

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,  
COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, AND  
COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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June 22, 2015  
Start: 12:05 p.m.  
Recess: 3:24 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E:

CARLOS MENCHACA  
Chairperson

MARIA DEL CARMEN ARROYO  
Chairperson

INEZ BARRON  
Chairperson

MATHIEU EUGENE  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Daniel Dromm  
Peter A. Koo  
Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.  
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Elizabeth S. Crowley  
Andy L. King  
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Margaret S. Chin  
David G. Greenfield  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
James Vacca  
Fernando Cabrera  
Jumaane D. Williams  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez

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

Malberto Alinde  
Sunset Park, Brooklyn

Stacie Evans  
Literacy Advisor  
NYC Mayor's Office of Workforce Development

Nisha Agarwal  
Commissioner  
NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Robert Smith  
Professor  
City University of New York, Baruch College

Roberto Guerena [sp?], Director  
Adult Literacy DACA/CUNY Language Immersion Program  
New York City College of Technology/CUNY  
Appearing for Dr. Leslee Oppenheim

Adriana Blancarte-Hayward  
Outreach Manager for Immigrant Affairs  
New York Public Library

Ariana Rosas  
Special Projects Associate  
New York Immigration Coalition

Lawrence Fish, Director  
Adult Education, Vocation Citizenship Services  
Shorefront YMWHA

Freddy Acevedo  
Turning Point Student

Irfan Ahmed  
Arab-American Family Support Center

Louis Welz  
Chief Executive Officer  
COJO Flatbush

Nelson Yu  
Director of Adult Education and Immigration  
Queens Community House.

Kevin Douglas  
United Neighborhood Houses of New York

Leah Aber  
Interim Chief Program Officer  
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow

David Hunt  
ESL Teacher

Anzardo Jennifer Valdes  
Senior Immigration Attorney  
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation

Sandy Myers  
Associate Director of Government Relations  
UJA Federation

Jocelyn Mendoza  
Student  
Make the Road New York

Sierra Stoneman-Bell  
Director of Adult Education  
Career Pathways at Make the Road New York

Maia Goodell  
MFY Legal Services

Margarita Guerros  
Staff Attorney  
New York Legal Assistance Group



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2 COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,  
3 COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, AND  
4 COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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2 [sound check, pause]

3 [gavel]

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [Speaking Spanish]

5 I am Carlos Menchaca, Chair of the New York City  
6 Council's Committee on Immigration. Before  
7 proceeding, I'd like to introduce the co-chairs of  
8 today's hearing, Council Member Maria Del Carmen  
9 Arroyo, Chair of the Committee on Community  
10 Development; Council Member Inez Barron the Chair of  
11 the Higher Education Committee; and Council Member  
12 Mathieu Eugene, Chair of the Committee on Youth  
13 Services. There are several hearings at the same  
14 time. We are going to be expecting them soon. I'm  
15 really excited that Council Member Del Carmen Arroyo  
16 is here with us today. Now, today our committee and  
17 our committees are holding a timely and important  
18 hearing on how our city is educating our immigrant  
19 communities. We will hear testimony from the  
20 Administration and advocates about the Adult Literacy  
21 Initiative, and the literacy portion of New York  
22 City's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival, DACA  
23 Initiative.

24 We know that language barriers and low  
25 literacy places a significant roadblock in our

1 communities' ability to achieve financial security,  
2 and that often it can prevent our residents,  
3 especially our immigrants from understanding their  
4 rights. Although literacy is not just an immigrant  
5 issue, we recognize that often it is the immigrant  
6 communities who are most affected. We are also--we  
7 also know that limited English proficiency makes it  
8 harder for parents to support their children  
9 academically and engage in school system. And for  
10 residents to communicate with the police, and  
11 healthcare professionals, and other critical issues  
12 affecting their health and security. Every day, New  
13 Yorkers labor across the city with little hope for  
14 advancement due to the--due to their limited English  
15 skills. 1.7 million New York City residents over the  
16 age of 18 lack English proficiency, a high school  
17 diploma or both.

19           At the same time, city funding for  
20 community-based adult literacy programs--again, I'm  
21 going to stress that. Community-based adult literacy  
22 programs were cut drastically during our most recent  
23 recession has not been restored to meet the need and  
24 the demand. Existing community-based programs are  
25 stretched beyond capacity with classes filling up as

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1 soon as registration opens. Additionally, at time  
2 when the U.S. Court of Appeals has decided to deny  
3 emergency stay for Deferred Action for Parents of  
4 United States Citizens and Permanent Residents, DAPA  
5 and Expanded DACA, New York City still has the  
6 potential to make meaningful investments to better  
7 the lives of immigrants with their access to  
8 literacy. We have the opportunity to take action  
9 before the legal case moves through the system and to  
10 support this population now, today. Our city's  
11 investment in adult education not only benefits the  
12 learners, but by extension it's benefits their  
13 families, our economy, our society as a whole.

15           While higher education is increasing  
16 necessary to achieve individual financial security  
17 and local economic growth. For many New Yorkers the  
18 pathway to post-secondary success has to start with  
19 basic education, English language literacy and High  
20 School Equivalency preparation. Obtaining even a  
21 high school degree produces economic and social  
22 returns to families and their communities. Median  
23 wages are 25% higher for adults who are able to  
24 complete high school or earn a High School  
25 Equivalency diploma, HSE. And helping adults finish

1  
2 their primary education better prepares them to  
3 enroll in training programs, pursue college or  
4 advance in their careers. And these investments pay  
5 off for the public as well. Every high school  
6 credential earned generated \$324,000 in benefits for  
7 the city through reduced reliance on public benefits  
8 and increased tax revenue for higher earnings. In  
9 New York City even anecdotal data has shown that  
10 adults with access to literacy programs have shown  
11 increases in job training, job retention, income and  
12 even in their participation in their children's  
13 schools.

14           Arguably, one of the most striking  
15 statistics has shown a 15% increase in New York  
16 State's DACA application rate, a benefit that is  
17 increasingly important during a time of uncertainty  
18 for our undocumented community. At the City Council,  
19 we are clear that a solution to this glaring resource  
20 gap--glaring resource gap requires real partnership  
21 between our legislative body and the Administration.  
22 And today, our communities hope to hear testimony  
23 from the Administration about the impact these two  
24 initiatives have had on our own communities, as well  
25 as our future plans that the Administration has to

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1  
2 ensure that our communities still has access to the  
3 resources they need. We also hope to hear from  
4 community advocates and affected individuals today  
5 about the experience of receiving services through  
6 the initiatives and any future needs the community  
7 still faces. I'd like to thank my staff--my staff of  
8 the Immigration Committee who helped put this hearing  
9 together, Catalina Cruz, Muzna Ansari, Ivan Huevanos,  
10 Crilhien Francisco and Vladimir Martinez. I now am  
11 going to hand it over to Co-Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you Mr. Chair  
13 and good morning. Good morning everyone. Welcome to  
14 City Hall on this beautiful almost end of budget day,  
15 right? Don't Tweet anything, please. [laughter]  
16 Thank you, Chair Menchaca, good afternoon and welcome  
17 to our joint hearing. I want to thank Council Member  
18 Menchaca for his leadership on this issue, and  
19 forcing us to come together on the last week of June  
20 to have a conversation that is long overdue given  
21 everything that is being planned in the  
22 Administration. I'm Maria Carmen Del Arroyo, Chair  
23 of the Committee on Community Development, and I  
24 would like to thank my colleagues, the Co-Chairs  
25 Barron and Eugene, and the members of the four

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2 committees for coming together to--to participate in  
3 this joint hearing today. And since it's a large  
4 hearing and I think we'll probably have quorum for a  
5 State since we have four large committees together.  
6 I will keep my comments brief.

7           The Committee on Community Development  
8 shares many of the concerns raised by Chair Menchaca,  
9 and we would like to hear the specifics from the  
10 Administration on the City's implementation of the  
11 various adult literacy programs that we fund in our  
12 city. In particular, this committee would like to  
13 better understand several issues. First, how many  
14 New Yorkers qualify for DACA or do we even know? But  
15 the--and--and the concern about how much common sense  
16 there is in a qualification process given the status  
17 of the individuals who have to engage government to  
18 receive the--the services that we can provide to  
19 them. Thirdly, whether the Administration has the  
20 capacity to handle the potential DACA applicants, and  
21 what options, if any, or services are available for  
22 those undocumented individuals who do not qualify for  
23 DACA. And I would imagine that those are many, and  
24 also need the services that we can provide in our  
25 city. We hope this hearing will allow the Council to

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1  
2 better understand some of the hurdles to employment  
3 faced by the city's immigrant community, and whether  
4 additional steps can be taken to improve access to  
5 effective language training programs. I want to  
6 thank my committee staff for their work in preparing  
7 for this hearing, Alex Paulenoff, my Committee  
8 Counsel to my left, Jose Conde, the Policy Analyst  
9 and Jessica Ackerman, the Fiscal Analyst and the  
10 Fiscal Analysts were all really, really busy these  
11 last few weeks crunching the numbers for our budget.  
12 Thank you all for your work, and now Mr. Chair, I  
13 have to excuse myself. I have to go vote in the  
14 Landmarks Committee across the street, but I will  
15 return.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. We've  
17 also been joined by Council Member and our other co-  
18 chair Mathieu Eugene from Brooklyn.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
20 Mr. Menchaca. Thank you. Good afternoon. Is it  
21 afternoon or morning? Good afternoon. My name is  
22 Mathieu Eugene, and I'm the Chairman of the Youth  
23 Services Committee. I'm so please to join today, the  
24 Committee on Immigration chaired by Council Member  
25 Carlos Menchaca, and also by the Committee of

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2 Community Development chaired by Council Member Maria  
3 Del Carmen Arroyo, and the Committee on Higher  
4 Education chaired by Council Member Inez Barron. New  
5 York City is such a diverse place, and we are blessed  
6 to be a city that celebrates all different cultures.  
7 New York in our neighborhoods have high immigration  
8 population, and as prior--as the prior Haitian  
9 immigrant, I'm supporting New York immigrants  
10 everywhere who are working hard so their families can  
11 have a better life. In order to ensure that everyone  
12 can work toward a better future, we must make sure  
13 that everyone has access to enriching opportunities,  
14 and that begins with offering English classes to  
15 everyone who wish to learn the language.

