUNSON: Yeah, we are one BOD. [sic]  
25

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But thank you very much. I appreciate the work that all of your agencies do in ensuring that people have access to quality food, and that no family or no child goes hungry in New York City. It's the network of providers that makes it happen. So we greatly appreciate all of your work, and thank you very much for taking the time out of your day to be here and to stay for the public testimony portion. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, the last panel. Marianne Yang, Brooklyn Defenders; Mallory Nugent, FPWA; David Eng, Human Services Council of New York; and Lynn Frederick-Holly, Mount Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, yes. I'm sorry. Somehow that got--I'm sorry. Michael Jackson, Bronx Defenders. Sorry. We got you here. I'm sorry, guy. My fault. I hope I didn't--if there's anybody else that's here that I missed, you know, misplaced the slip, come on up.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Oh, the light has to be on. Is the light on, on your mic? Nice.

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MARIANNE YANG: Thank you. I'm Marianne Yang. I'm the Immigration Practice Director of Brooklyn Defender Services. And together with the Legal Aid Society, Bronx Defenders, BDS serves as assigned counsel under the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, NYIFUP, which is our country's first public defender system for immigrants facing deportation. We thank the City Council for having made NYIFUP a reality, and we're here to ask for your continued support into the coming year. Today, with the City Council's leadership, this city can say that no New York Family will have a loved one locked up or deported simply because they cannot afford an attorney. And with New York's leadership, we have cities such as Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles looking to mount replication efforts. And more than a dozen cities making inquiries to follow suit.

You know, without NYIFUP, detained New Yorkers would face deportation in a complex system that without a lawyers results in 97% of people basically being deported. With NYIFUP, we will provide high quality deportation services to more than a thousand New York immigrants this year.

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Pursuing NYIFUP's primary goals which are to keep families united, and to keep communities strong. Our clients come from really all across our large and diverse city. We've got an appendix that we attached to my written testimony, and it shows that our clients so far have hailed from 48 of the 51 Council Districts in New York City. Really, it's a citywide issue.

So the preliminary data from NYIFUP's pilot phase of 190 cases in Fiscal Year 2014 show what a critical difference NYIFUP has made to New York's immigrant communities. February numbers show that NYIFUP's pilot has results in a 69% trial win rate, meaning our clients win their cases. And it has also showed that 42% of our clients are being reunified with their families whether at the end of the case win, or because they secured their release pending the outcome of the case. We can with this data and others working together with the Institute of Justice tell you that we can project an increase in the percentage of immigrants who will win their right to remain the United States to 1000% compared to the 3% success rate that a study [bell] has found would result otherwise.



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One final note is that as you consider funding NYIFUP into the future, immigrant enforcement levels frequently change. It's really they change in both directions. It could be high in one year and lower the next year. It's hard to predict where you'll land in any given year. But to maintain stability for the program, and to make sure it's a reality and a success while at the same time allowing for flexibility for this city to meet emergent immigrant legal service needs, we're asking for the continued funding rate of \$4.9 million into next year that allows just that. We will continue our priority of representing detained people into deportation proceedings. But in any given year where there are emerging legal needs like the one coming up where the Federal Government's--President's Executive Action Announcement for expanded deferred action for childhood arrivals, and deferred action for parents of citizens and lawful permanent residents. Where you see that need, you can always see NYIFUP as a partner and responding nimbly. And reacting in ways that would make this city one of the most robust immigrant resource legal service cities in the country. Thank you. Next--next to me is Mr.

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Michael Jackson who is one of NYIFUP clients and he's here to give you his testimony today.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much for your testimony and for the work that you do.

MICHAEL JACKSON: My name is Michael Jackson. I was an immigrant in the United States when I was nine years old with a Green Card. I reside in Hollis, Queens at 10 PS 134 Jamaica High School. In 2006, my mama's house went into foreclosure, and I was--I was homeless. I went to the shelter, and I caught a misdemeanor case for assault. And Immigration picked me up on that in September 2014. While incarcerated I wasn't able to afford a lawyer. This program provided me with a lawyer and a social worker. My lawyer Paige and my social worker Shane helped me with reaching family members and people that come while I was incarcerated. And if it wasn't for them, I would probably still be in detention. I'd probably be deported. While I was in detention, I was very miserable and depressed because I missed the holidays--the whole holidays. I couldn't spend time with my family or my daughter. I missed her second birthday. And I just came out around a month ago out

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of detention, and a social worker provided me with this program Fortune Society that helped ex-cons with additional training, and job assistance and housing and GED and stuff.

[pause, background comments]

MICHAEL JACKSON: Being out of detention I feel relieved and grateful for the opportunity to stay with my daughter because I never grew up with my father. So I didn't want my daughter to experience that experience without a father in her life.

[background comment]

MARIANNE YANG: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.  
Thank you for your testimony.

MICHAEL JACKSON: You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And if there is anything else you would like to add, feel free. We appreciate you be here and for sharing your story. It's very--

MICHAEL JACKSON: Yeah, my lawyer and my social worker was able to provide documents tot he judge to show that I'm not a bad person. It was just because I--I went through hard--hardship, and I didn't choose the right decision at the time because

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of instability, and that was very helpful to the judge to see that I wasn't a bad person. I just went through some hardship, and I didn't pick the right decision.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. I really, really appreciate your taking the time to be here today. Thank you very much. Thank you for your testimony.

DAVID ENG: Okay. Hello, Council staff and Chair Levin. [coughs] I know it's been a long day so I'm going to try to make this very brief and to the point. My name is David Eng. I'm here on behalf of the Hum Services Council, and we represent a wide variety of organizations that provide social services throughout the city. As you know, the social service sector has been delivering, you know, much needed government services to the community. But we've been facing a lot of challenges, you know, and that includes: Funding cuts; lack of cost of living adjustments; a lot of regulatory requirements that are counter-productive. And the sector has been due a substantial investment for a long time. Unfortunately, that hasn't happened and although there's been a heavy demand for human services, the

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1 funding for these programs and services has remained  
2 stagnant.

3  
4 So, what we're asking for is we're urging  
5 for a total increase 10% to the non-profit human  
6 service sector by 2016 with a 5% increase this fiscal  
7 year and another 5% increase next fiscal year. This  
8 is going to be very important for us, as you know,  
9 because due to inflation the cost of living in New  
10 York City is ever-rising. But, unfortunately, the  
11 wages for those initial service sectors isn't. And  
12 in order for us to, you know, provide quality  
13 services to the community, we also need that re-  
14 investment into the sector as well. So we hope that,  
15 you know, the City council and the legislators can  
16 work with us in make sure that there is adequate  
17 investment for our sector. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
19 and thank you to this panel for your testimony.  
20 Especially, Mr. Jackson, thank you for coming out.  
21 Welcome to City Hall and I wish you the best of luck  
22 with raising your daughter. I wish her many  
23 successes. So, thank you and thank you to this  
24 panel, and we appreciate your insight and your  
25 patience for waiting to testify here at the Council.

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We greatly appreciate your input, and we will certainly be taking that into account moving forward. And we look forward to working with all of you into a good era here in what--in term social services in New York City. And, I look forward to working with all of the providers and advocates as well as the Administration as we move forward to make this city a fair place, a better place, and a place that affords every citizen with the dignity that they deserve. So thank you very much, and thank you to everybody for your patience and your time, and with that at 7:19 p.m. the Preliminary Budget Hearing of the General Welfare Committee and 2016 Budget is hereby adjourned.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 5, 2015