16           Without this labor [sic] of  
17 communication, immigrants live in fear everyday, and  
18 most of them worry about their legal status or that  
19 oppressive employers will not take advantage of them.  
20 The one equalizer in our community is education.  
21 Therefore, the need for other resources and services  
22 for the true medium for involving New York City  
23 residents is overwhelming. It is indisputable that  
24 our City of New York benefits when immigrants obtain  
25 quality and meaningful educational services as that

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2 is what enables and empowers them. And can lead to  
3 meaningful and primary opportunities, which in turn  
4 helps support the city's economy. Our own City  
5 Comptroller reports that just a few years ago,  
6 immigrants accounted for \$210 billion in economic  
7 activities in New York City, or about 31% of Gross  
8 City Product. Immigrants have built this great--this  
9 great nation, and immigrants continue to build and to  
10 bring up this good city on a daily basis.

11           Unfortunately, without also building  
12 English proficiency, [sic] immigrants often remain  
13 trapped in jobs that are failing to provide fair and  
14 livable wages. Because many are not comfortable or  
15 embrace that they will not be understood by their  
16 child--children's teachers, they are too often not  
17 fully engaged in their children's education.  
18 Additionally, without English proficiency, many of  
19 our immigrants may not qualify for any of the already  
20 affordable federal immigration relief, which would  
21 act as a temporary safety net as they're--they're  
22 transitioning into the workforce in the new nation.  
23 I could go on and elaborate about federal and city  
24 Immigration Initiative, past and present. But I  
25 really want to hear from our witnesses. I'm anxious

1  
2 to hear from the Administration and from those who  
3 are personally living through the situation. I want  
4 them to inform us of what's--what is working, what is  
5 not working in the world of other youth services.

6 [sic] To not do everything we can then to assure the  
7 best plan for education, our immigrants and just them  
8 and their families, but really the future of all New  
9 Yorkers. We are not alone. That we should know that  
10 and adapt that in our watch. I would like to thank  
11 my Committee Counsel Kimberly Williams and our Policy  
12 Analyst Michael Benjamin, and the wonderful staff and  
13 also my co-chairs who work hard to make this hearing  
14 possible. And especially, thank you to all of you  
15 for being here to testify, and to be part of this  
16 group in our public hearing. Thank you very much.  
17 Mr. Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Chair  
19 and I want to acknowledge that we have been joined by  
20 Council Member Williams, Council Member Maisel from  
21 Brooklyn, Council Member Chin from Manhattan and  
22 Council Member Crowley Queens. And now, we're going  
23 to hand it over now to our Co-Chair Council Member  
24 Barron from Brooklyn.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.  
3 Chair. Good afternoon. I would like to begin by  
4 thanking Council Member Menchaca for calling for this  
5 important hearing on the New York City Adult Literacy  
6 Initiative. I also want to acknowledge the other co-  
7 chairs, Council Member Maria Del Carmen Arroyo and  
8 Council Member Mathieu Eugene. In our regular budget  
9 meetings, we don't always have the opportunity to  
10 examine the broad impact of budget modifications on  
11 citywide initiatives that implicate multiple  
12 agencies. In this instance where the  
13 Administration's reconfiguration of the Adult  
14 Literacy programs offered in conjunction--in  
15 connection with the Deferred Action for Childhood  
16 Arrivals program. I'm glad that we have the  
17 opportunity to review the services the city provides  
18 before any of them sees cuts in this 2016 budget.  
19 The Committee on Higher Education joins this hearing  
20 as we have oversight over the City University of New  
21 York, which provides adult literacy programs on 14 of  
22 its campuses across the five boroughs. CUNY offers  
23 free English for speaker of other languages, basic  
24 education, pre-High School Equivalency, High School  
25 Equivalency, and GED classes. The classes are

1  
2 offered mornings, evenings and weekends on an ongoing  
3 basis.

4           Beginning in 2013, the City Council  
5 partnered with then Mayor Bloomberg to provide an  
6 additional \$4.3 million in funding to expand the  
7 seats available to these CUNY programs to assist DACA  
8 candidates in meeting their educational requirements.  
9 While this program continues at CUNY, I'm concerned  
10 that cutting the budget in other ESL programs will  
11 increase the demand at CUNY. And that the Council  
12 will be left to increase funding for the initiatives  
13 there. Public education is a civil right. It's part  
14 of the basic bargain programs that the government has  
15 with other people it governs. I'm always concerned  
16 about shifting the cost of such programs to the  
17 Council. I hope that this hearing sheds light on how  
18 the different parts of the city's integrated  
19 education initiatives fit together so that we as  
20 members can be better educated partners with the  
21 Administration. I would like to recognize the other  
22 members of the Higher Education Committee. I think  
23 Council Member Williams was here, and I would like to  
24 thank my CUNY Liaison and Legislative Direct Indigo  
25 Washington, and Higher Education staff, Policy

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2 Analyst Chloe Rivera, final--Finance Analyst Jessica  
3 Dodson, and Committee Counsel Jeff Campagna. Thank  
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you Chair  
6 and before we get into our first panel, I just want  
7 to also welcome our previous chair of the Immigration  
8 Committee, Council Member Dromm from Queens.  
9 Welcome, and just a little bit in Spanish, and we're  
10 going to go into our--our panel. [Speaks Spanish]  
11 With that, I'm handing it over to our first panel--  
12 our first panel Malberto Alinde. [sp?] And we can  
13 have you come over to the front, and get over to the  
14 desk. [pause] Norberto, right over here. Thank  
15 you. Thank you so much. First, you hailing from  
16 Sunset Park. Thank you so much. From Brooklyn and I  
17 know you're not--you're no stranger to our committee  
18 hearings, and so I welcome you back.

19 MALBERTO ALINDE: Hello, everybody. My  
20 name Malberto Alinde. I'm from Sunset Park,  
21 Brooklyn. I'm a graduate of Turning Point Education  
22 Center. My parents came here from Puerto Rico and  
23 they only spoke Spanish. Their English was very  
24 limited. I was born her, but in my household we only  
25 spoke Spanish. So, when I was around five years old

1  
2 until like eight years old I got made fun of because  
3 I didn't know how to speak English that well. Thank  
4 God for ESL classes, resources classes that I got to  
5 learn English pretty fast. So by the time I was in  
6 middle school, I was able to defend myself with the  
7 English language. When I grew up in Sunset Park it  
8 was a really rough neighborhood. It was drug  
9 infested and a lot of alcohol use. There was a lot  
10 of prostitution and single mothers were doing what  
11 they had to do to survive, to give to their children.  
12 By the time I got to high school, I--I joined a gang.  
13 I hung out with drug dealers.

14 I started selling drugs myself. I became  
15 part of a gang because I--I didn't have the family  
16 structure that I wanted to--the family structure that  
17 we ask for, that we should hope for. And they made  
18 me feel like it was a family, and they showed me how  
19 to make money, something I didn't really learn from  
20 my--from my peers. Even though it was illegal, it  
21 was a way for me to eat, buy clothing because I  
22 walked around holes in my sneakers. And, you know,  
23 the same clothes, dirty clothes. I didn't really  
24 have much. So, I got stabbed and I lost all hope  
25 because I lost the feeling to my right hand, and I

1 just stop going to school. I didn't know where to  
2 go, where I was going to wind up or anything. I  
3 started working dead-end jobs like security,  
4 bouncing, doing construction jobs, you know, odd  
5 jobs. In between that point to when I come--came to  
6 Turning Point, when I went to Turning Point Education  
7 Center, in between that a lot of my friends wound up  
8 doing a lot of time in jail like 25 years to life, 15  
9 years to life. You know, ten years.

11           And also, I have a few friends who also  
12 passed away from drugs or selling drugs. They--they  
13 got murdered or they overdosed. So then I stepped  
14 into Turning Point because I was tired of--I was  
15 tired of being with these situations. I was--it  
16 wasn't getting better. No matter how much drugs I  
17 sold, no matter what gang I was in, no matter what I  
18 was doing, it was--it was--there wasn't a future  
19 being that way. I seen me winding up in a box or in  
20 a cage. So I stepped into Turning Point, and they  
21 really helped me. [bell] They helped me gain my  
22 confidence. They helped me get my GED, and they  
23 helped me with my reading and my writing. I wasn't  
24 good at math. They helped me with my math, and I got  
25 a lot of help from them, and I got a lot of support

1  
2 from them like a family. They became my new family  
3 instead of my, you know, gang friends or drug dealing  
4 friends. And now I actually go to college, and I go  
5 to Kingsborough. I want to be a political leader, a  
6 community organizer for my community and I'm majoring  
7 in political science. And hopefully I go to Brooklyn  
8 College soon after Kingsborough, and after that  
9 Brooklyn Law School so I can help my community in  
10 Sunset Park and many more of the communities. Thank  
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Mr.  
13 Orlando, and thank you for your testimony and your  
14 courage and--and you--may you continue to--to succeed  
15 in your--in your future. Thank you so much.

16 MALBERTO ALINDE: Thank you. I will.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. And  
18 as, you know, as that--that testimony continues I'm  
19 just going to settle. I'm going to ask the  
20 Administration to come up and take the--the desk.  
21 Commissioner Nisha Agarwal and Ms. Stacie Evans from  
22 the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development.

23 [background noise]

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And we've also  
25 been joined by Council Member Koo from Queens.

5 LEGAL COUNSEL: I'm going to administer  
6 the oath. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
7 truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony  
8 before this committee, and to respond honestly to  
9 council member questions?

10 STACIE EVANS: I do.

11 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

12 STACIE EVANS: Before I start, one of  
13 those truths was that Norberto was a student of mine  
14 years ago. So it thrills me that he is here.

15 [laughs]

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: One big family.

17 STACIE EVANS: Good afternoon,  
18 Chairperson Menchaca, Chairperson Arroyo, Chairperson  
19 Eugene and Chairperson Barron and members of the City  
20 Council Committees on Immigration, Community  
21 Development, Youth Services and Higher Education.  
22 I'm Stacie Evans, Literacy Advisor in the Mayor's  
23 Office of Workforce Development. My job is to  
24 support, strengthen and expand New York City's Adult  
25 Education System. Thank you for the opportunity to  
speak with you today about education opportunities  
for adult immigrants. As a former adult literacy  
instructor program director for over 25 years in the

1 field, I thank the Council for its ongoing focus on  
2 adult literacy. In April, 2014, the Mayor  
3 established the Office of Workforce Development to  
4 coordinate the city's workforce initiatives. He  
5 convened the Jobs for New Yorkers Task Force to  
6 articulate Workforce system goals. From the outset,  
7 Mayor wanted to ensure that the city's annual  
8 workforce budget was being strategically invested in  
9 programs that would increase economic opportunity,  
10 improve job quality at the low end of the wage  
11 spectrum and deliver higher quality service by  
12 aligning agency resources.  
13

14           Achieving these objectives will increase  
15 stability and enable mobility for countless workers  
16 in New York City while providing businesses with the  
17 skilled workforce they need to grow and thrive in New  
18 York City. In November, the Mayor released *Career*  
19 *Pathways: One City Working Together*, which outlined  
20 ten recommendations to fulfill his workforce system  
21 vision. The Mayor's goal is to building the  
22 workforce system's coordination and capacity so that  
23 we are training 30,000 New Yorkers a year by 2020,  
24 building a strong resilient workforce supported by a  
25 robust and flexible array of education and training

1  
2 programs and services. Adult literacy plays an  
3 important role in the city's new vision for the  
4 system, which I will discuss in a moment. The  
5 Mayor's Office for Workforce Development is tasked  
6 with implementing the Mayor's Careers Pathways Plan.  
7 Working with 12 city agency partners as well as  
8 employers, labor, education and training providers,  
9 the Workforce Investment Board, philanthropy and  
10 community stakeholders to create a workforce system  
11 that more effectively meets the education, training  
12 and employment needs of city residents.

13 WKDEV's goals are to build skills  
14 employers seek, improve job quality and increase  
15 system and quality coordination. Achieving these  
16 goals will increase stability and mobility  
17 opportunities for city residents while providing  
18 employers with the homegrown talent they need. WKDEV  
19 adds value to the system realignment process through  
20 our focus on coordination, aligning city workforce  
21 programs around the common goal of improving job  
22 outcomes and providing higher quality services that  
23 speak to the specific needs of different populations.  
24 The problem the city faces is large. 1.7 million New  
25 Yorkers over the age of 18 lack English proficiency

1  
2 or a high school diploma. Twenty-five percent of  
3 HRA's Back to Work participants test between 7th and  
4 10th grade level. Up to 30% of DYCDs have a school  
5 youth population who test between 5th and 7th grade  
6 level. The individuals need access to language and  
7 literacy programs in order to gain the skills that  
8 will enable them to obtain family sustaining jobs,  
9 pursue their career goals, and take a more active and  
10 integrated part in the life and forward movement of  
11 our city.

12           The Council has been an important partner  
13 in ensuring the availability of programs and services  
14 to meet these residents' education and training need.  
15 And we look forward to continuing this partnership.  
16 The current adult literacy landscape includes  
17 programs and services offered through the City  
18 University of New York, the Department of Education,  
19 the many community-based programs that contract with  
20 the Department of Youth and Community Development,  
21 and the city's three library systems. Funding to  
22 support those programs come from city, state and  
23 federal funding streams as well as the generous  
24 support from private foundations. In addition to  
25 enabling participants to more effectively navigate

1  
2 city systems and become more active community  
3 members, these programs are critical first steps  
4 toward college and career attainment and long-term  
5 employment success. Services offered include English  
6 for Speakers of other Languages, ESOL. These classes  
7 serve primarily immigrant youth and adult who need to  
8 develop their facility and fluency in English. Young  
9 Adult Literacy and Adult Basic Education. These  
10 classes provide basic skills instruction for youth  
11 and adults with reading and math levels below 9th  
12 grade.

13 High School Equivalency or HSE. These  
14 classes for youth and adults with 10th grade to 12th  
15 reading and math levels prepare students to take the  
16 TASC exam, formerly the GED, and receive their HSE  
17 diploma. Out of School Youth, or OSY, these programs  
18 for 16 to 24-year-olds offer a variety of services  
19 including ABE and HSE classes. Literacy Zones.  
20 There are 15 Literacy Zone projects in New York City.  
21 These programs are part of the statewide initiative  
22 to close the achievement gap in communities of  
23 concentrated poverty and high concentrations of  
24 families and individuals with limited literacy or  
25 English proficiency. Literacy Zones provide a

1  
2 continuum of literacy services from early childhood  
3 through adult education with services tailored to  
4 meet the needs of the community. There are excellent  
5 programs offering these services across the city.

6 Make the Road New York, for example, offers  
7 programming in Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island,  
8 including a Spanish Language HSE program and a  
9 community health worker training program.

10                   Riverside Language Program provides  
11 English language instruction to residents from across  
12 the city, and professional development to ESOL  
13 providers from across the city and state. The  
14 Fortune Society in Long Island City supports the  
15 academic advancement and successful re-entry of  
16 formerly incarcerated adults. In the Bronx, the Door  
17 runs the Bronx Youth Center, a program that has  
18 launched the basic education Tech Training Program in  
19 partnership with Priscolas. In Sunset Park, Turning  
20 Point, Lutheran Family Health Centers' Opportunities  
21 for a Better Tomorrow and the Center for Family Life.  
22 In Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development  
23 Corporation work together to provide a range of  
24 education, training and wraparound supports for the  
25 educational and career advancement for out-of-school

1 youth. The system serves roughly 80,000 New Yorkers  
2 at an investment of approximately \$85 million.

3 Through analysis of those numbers, we see that the  
4 lion share of adult literacy programming is supported  
5 by non-city sources.

6  
7 Programs administered through the  
8 Department of Education's Office of Adult and  
9 Continuing Education, for example, make up the  
10 largest piece of the adult literacy system. Funding  
11 for those classes comes primarily from the State  
12 Education Department's Employment Preparation,  
13 Education funding. Not from City funding sources.  
14 The Department of Youth and Community Development,  
15 DYCD, offers ESOL, ADE and HSE programs that are  
16 directly funded by the city. In FY16, DYCD projects  
17 serving more than 8,800 youth and adults in 95  
18 programs contracted through community-based providers  
19 in all boroughs. DYCD's program budget is \$24.4  
20 million. The Career Pathways model can help us serve  
21 adult learners more effectively, and support learners  
22 in moving more quickly through the system, and toward  
23 the achievement of their goals. The primary  
24 mechanism for that shortened time between program  
25

1 enrollment and education and employment outcome is  
2 Bridge programming.

3  
4           Coordinating the development and the  
5 implementation of Bridge programs is one of the key  
6 initiatives I'm focused on as Literacy Advisor.  
7 Integration of adult education with occupational  
8 training and post-secondary education through the  
9 implementation of bridge programs will increase the  
10 return on investment for both funders and  
11 participants. Bridge programs differ from  
12 traditional adult literacy programs. Their work  
13 extends beyond English proficiency and the attainment  
14 of a high school credential. Bridge programs prepare  
15 educational instruction with a workforce or career  
16 focus to connect low-literacy youth and adults to  
17 clearly defined education and/or employment outcomes  
18 such as HSE programs, college, occupational training  
19 or employment. Bridge programs have three core  
20 components: Sector focused basic skills instruction  
21 including partnership with employers and/or higher  
22 education providers. Strong hand-offs between the  
23 basic education provider and the destination program.  
24 And support services including college and career  
25 counseling and transition support.

1  
2           Integrated or contextualized education  
3 allows students with lower levels of proficiency to  
4 engage with job or sector focused material early.  
5 There's no need to complete their HSE before taking  
6 on that more specialized instruction. In this way,  
7 learners move toward education and employment goals  
8 concurrently. The flexibility built into the bridge  
9 model means that programs can be designed to serve  
10 learners at all levels. I created a health careers  
11 training program in Sunset Park, for example, that  
12 was developed for English language learners and low-  
13 level basic education students. The program led to  
14 industry recognized certifications, and positions as  
15 certified nursing assistants, pharmacy technicians or  
16 medical office associates. Bridge is an evidence  
17 informed program model. La Guardia Community  
18 College's Bridge Program was the focus of an MDRC  
19 research evaluation that highlights the value of  
20 Bridge.

21           La Guardia's GED Bridge Program, which  
22 has since grown and expanded into the College and  
23 Careers Pathway Institute, was designed for low-  
24 income individuals who did not have a high school  
25 diploma or GED. Key findings of the MDRC study

1 include stronger rates of program completion.  
2  
3 Students in the GED Bridge group completed the class  
4 at a significantly higher rate than students in the  
5 traditional GED prep class, 68% compared with 47%.  
6 Higher rates of GED exam success. Bridge students  
7 were more than twice as likely to pass the GED exam  
8 as prep class students, with 53% passing the exam  
9 compared with 22% of the prep class students. Higher  
10 rates of post-secondary enrollment. Bridge students  
11 were more than three times as likely to enroll in  
12 CUNY as prep class students. Our focus on Bridge is  
13 a focus on developing a system that supports life  
14 long learning and career advancement, making economic  
15 mobility a reality for residents with limited skill  
16 attainment. We are partnering in this work with CEO  
17 and DYCD who are developing the first city funded  
18 Bridge pilot, set to launch in FY16.

19           The program will work with 16 provider  
20 organization, and will reshape existing young adult  
21 literacy programs. CEO will also conduct a random  
22 assignment and evaluation of this pilot, and use the  
23 lessons learned to support the successful rollout of  
24 Bridge classes across the provider community. As  
25 part of the larger Bridge initiatives, CEO, CUNY and

1 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH  
2 COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,  
3 COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, AND  
4 COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

32

5 WKDEV have just launched Building Bridges, a month  
6 long professional development series on Bridge  
7 program design. A week ago, more than 125 staff from  
8 the adult education and training programs came  
9 together for the kickoff session. Bridge is the  
10 foundation of a strong career pathway. As such, we  
11 are committed to robust and intentional support of  
12 organization and agencies implementing Bridget. CEO  
13 is developing ongoing specialized technical  
14 assistance for agencies and organizations launching  
15 new classes. In closing, we look forward to working  
16 with the Council on our shared goal of creating and  
17 supporting education and training services for high  
18 need youth and adults. Thank you for the opportunity  
19 to address these committees.

20 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Thank you to  
21 Committee Chair Menchaca and the members of the  
22 Committee on Immigration, to Committee Chair Barron  
23 and the members of the Committee on Higher Education,  
24 to Committee Chair Arroyo and the members of the  
25 Committee on Community Development, and to Committee  
Chair Eugene and the members of the Committee on  
Youth Services. As Commissioner of the Mayor's  
Office of Immigrant Affairs, I work on policies and

1  
2 programs that promote the wellbeing of immigrants in  
3 New York City and facilitate the successful economic,  
4 social, and civic integration. Towards these ends,  
5 my office works on programs that support English  
6 language learning and educational opportunities for  
7 immigrants. I thank the Council for this opportunity  
8 to discuss this work.

9           The first program I want to discuss is We  
10 Are New York known as WANY. The Mayor's Office of  
11 Immigrant Affairs is the home of WANY, An Emmy award  
12 winning educational TV series that is based on true  
13 to life stories of immigrants making their way in New  
14 York City. Each episode teaches English and  
15 highlights different aspects of civic engagement so  
16 that individuals learn English as well as use  
17 important information about essential city services,  
18 and how people working across different communities  
19 can access resources and solve common problems. To  
20 complement the WANY episodes, MOIA has also developed  
21 a robust 10-week curriculum with a study guide and a  
22 facilitator's guide. WANY has been used widely  
23 throughout the city's adult education system to help  
24 tens of thousands of New Yorkers improve their  
25 English. In addition to offering videos and a

1  
2 conversational English curriculum, WANY also supports  
3 grassroots organizations within immigrant  
4 communities.

5           Community-based organizations, cultural  
6 institutions, labor unions and many other  
7 organizations have hosted WANY classes. Such a  
8 community-based approach to education and information  
9 sharing is consistent with the de Blasio  
10 Administration's overall approach to outreach and  
11 engagement. I am also happy for the opportunity to  
12 discuss the second program I want to cover in my  
13 testimony today, MOIA's DACA education initiative,  
14 which is a part of our larger local program to  
15 implement the president's Executive Action on  
16 immigration. MOIA is designing a model for this  
17 program in partnership with the Human Resources  
18 Administration, HRA, who is helping to administer it  
19 by a sustainable procurement process. One of MOIA's  
20 key priorities is to support legal and community  
21 services for immigrants at scale so that the maximum  
22 number of New York City residents can obtain safe,  
23 high quality information and assistance about their  
24 immigration options.

1  
2           In MOIA's work on Executive Action, we  
3 are designing and implementing models for connecting  
4 with immigrants who may be eligible for immigration  
5 relief under the current Deferred Action for  
6 Childhood Arrivals or DACA program. As well as  
7 immigrants who may be eligible for the Expanded DACA,  
8 which was announced by the White House last year.  
9 Or, the DAPA program for the Parents of U.S. Citizens  
10 and Permanent Residents, also announced by the White  
11 House last year as well as other forms of immigration  
12 relief. The DACA Education Initiative will refocus  
13 on immigrant New Yorkers who may be eligible for DACA  
14 and Expanded DACA, but cannot establish eligibility  
15 because they do not yet meet the educational  
16 requirement. Through this program, the city has the  
17 opportunity to improve access to educational and  
18 vocational programming and immigration legal services  
19 for some of the city's most vulnerable communities.

20           In New York City, as is the case in other  
21 municipalities across the country, the demographic  
22 reality is such that this initiative will not only  
23 help qualify individuals for relief, but also has the  
24 potential to support their economic advancement in  
25 the local workforce. Mayor de Blasio and the entire

1 Administration are firmly committed to help the  
2 thousands of youth and young adults who may be  
3 eligible for DACA, but for their need to enroll in  
4 educational programming as we implement our broader  
5 administrative relief program. We have learned from  
6 the City Council programs that was developed in 2012  
7 with the start of the DACA program, and now we're  
8 looking forward to working together to help move DACA  
9 eligible New Yorkers to participate more fully in the  
10 city's social and economic life. And first I'll just  
11 give a little bit of background on the executive  
12 action and the citywide response. On June 15th,  
13 2012, President Obama announced DACA. The program  
14 offers an opportunity for certain undocumented young  
15 people who meet the program's residence and  
16 educational requirements to obtain a work permit and  
17 gain relief from deportation.

19           New York City was estimated to have a  
20 large number of individuals who would be eligible for  
21 DACA. However, New York saw lower rates of DACA  
22 applications than we initially anticipated. In fact,  
23 according to the Migration Policy Institute, as of  
24 March 2014, New York State had a total application  
25 rate of 49% compared to the national total of 55%

1 among the immediately DACA eligible population. It  
2 failed to include both potentially eligible and  
3 immediately eligible populations meaning individuals  
4 who would qualify for DACA if they met the  
5 educational requirement in addition to those who  
6 already had met the educational requirement. Then  
7 the application rate falls to 37% in New York State.  
8 This rate is also the same rate of uptick across the  
9 country for the potentially eligible and immediately  
10 eligible individuals. A fact, which reinforces the  
11 observation made by practitioners nationwide that  
12 educational attainment is among the barriers that  
13 have contributed to the most low application rates.

15           In November 2014, President Obama took  
16 new steps to address our broken immigration system,  
17 and announced that he would use his executive  
18 authority to expand DACA and create another program  
19 to provide relief for the parents of U.S. citizens and  
20 lawful permanent residents. The expanded DACA  
21 program will increase access to the program by  
22 eliminating the age cap and reducing the period for  
23 which this population must provide their proof of  
24 residency. The President's executive action is  
25 projected offer relief to millions of undocumented

1  
2 immigrants nationwide. We estimate that in our city  
3 alone administrative relief will positively impact  
4 approximately 200 to 230,000 undocumented New  
5 Yorkers. Despite the entry of a temporary  
6 preliminary injunction on the implementation of  
7 Expanded DACA and DAPA, it remains a priority for the  
8 Mayor to prepare the city's coordinated response.  
9 MOIA is moving forward to pull together a large scale  
10 citywide response involving city agencies, legal  
11 service providers, and community-based organizations.  
12 The model will include a public education campaign,  
13 coordinated legal services delivery, mass outreach  
14 efforts in targeted communities, screenings for  
15 eligibility, legal service referrals and linkages to  
16 ancillary benefits such as IDNYC. As part of these  
17 efforts, we will incorporate the DACA Educational  
18 Initiative into the broader model for executive  
19 action. It is important to note that the federal  
20 ruling does not affect the existing DACA program, but  
21 came about in 2012. Individuals may continue to come  
22 forward and request an initial grant of DACA or  
23 renewal of DACA pursuant to the guidelines  
24 established in 2012. As such, it is even more  
25 critical that we continue to move forward with our

1 plans to conduct--to connect immigrants with legal  
2 services and access to educational and vocational  
3 training through our service delivery model including  
4 the DACA Education Initiative. Through this model,  
5 we seek to offer tailored educational and vocational  
6 training services directly to otherwise DACA eligible  
7 populations who need them. Our approach to the DACA  
8 and Education Initiative is informed by new research  
9 and data about the key challenges that face this hard  
10 to reach population. Since DACA was announced over  
11 three years ago, MOIA has been able to better study  
12 the program and understand the MOIA application rate  
13 among New Yorkers. In coordination with the Poverty  
14 Research Unit at the Mayor's Office of Operations,  
15 and ongoing conversations with community-based  
16 organizations and other partners in the field, we  
17 have found that the needs of the DACA population that  
18 have already applied are very different from the  
19 needs of individuals--individuals who have not yet  
20 applied for DACA, but are potentially eligible. For  
21 the purposes of today's discussion, when I referred  
22 to potentially DACA eligible individuals, I am  
23 describing those that meet the age and residence  
24 requirements of the 2012 DACA Program or Expanded  
25

1  
2 DACA, but do not currently meet the educational  
3 requirement. We estimate that in addition to the 75  
4 to 85,000 potential DACA recipients in New York City,  
5 there are approximately 24,100 New Yorkers who may be  
6 eligible for original and expanded DACA, but for  
7 their ability to meet the educational requirement.

8           According to the American Community  
9 survey data, as further analyzed by the Center for  
10 Economic Opportunity, we have found that potentially  
11 DACA eligible individuals are among the most  
12 vulnerable and isolated immigrants in our city. Many  
13 of these individuals are much older than most DACA  
14 applicants, between the ages of 25 and 34. According  
15 to a 2014 report published by the Brookings Policy  
16 Program, more than half or 54% of all DACA applicants  
17 that filed were under the age of 21. This is  
18 important because researchers have found that the  
19 older the individual, the more likely they are to  
20 feel unsafe by submitting an application for DACA.  
21 Moreover, compared to the immediately DACA eligible  
22 profile this population is more likely to lack  
23 English proficiency, have less than an 8th graded  
24 education level, and already be in the workforce. In  
25 fact, 82% of the potentially DACA eligible population

1  
2 is limited English proficient compared to the 43% of  
3 the DACA eligible total. And 72% of the potentially  
4 DACA eligible population is already employed in the  
5 workforce. This number is remarkably highly compared  
6 to the 57% of the working age population that is  
7 employed citywide. In terms of geography throughout  
8 the five boroughs, the vast majority, over 65% live  
9 in either Brooklyn or Queens and nearly a quarter  
10 reside in the Bronx.

11           Among the challenges facing legal  
12 services and education providers it has been  
13 incredibly difficult to engage these harder to reach  
14 individuals who may be eligible for DACA that are  
15 older and have significant gaps in their education.  
16 Through ongoing conversations with community leaders,  
17 we have been able to learn even more about this  
18 group's specific hurdles. For example, after their  
19 arrival to the United States, many arrived with an  
20 enormous amount of debt from migration trip, and  
21 subsequently went straight into the workforce. Many  
22 entered into survival jobs such as delivery work,  
23 house cleaning, low wage, restaurant and construction  
24 work and other occupations characterized by low pay  
25 and long hours that make it extremely difficult for

1  
2 workers to find time to attend classes. This in turn  
3 forces them to weigh the incentive of getting a two-  
4 year work permit through DACA against the fact that  
5 they are already working.

6           Finally, other than factors such as  
7 employment, parenting and other responsibilities,  
8 that pose high hurdles to returning to education and  
9 training programs, many individuals who are  
10 potentially eligible for DACA simply do not know that  
11 they may qualify for immigration relief. Given the  
12 lack of educational attainment, and older age, this  
13 population may not readily identify with the common  
14 dreamer profile. And as a result, may not self-  
15 identify as potentially eligible for DACA. When all  
16 of these factors are pulled together, it results in a  
17 population that is extraordinarily and uniquely  
18 difficult to reach. To address this challenge, MOIA  
19 will update the program design utilized by DYCD under  
20 the Council's 2012 DACA program, and tailor it to new  
21 research and data about this population. We are  
22 committed to fitting educational and vocational  
23 programming into the context of our broader executive  
24 action model.

1  
2           Through this approach we plan to connect  
3 literacy and other qualifying educational or  
4 vocational training directly to potentially DACA--  
5 potentially eligible DACA individuals instead of  
6 funding general literacy seats with the hope that  
7 DACA clients will come forward. Within this new  
8 model in addition to legal help, we will provide more  
9 tailored outreach, workforce and support services  
10 navigation and case management to assist individuals  
11 over--to overcome barriers to educational and career  
12 advancement. For outreach we will leverage the  
13 connections that the dedicated team of community  
14 organizers for IDNYC and Executive Action have  
15 established ,and are continuing to strengthen with  
16 trusted community groups, faith based institutions  
17 and other leaders in immigrant neighborhoods.  
18 Through these connections, as well as the larger  
19 outreach plan we are developing with community  
20 partners across the city, we can develop a targeted  
21 outreach strategy to reach individuals who may  
22 otherwise be very hard to reach.

23           We will also conduct a public education  
24 campaign that will incorporate messaging about the  
25 benefits of DACA, such as a work permit, a Social

1 Security number, eligibility for the earned income  
2 tax credit, a driver's license and Workforce 1  
3 services among other benefits. These outreach and  
4 marketing efforts can help direct individuals to  
5 education and legal services. Additionally, the  
6 educational programming must be specifically crafted  
7 to the potentially DACA eligible populations so that  
8 they not only receive the English or other  
9 educational and vocational programming that is  
10 necessary for DACA eligibility. But that they also  
11 receive the training and support they need to  
12 ultimately succeed in their integration and career  
13 pathways. To help individuals find and make time for  
14 educational courses, which may take months, while  
15 juggling work and personal responsibility, our  
16 proposed service model will feature stronger links to  
17 wrap around services such as case management,  
18 navigation support to help immigrants address  
19 barriers and get on a path to success.

21 As well as potentially using more  
22 flexible means of delivering instruction in  
23 traditional classroom programs. When New York City--  
24 with New York City at the forefront of national  
25 immigration reform and inclusion, we believe that the

1 city can spearhead this model for educational  
2 programming that will be positively transformative  
3 for potentially DACA eligible immigrants. Bringing  
4 individuals out of the shadow and providing access to  
5 work authorization, better jobs, potentially health  
6 insurance and other social benefits, will help  
7 address many facets of inequality faced by this  
8 population. MOIA looks forward to working with the  
9 Council, partners in community-based organizations  
10 and the advocacy community to continue learning about  
11 the needs of potentially eligible DACA New Yorkers.  
12 And how the City can better reach and serve this  
13 population. We agree on the critical importance of  
14 this work, and the city's role in lifting up this  
15 program. MOIA and the de Blasio Administration  
16 remain committed to enhancing the educational  
17 opportunities of immigrants and empowering them to  
18 succeed. Thank you very much for the opportunity to  
19 address these committees.  
20

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for both  
22 of your testimony, and we're going to go through a  
23 round of council member questions and I'm going to  
24 clock on that's five minutes. But I'm going to ask a  
25 few questions just to get us started. One, I'm going

1  
2 to just point out a couple pieces here that Mayor  
3 talked to the links between our communities that  
4 we're trying to outreach. The fear of the  
5 potentially eligible DACA recipients and the learning  
6 that you've done over the last two years for the--the  
7 big funding of \$18 million that was put out there.  
8 So in all that, can you now tell us of the vision?  
9 It sounds like we have--we have--we have all the kind  
10 of criteria for the work that's ahead of us. But  
11 really in this next version of funding and we're in  
12 the middle of budget season right now. But even just  
13 moving the budget season alone, and just kind of  
14 thinking about how the Workforce Development work  
15 that you see the administration realigning, and then  
16 what I want to add to that is HRA taking all the  
17 legal services out of DACA, and the evolution of DACA  
18 as an initiative for the city. How all that--we can  
19 just kind of clarify it with the--with the vision for  
20 the Administration as we understand the links between  
21 legal services and educational opportunities.

22 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Just kind of  
24 unpack that for this first.

1  
2                   COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Sure. So maybe  
3 I'll start. So the--with respect to the DACA program  
4 in particular, the--all of NYLAG and most of the  
5 legal services--civil legal services programs in the  
6 city are--are under HRA, and they have been a very  
7 good partner for us in a number of initiatives  
8 including Immigration legal services through the  
9 Executive Action Program. And so, to the extent that  
10 the Literacy Program Funding as well that I just  
11 spoke about is connected to the ability to get an  
12 immigration legal benefit like DACA, that's also a--a  
13 funding stream that HRA will help us administer. And  
14 in some ways the sort of DACA funding is part of that  
15 larger stream of literacy funding that Stacie spoke  
16 about. But it's a component of it that's really  
17 connected to the legal benefits with respect to DACA.  
18 And our visions for moving forward from what we have  
19 learned really from the last two years of DACA  
20 implementation is to really augment outreach in  
21 general for Executive Action right. As some sort of  
22 colleagues have said expand the funnel of who gets  
23 touched with information about Executive Action  
24 programs. And so our hope is through that outreach  
25 hit, you know, to be able to reach 200,000 or even

1  
2 more individuals with information. And then to be  
3 able to provide large scale on services. And that  
4 kind of targeted outreach, which we've done very  
5 successfully with IDNYC--

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] Uh-  
7 huh.

8 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: --is what we're  
9 going to use for Executive Action as well with the  
10 goal of being able to reach obviously the--the bulk  
11 of the individuals who may be eligible for programs  
12 like DACA and DAPA, but also these hardest to reach  
13 individuals. Be able to identify them as potentially  
14 eligible DACA recipients and then connect to  
15 education--educational programs they need.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So it sounds like  
17 outreach is an important piece. Who will be doing  
18 that outreach in--under your vision?

19 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Yeah. So we have  
20 been working very closely with a number of different  
21 community-based partners around the city to develop  
22 and outreach, and it will have a number of different  
23 components. One will be marketing and sort of public  
24 outreach in the manner of IDNYC with the transits ads  
25 and things like that, which MOIA will lead. In

1  
2 addition, we'll have our own outreach team, which  
3 started for IDNYC and has doubled. We'll focus on  
4 developing relationships in--in neighborhoods around  
5 the city, with faith communities, community-based  
6 organizations, et cetera. As well, we'll allocate  
7 our own staff resources to it. And then we'll be  
8 partnering with and contracting with community-based  
9 providers around the city as well to help with CBO  
10 navigation and outreach. So it will be very multi-  
11 faceted.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: What value do  
13 small based--small community-based organizations have  
14 in this plan of yours?

15 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: We are looking to  
16 really partner with all the different types of  
17 providers and community-based organizations that are  
18 in the city very comparably--again I think we've  
19 learned a lot from the IDNYC program--to make sure  
20 that we can reach the hardest to reach populations as  
21 well as folks across the board.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So, you know, one  
23 of the things that we've been hearing a lot in the  
24 shifts, I know there's a baseline conversation that  
25 we're happy--having--having right now with

1  
2 organizations that were previously funded by the  
3 Council. And now that the Administration and  
4 agencies are taking lead, have kind of left out a lot  
5 of smaller based community organizations. And so, I  
6 guess I'm trying--going back to that original  
7 question--how--how much do we value. We're already  
8 seeing a shift in focus for funding for organizations  
9 that can create that relationship with our vulnerable  
10 communities, and the immigrant communities. And so  
11 how does--how do you reconcile the kind of shifts  
12 that we're already seeing in the new changes for--for  
13 the Administration?

14 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Well, I think, you  
15 know, we're still in the middle of the budget  
16 discussions and obviously talking with Council about  
17 the sort of funding. So I, you know, I'm not totally  
18 sure about the changes that we're talking about, but  
19 certainly with respect to our Executive Action  
20 program there will be support in the outreach phase  
21 for a range of different community-based  
22 organizations. Which, you know, our support that was  
23 outlined in the Executive Budget for Executive Action  
24 with the largest investment by a local government in  
25 Executive Action in the country. And so, I think

1  
2 that's a signal of how much we value, and it has--the  
3 plan has been developed all along in consultation and  
4 close collaboration with community partners. And  
5 certainly depends on the participation of those  
6 community partners across the city for its-- But it's  
7 hard to say exactly whom and how it will be funded  
8 right now because we haven't finished the budget  
9 process, and haven't really unrolled the program.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Got it. Well, and  
11 I think we're going to get some more specific  
12 conversations, but I just wanted to open that up.  
13 And then I can get a little bit more on the Building  
14 Bridges Project. I'm really thinking--thinking about  
15 a particular focus on the outreach to immigrant  
16 providers or community members. And, if you could  
17 kind of talk a little bit about any--any kind of  
18 particular outreach that would--that's focused on the  
19 immigrant community.

20 STACIE EVANS: Sure. So the initial  
21 outreach to encourage organizations to send staff to  
22 participate in Building Bridges was done through CEO,  
23 through my office and through DYCD, and it went out  
24 and actually through Ginny [sic]. So it went out to  
25 the various folks who are connected to--to all of us.

1  
2 And we actually had many more people apply than we  
3 had room for in the training. So we may talk about  
4 doing a second--a second iteration. But right now we  
5 have 125 staff from a lot of different organizations  
6 going through, and organizations of all different  
7 sizes are going through that training.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And that's just--  
9 that's just the--the collective, but is there--is  
10 there anything specific with mandates for your  
11 communities, or is this--it sounds like an open call.

12 STACIE EVANS: It was an open call,  
13 absolutely. There wasn't a specific call to folks  
14 who are serving immigrants. However, because we know  
15 that immigrants are involved in pretty much every  
16 program that we're working with. Even if those  
17 programs don't offer English classes, immigrants are  
18 enrolled ABE classes, in agency classes. They're  
19 already connected in all of those programs. So if  
20 we're working with a broad swath of the adult ed  
21 provider population, we are probably serving a large  
22 number of immigrants.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Well, and--and I  
24 think what this is showing is not on the--the  
25 necessity for concentration to our immigrant

1 community, but also the measurement of success. And  
2 so, I'm hoping that we can work together to kind of  
3 build in--so--so we turn open calls into--into  
4 targeted calls for immigrant community-based  
5 organizations that don't always connect to the big--  
6 kind of the big agency calls that have huge impact on  
7 the community. And that goes back to the original  
8 question about how we value each of these  
9 organizations on the ground. That needs to be  
10 connected at every level. Not just in hopes of the  
11 big net, but really a kind of concentrated effort in  
12 connection. And as IDNYC continues to show us, is  
13 that whenever we do that--that work we--we land on--  
14 on years of foundation building in our communities.  
15 I think that's the main point that I want to--it's  
16 the first main point for today's hearing. But I am  
17 now going to hand it over to my Co-Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you, Mr.

20 Chair. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank  
21 you for being here and for your testimony. I'm going  
22 to focus my--my questions around transition and I--we  
23 have the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and the  
24 Mayor's Office of Workforce Development here. Who  
25 are your sister agencies, and you're not an agency.

1  
2 I'm trying to understand the difference between DYCD,  
3 HRA and the Mayor's Office of whatever. Who are your  
4 agencies that play a role in the integration of this  
5 transfer of adult literacy and legal services to HRA?  
6 Are they in the room with you?

7 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: So, yeah.

8 [laughs] We have HRA here present for--

9 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [interposing] DYCD  
10 is not here?

11 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: DYCD is not here.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. I want to  
13 know why? The--the--my biggest concern about the  
14 transfer of a function is always that transition and  
15 whether we can execute that transition successfully.  
16 And by successfully, I mean that those who would need  
17 to access services, do not see the difference. How  
18 much the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs  
19 oversight and power do you have in ensuring that HRA  
20 and DYCD are executing that transition successfully?

21 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Yeah, it's an  
22 excellent question.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: And who do you  
24 complain to if they don't.

1  
2           COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Yeah, so it's an  
3 excellent question, and we have been in very active  
4 conversation over the last several months with HRA  
5 and DYCD in this question of transition and how to  
6 ensure that there isn't a disruption of services.  
7 And what I can say with confidences is that those  
8 conversations are ongoing despite sort of who's here  
9 at the--at the hearing.

10           CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: I know so.

11           COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: And we have seen  
12 the successful transition of the legal services  
13 contracts, for example, and the effective baselining  
14 of programs like the Immigrant Opportunities  
15 Initiative, and I think that's a signal of sort of  
16 what's to come even with the transition of some of  
17 these DACA literacy dollars to HRA, which will help  
18 administer them. And in many ways, you know, I'm  
19 here and Stacie is here as a representative of the  
20 Administration as a whole. Not necessarily for our  
21 specific agencies, and whether it's IDNYC or it's  
22 other programs, we've had an incredible experience  
23 working very collaboratively on multi-agency large  
24 initiatives like this one. And I think successfully  
25 being able to come to the table together and ensuring

1  
2 that the outcome is effective. And that if a  
3 community has a concern, they can come to anyone of  
4 us, and we'll all sort of address it collectively.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: I, you know, not  
6 knowing who the boss is, is a problem for me, really.  
7 Because at the end of the day, people do what you  
8 inspect, not what you expect. And having such a  
9 critical service split between two different  
10 agencies, and at the end of the day on ground they  
11 seem to accomplish the same thing: Educate adults  
12 and be able to prepare them meaningful employment  
13 that's going to help them take care of themselves and  
14 their families. Because at the end of the day, that  
15 is what our responsibility is regardless of what  
16 status they have. You know, because I would imagine  
17 the 1.7 million that Stacie spoke about was the  
18 percentage of immigrants and that number. And how  
19 many are natural citizens who don't have the literacy  
20 capacity to be able to graduate from high school? So  
21 at the end of the day, the status or--I don't want to  
22 label it anything. They are people in need who need  
23 to access services at the community level, and I will  
24 echo Mr. Chairman's concern how is this transition  
25 going to roll out? And what is it going to look like

1  
2 in the community when someone comes into a provider's  
3 office to enroll for a program? When education  
4 programs are the biggest barrier for those who would  
5 potentially be eligible to apply for DACA? I'm  
6 concerned. I'm really worried and I--I'm--the--the  
7 office--the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs what  
8 your staffing pattern? How many people do you have  
9 in the office? Do you have the capacity to oversee  
10 this transition?

11 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Sure. So I can  
12 speak to that. Executive Action of the Mayor has  
13 tasked us with developing the citywide coordinated  
14 response that I described. And in furtherance of  
15 that goal, we've been able to expand our staffing for  
16 Executive Action across the board both to hire an  
17 Executive Director who oversees the program, an  
18 Operations Director who can help with management of  
19 things like procurement. A Volunteer Manager as well  
20 as pretty significant outreach team. So we've  
21 developed a team focused specifically on that . And  
22 then we have been working closely with HRA on IDNYC  
23 and now on Executive Action to ensure that these  
24 transitions occur.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: So you can help me  
3 with--how many funding lines do you have in your  
4 office, and do you have any staff from HRA or DYCD  
5 assigned to your office that are part of this  
6 coordination?

7 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Yes, so we have--

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [interposing] Give  
9 me the numbers.

10 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: So we have a staff  
11 of I would say at this point now of just under 50, a  
12 piece of which is the Executive Action team that I  
13 mentioned and the outreach team that I mentioned.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: In your office?

15 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: In my office.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: And then those--we  
18 also have staff from HRA that are assigned to work  
19 with us, and who we collaborate with very closely on-

20 -

21 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [interposing]  
22 Physically located in your office?

23 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Some who are  
24 physically located in our office--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [interposing] How  
3 many?

4 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: --and some who  
5 are-- I will have to get the numbers. I can get  
6 back to you on the specific numbers.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: And the same for  
8 DYCD.

9 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Not for DYCD.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Why not?

11 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Because HRA is our  
12 collaborator on Executive Action, and so we have  
13 staff who are partners that are placed within MOIA  
14 for that.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: And--and the--the  
16 adult literacy that remains in DYCD, they're not  
17 reaching immigrants?

18 STACIE EVANS: They are definitely  
19 reaching immigrants.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: So, why isn't there  
21 that collaboration then with DYCD?

22 STACIE EVANS: A collaboration with--

23 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [interposing] DYCD?

24 STACIE EVANS: --MOIA and the transition?

25 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Uh-huh.

5 STACIE EVANS: I think we would have to  
6 absolutely--

7 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: [interposing] I  
8 can speak to that. So our--our component of the  
9 literacy that we're working on is strictly the  
10 literacy related to DACA, which is the Executive  
11 Action program, and all of the other literacy  
12 programming remains with DYCD. We don't need to--  
13 we're not managing or administration the many  
14 millions of dollars that they've invested in literacy  
15 programs.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: So you're only  
17 focused on DACA? What about the other individuals in  
18 our city who may not be eligible for DACA who need  
19 the services from your office?

20 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Those programs  
21 remain within DYCD's administration, and they  
22 continue as Stacie mentioned to be administered by  
23 DYCD. We work with them. We collaborate with them  
24 on ensuring that those programs reach immigrant  
25 communities effectively. But they are not directly  
within our control and administration in the same way  
that the DACA education initiative is.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay, I'm--I'm a  
3 very visual person. So at some point we're going to  
4 need to come together, and you're going to draw a  
5 little chart--

6 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: [interposing]  
7 Sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: --of how those  
9 things connect. Whether or not your focus is on what  
10 DYCD services--DYCD is contracting for. At the end  
11 of the day, they're reaching the same population in  
12 different ways for different reasons because the  
13 funder providers by DYCD may have a stronger  
14 connection in the community. And at the end of the  
15 day, the immigrant population, especially those that  
16 are not documented are going to be very suspicious of  
17 government agencies and/or offices. It wasn't until  
18 CUNY Citizenship program put an attorney in my office  
19 two days a week that we started to see in my office  
20 where we don't report anybody's status. People need  
21 to know that it's a safe place for them to come. We  
22 were not seeing the immigrant community coming into  
23 our office for services regardless of what their  
24 needs are, and we know that they're very complicated  
25 needs. So, I'm--I'm not happy with the transition.

1 I firmly believe that if it ain't broke you don't try  
2 to fix it, and that at the end of the day the  
3 services provided by our local providers in the  
4 community must remain supported through whatever  
5 efforts and funding streams our city can make  
6 available. So, I understand that most of the funding  
7 is state funded and/or some other source. But at the  
8 end of the day, they're here in our city. And you  
9 are responsible for making sure that we can  
10 coordinate the services they need well, and that at  
11 the end of the day we graduate people from high  
12 school. We get them trained and help them become  
13 citizens because we want to make sure that all of  
14 those people that work in the city get the benefits  
15 they deserve. They do not get exploited by workers.  
16 You know, one of the things that I'm thinking as I  
17 was reading and hearing your testimony is maybe we  
18 should be providing English classes in the  
19 restaurants where they work in the morning. And  
20 maybe we can engage the employers to let us come in  
21 and set up a little classroom, and offer these  
22 classes a couple of days a week. In order for that  
23 population that's going to have that challenge of the  
24  
25

1  
2 educational requirement to help them meet that. You  
3 know, we need to think a little bit outside the box.

4 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: I totally agree  
5 with that. I'd be very happy to provide a chart for  
6 you afterwards of how the--the division of  
7 responsibility is broken up.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: You didn't answer me  
9 when I asked you who do you complain to if you're not  
10 happy with what you see happening.

11 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: So, I--I'm very  
12 happy to pick up the phone and talk to my fellow  
13 commissioners who are responsible for their agencies.  
14 And again, we all work very closely together, and  
15 then can always complain to our boss if we need to--

16 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [interposing] Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: --if things aren't  
18 going well.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: So, Chair Menchaca,  
20 I think we will do a follow-up conversation maybe in  
21 the fall so that you can bring back to us what  
22 experiences you've had within the implementation of  
23 this transition. At the end of the day we want to be  
24 part of the solution, not part of the problem. Thank  
25 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Chair,  
6 and really I think that continues just back to  
7 unpacking all of this piece and setting goals. We  
8 can't reach any goals unless we set them. We can't--  
9 we can't create relationships unless we--we can see  
10 them. So, I--I not only applaud the Chair--the  
11 Chair's kind of line of--of focus, but we'll be  
12 coming back very shortly. The Budget as it continues  
13 to conclude will actually reveal a lot, which is my  
14 next question, and then I'm going to hand it over to  
15 our next chair. You know, when DACA 2012 was  
16 implementing and announced 16,000 New Yorkers--that  
17 was the number, 16,000 New Yorkers were expected to  
18 need education. Now, in your testimony you've bumped  
19 it up to 24,100. In this moment of change and  
20 increase we're seeing--and there's been a lot of  
21 press on this, Op-ed, et cetera. And in  
22 conversations with advocates, there's been a major  
23 decrease in the literacy component. We're keeping  
24 hold of legal, and we're--we're now seeing the shift  
25 here. How--how can you reconcile the--the increase  
of need in your testimony, and a decrease in dollars  
that we're seeing right now in our budget process?

COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Sure. So I can address that. MOIA was allocated \$1.3 million in the Executive Budget to fund literacy programming to potentially DACA eligible populations. This amount was part of the funding that was allocated for the larger Executive Action Budget for implementation of outreach and legal services for Executive Action. And the DACA literacy figure was determined based on the goal of being strategic and targeted in our outreach to potentially eligible DACA individuals, and connecting these individuals to our legal services and educational support that they need for their eligibility. Similar to the anticipated scale for Executive Action, we estimate that over the course of a year, the city could connect to approximately 10% of the potentially DACA eligible population for literacy support services. And so that's the basis on which the funding was applied. So if you--if we say we want to reach 200,000 individuals through our outreach, we don't expect all 200,000 people to arrive for a legal screening throughout the course of a year. So the percentage we've estimated is about 10% will actually come to a screening event. And so similarly taking the numbers

1  
2 expected for the potentially DACA eligible population  
3 in New York on new data, we're expecting to actually  
4 be able to connect about 10% of that population to  
5 actual services as a result of our targeted outreach  
6 and screenings.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: To just clarify,  
8 that's--that's a--that's a legal service screening?

9 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Not educational--

11 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: [interposing]

12 Correct. So the--

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --program?

14 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Exactly, but the

15 ratio--

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]

17 You're saying that the screening of--of the--I guess  
18 the outreach and the intro--introduction to a legal  
19 service provider is--is going to also being in  
20 educational--

21 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: [interposing]

22 Correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --connections?

24 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Exactly. So the

25 idea would be to identify--first to do outreach and a

1  
2 focused outreach for the hardest to reach  
3 populations, which are this group of potentially DACA  
4 eligible, and enable them to be able to get a free  
5 high quality legal screening. And then, be able to  
6 connect those individuals who may be DACA eligible  
7 but for the educational requirement through the  
8 educational programming that they need--

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]  
10 Right.

11 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: --but that's  
12 flexible.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Well, and--and  
14 again I hope--I hope staff stay. [sic] I think  
15 everything here is very different model where the  
16 efficacy of our connection to our immigrant  
17 communities does not come with a large kind of  
18 screening process. And more of an intimate  
19 conversation with community trusted partners, and as--  
20 --and I hope that we can continue. Going back to that  
21 sentiment, how does that conversation happen at the--  
22 at your kind of policy making strategy right now?  
23 And do you have an alternative outreach program that  
24 doesn't focus on legal services as the front end, and  
25 instead is an educational focused only on immigrant

1  
2 communities that is not necessarily happening around  
3 this workforce development?

4           COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: So to be totally  
5 clear, the outreach will be through community-based  
6 providers and others who are in the field who are  
7 community organizations and others with a view to  
8 very much building the capacity of those groups. And  
9 supporting those groups to be able to do even more  
10 than they've been able to do in the past. And so  
11 that's the first touchpoint, not the legal screening.  
12 But if the idea is to provide legal and educational  
13 services at scale, the community-based providers will  
14 have the ability to refer an individual to a legal  
15 screening event to actually get good information  
16 about what they might be eligible for or not. Which  
17 as I had mentioned in my testimony is something that  
18 many of this population may not even identify in that  
19 way. And so, having that first contact at the  
20 community level is really critical in helping people  
21 get access to good legal information, which is really  
22 the second step. And frankly prevents people going  
23 to notarials and other providers who might be out  
24 there. And then at that point it--because we're  
25 going to be doing very wide scale outreach for those

1  
2 who may be potentially DACA eligible. Then  
3 connecting them to the education services we think is  
4 the model that will work to reach this hardest to  
5 reach population. Learning frankly from the last  
6 couple of years of who's been able to get DACA and  
7 now who remains who hasn't.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, we're going  
9 to pause here and go over to Chair Mathieu Eugene  
10 from Brooklyn.

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
12 Mr. Chair. Commissioner, thank you for your  
13 testimony and thank you also to all the members of  
14 the panel. And I'm going quickly because I know that  
15 you have to leave. It is very important to provide  
16 literacy or English classes to the immigrant. This  
17 is wonderful, and I commend you to all of you who are  
18 engaged in doing that. But to one of the things that  
19 we have been observing in the community especially  
20 for those people who don't speak English at home,  
21 what do you have in place to help them be prepared to  
22 learn a different language, a foreign language like  
23 people coming from Haiti, from Santa de Mayo, [sic]  
24 Mexico. They are going to learn a new language, you  
25 know. What is the transition system that make you

1  
2 offer them in order for them to be ready and to get  
3 the full advantage of learning the new language?

4 STACIE EVANS: So that's where the city's  
5 broad adult education comes in. There are programs  
6 in every borough all across the city that offer  
7 English language classes that offer basic education  
8 and HSE programming. So that people can start at the  
9 most beginning level and work their way up through  
10 those programs.

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, what I'm  
12 thinking about is there any transition, you know,  
13 bilingual? You know, both--like somebody who speaks  
14 Creole. At the same time, you know, he's getting the  
15 transition in his language before he starts, you  
16 know, learning English, or somebody from the Spanish  
17 community?

18 STACIE EVANS: I know that there are some  
19 programs that offer programming in native language.  
20 I would have to look into that to get those numbers  
21 for you and get back to you on that.

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Well, thank you very  
23 much. Do you believe that--because there are so many  
24 people in New York City who came from a different  
25 country. Do you think that you have been serving the

1 number of people who are in need of literacy? Have  
2 you been able to serve all of them, and do you  
3 believe that we're seeing a large population of  
4 people who didn't have the opportunity to benefit  
5 from the literacy that you are offering?  
6

7 STACIE EVANS: There's--

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Like  
9 what is the percentage, you know?

10 STACIE EVANS: There's still a very large  
11 number of people. So, as I said in my testimony, 1.7  
12 million people need the services that--that we are  
13 offering. And at this moment the city is able to  
14 serve both your city funding, and through other  
15 sources the city serves about 80,000 people. So it's  
16 a huge difference between those two, and that's why  
17 we continue to work to develop new programs. We want  
18 to partner with the Council to make sure that we can  
19 fund as many new seats and new classes as we possibly  
20 can.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And I know that, you  
22 know, it has not been easy to provide literacy to  
23 those immigrant people who need the service. What,  
24 if you can tell me, what is the biggest challenge  
25 that you face in terms of providing literacy to the

1  
2 immigrant people? What is the biggest challenge?

3 And how are you planning to overcome this challenge?

4 STACIE EVANS: So our role in first  
5 development is really a coordination and policy  
6 making role, and so we are really partnering with  
7 city agencies, community providers to really talk to  
8 folks and understand so what are the things we need  
9 to be moving forward on? How do we need to be making  
10 changes, and how can we as the Mayor's Office  
11 coordinate that work so that funds are spent most  
12 effectively, more people are served and that we see  
13 as many positive outcomes as we can.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But what I want to  
15 know, you know, is basically your experience. You  
16 know, the everyday experience. You are serving  
17 people. You are providing money to our city. But if  
18 there is one thing, is it funding? Is it, you know,  
19 the ability to communicate with the people, with our  
20 students? What is the biggest challenge that you  
21 face in terms of providing, you know, literacy to  
22 people who don't speak English? What is the biggest  
23 challenge you face in terms of providing, you know,  
24 literacy to people who don't speak English? What is  
25

1  
2 the biggest challenge? What is it exactly? Is that  
3 funding--

4 STACIE EVANS: [interposing] So--

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --education or--?

6 STACIE EVANS: You're--you're offering me  
7 the easiest answer of funding. I won't lie.

8 [laughs] It really is a big issue always for  
9 programming like this, but our office doesn't provide  
10 direct services. We really are working with agencies  
11 and programs to coordinate with them to make sure  
12 that things are covered across the systems. But I'm  
13 sure if you asked providers in the room if funding is  
14 a big issue for them, they will probably all say yes.  
15 There needs to be a lot more funding in adult  
16 education. Uh--

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. I'm sorry.  
18 Go ahead.

19 STACIE EVANS: But yes, for us the issue  
20 is about coordinating what exists now and how do we  
21 make it work as effectively as possible.

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
23 but my last question to you: What has been done to  
24 overcome this challenge? And can we, you know, bring  
25 more funding today?

1 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH  
2 COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,  
3 COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, AND  
4 COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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5 STACIE EVANS: So I know that  
6 conversations are happening right now with the  
7 budget. So I don't have answers to--to that, but  
8 once that's finalized, we'll see where we are.

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
10 and thank you, Mr. Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Chair  
12 Eugene. We've also--we're joined by Council Member  
13 Cumbo, Council Member Cabrera and Council Member  
14 Gibson, and then we're headed over to Council Member  
15 Barron from Bronx--from Brooklyn.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Mr.  
17 Chair. Thank you to the panel for coming to share  
18 your testimony. We know that in--I want to also  
19 acknowledge my committee members who joined us,  
20 Vacca, Rodriguez, Cabrera, Williams, Cumbo, Gibson.  
21 So we are at 100%. Just want that on the record. In  
22 terms of the allocations, I believe that in 2013 for  
23 Fiscal Year 2014 and '15, there was \$18 million that  
24 was allocated, and some of that went to CBOs. Some  
25 of that went to CUNY, and the target was to assist--  
to provide assistance to those who might be eligible,  
and to provide the educational opportunities for  
those who needed to get that further assistance. Do

1 we have a number that we can identify as those who  
2 have benefitted from the program?

3  
4 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: That's a great  
5 question. So the City Council had made funding of \$9  
6 million available over two years--

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Right.

8 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: --in 2013 to 2015  
9 for a combination of outreach, educational and legal.  
10 And approximately 7,000 individuals were assisted  
11 over the course of two years with that funding.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and do we know  
13 how many actually had their applications completed  
14 and do we know the outcome of that process?

15 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: I'm not sure if we  
16 know the actual application outcomes, but we can  
17 follow up to see if that information, that program  
18 was administered by DYCD. We can get specific  
19 numbers, but I don't know that we have them.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I would be  
21 interested in knowing because at one point in my  
22 career in working with the Board of Education, I did  
23 teach adult literacy and then I coordinated the  
24 program for the GED. And it's really a great  
25 challenge. Most of these persons who are

1 participating are working. They have families. They  
2 have lots of other obligations. So they don't really  
3 have perhaps a dedicated schedule that they can  
4 commit on a regular basis, but it's as they can fit  
5 it in. And I know it's a really tough challenge to  
6 be able to get the consistency in participating in  
7 these programs to be able to get the full benefit.  
8 And often times when they're not able to be  
9 successful on that first round, they get discouraged,  
10 and you really need to be able to support them. So I  
11 know that this is a very important program, and I  
12 know that it's something that the Council supports,  
13 and the Administration as well. Do have an idea as  
14 to the age range of those who most benefit from  
15 participating in this program?

17 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: So I don't know  
18 the age range of the individuals sort of for this  
19 specific program over the last two years, but I do--  
20 what we do know is that about half who applied  
21 initially were under the age--I should revisit my  
22 testimony--but were under the age of 21. So it  
23 tended to be a younger population based on some of  
24 the research that's just come out about DACA. Some of  
25 the older individuals who may be eligible, tended to

1  
2 apply with less frequency. DACA itself is eligible  
3 for really 18 to 31, and so--

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] 18 to-  
5 -?

6 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Thirty-one.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Why is that  
8 age cap?

9 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Well, the new  
10 announcement by the President eliminated the age cap,  
11 but sadly--

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: --we're not  
14 allowed to move forward with that program yet because  
15 it's tied up in the courts.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Now, that--that age  
17 group has also another criteria and that is by the  
18 year 20 something. What is that?

19 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Right. So the  
20 eligibility--

21 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [interposing] 2013?

22 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: --requirements for  
23 DACA as it currently stands where you have to have  
24 come to the U.S. before your 16th birthday. That you  
25 were under the age of 31 on June 15th, 2012, and that

1  
2 you've lived continuously in the U.S. since 2007, and  
3 there's few other requirements, but those are the key  
4 ones from right now.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Thank you.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. Thank  
8 you, Chair for--

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Oh, I  
10 have one other question.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Go ahead, go  
12 ahead.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: What do you find to  
14 be--which languages do you find to be the ones that  
15 are most required or most requested for those who are  
16 participating in the programs?

17 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Sure. So Spanish  
18 is by far the kind of most frequent language as well--  
19 followed by--closely by Mandarin Chinese.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay. So, clearly  
22 I think there's a couple things that I just want to  
23 reiterate. One is since the beginning of the--of the  
24 formation of this hearing we had invited DYCD and  
25 they're not here. And I think you've--you've

1 expressed your disappointment that they're not here.

2  
3 Two, we know that there's a lot of communication and  
4 coordination happening, and so, we applaud that.

5 There's a lot of transition happening not just here  
6 in the city as the new Administration and new City

7 Council and new funding priorities. But as we react  
8 to the federal, the lack of federal, and also just

9 the hurdles that the federal government and the

10 courts are giving us, that the essential piece to all

11 of this is that coordination piece. So, next time

12 when we have a Council hearing, we're going to need

13 all the agencies to kind of show us exactly the--the

14 lines and how they connect. And I know, you--we're

15 leaving now. We're going to--we're going to end this

16 panel, but I hope staff can really take note about

17 some of the questions that you're providing and so

18 that we can continue to learn from them specifically.

19 And that might even affect some changes that we can

20 make now as we--as we wrap up the funding--the

21 funding process. So thank you so much for your work.

22 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Thank you so much.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And we'll continue

24 to--we'll continue this conversation. This is the

25

1  
2 beginning of the big ride. We have to get this  
3 right. We have to get this right. Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER AGARWAL: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Our next panel, if  
6 you can get ready and come up to the--to the able.  
7 Roberto Gurena [sp?] from the NYCCT CUNY Program;  
8 Robert Smith, Baruch College; Adriana Blancarte-  
9 Hayward, Outreach Manager at Immigrant Affairs;  
10 Arianna Rosas, the New York Immigration Coalition.  
11 If you can all make it up. Thank you so much for  
12 being here today, and you can be--begin on--to my  
13 left. Make sure it's on, the red light is on.

14 ROBERT SMITH: Here we go. So good  
15 morning and thank you very much for the opportunity  
16 to testify. I especially thank the Chairs Menchaca,  
17 Arroyo and Eugene. My name is Robert Smith. I'm a  
18 professor at the City University of New York at  
19 Baruch College, and also the Lead and the Research  
20 Director on the Mexican Initiative under Deferred  
21 Action, which is a collaborative project promoting  
22 deferred action. Among a variety of partners, the  
23 Mexican Consulate, the New York Immigration  
24 Coalition, Make the Road New York, MASA and ten other  
25 CBOs that serve the Mexican community. The reasons

1  
2 for which I'll discuss in a minute. This analysis is  
3 my own statement. It does not necessarily imply  
4 endorsement by any of the partners. The first thing  
5 that I would say is that DACA--promoting DACA by  
6 promoting adult education is the single most  
7 important thing that the City Council can do to  
8 increase the life chances of these New Yorkers.

9 I would also reiterate what we heard in  
10 the earlier testimony that the numbers have dropped  
11 nationwide for DACA applications because we're  
12 hitting the hard cases now. The people that need  
13 adult education. And I think that's a very important  
14 thing for us to underline. The third thing I'll say  
15 is that the Mexican community in New York overall  
16 demographers estimate that 23% of DACA eligibles  
17 needed adult education to qualify. That was 16,000  
18 out of 70,000 people in the city. But the Mexican  
19 population was 43% of DACA eligibles by time needed  
20 adult education. Nearly 7,000 out of over 15,000  
21 people. I've done independent research through this  
22 initiative that where the surveys completely back up  
23 the demog--demographic estimates where 42% of the  
24 Mexicans that we surveyed needed adult education to  
25 be able to apply. And we see this scene repeated

1  
2 again and again where people come in, we do a  
3 screening, they have the time.

4           We try to get them place in an adult ed  
5 class, and there's no possibility. Only 18% of the  
6 people outreached in the first round in 2014 actually  
7 ended up apply for DACA. And one of the single  
8 biggest reasons they did not follow through is that  
9 they could not get access to adult education. So I  
10 think it's critically--critically important that we  
11 fund adult education well. And secondly, we need a  
12 system to allocate those spots. Because we have a  
13 massive collection--collective action problem, right?  
14 Where there are lots of different people trying to  
15 place people and there's no place to do it. I can  
16 also tell you that from my work with this initiative  
17 and all these service providers that they have  
18 learned a tremendous amount about how to better do  
19 this advocacy, and to convert DACA contact into  
20 actual DACA applications. It's not going to happen I  
21 don't think by--by doing sort of the regular kind of  
22 outreach. I think it's going to happen by having  
23 services that help people through the process.

24           Because it's not just one encounter, and  
25 then they come back with their application. It's a

1  
2 variety of encounters. We have developed a model  
3 where we will promote at least a thousand  
4 applications over the coming year. But it was  
5 premised on the availability of adult education, and  
6 if that's not available, it's going to make things  
7 very difficult. Another thing that I would like to  
8 add is that, and I'm drawing on my own research and  
9 on the research of many others here. Long-term  
10 undocumented status really does bad things to and for  
11 families, and kids and for New York City. One of the  
12 things it does is it breaks the link between  
13 educational hard work and future outcomes. If you  
14 know you're going to be an undocumented kid after you  
15 graduate from high school and after you graduate from  
16 college, why bother if you're going to still work in  
17 a pizzeria. In a book I'm writing I call this the  
18 Hooky Party Moratorium.

19           Meaning, you know, some of the kids in  
20 high school actually think they're being incentivized  
21 to like why would you go keep studying when you're  
22 still going to work in the same place? You don't  
23 gain any benefit. For kids that have gotten DACA,  
24 that equation has been changed. The kids that get  
25 DACA principals have told us they're working harder.

1  
2 I think this is critically important. The other  
3 thing I would say is these people--these CBOs that  
4 have been doing this kind of outreach have links with  
5 the people in their communities, and have developed  
6 models for doing this. We have lists of thousands of  
7 people that have been outreached that we're following  
8 up with little by little. If we can't place them  
9 into adult education, we can't help them. If we can  
10 place them in adult education, then we can. I was  
11 told this is three minutes. Somebody may have  
12 forgotten to turn the clock on. So I will thank that  
13 person for that oversight --[laughter]

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]  
15 Thank you.

16 ROBERT SMITH. --and thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you so much.

18 ROBERTO GARENA : Good afternoon and  
19 thank you Chairs Menchaca, Arroyo, Eugene, Barron and  
20 members of the City Council for the opportunity to  
21 testify today. I am reading the testimony of Dr.  
22 Leslie Oppenheim, the City University Director of  
23 Language and Literacy Programs who is out of the  
24 country. I am Roberto Herrera [sp?], Director of the  
25 Adult Literacy DACA and CUNY Language Immersion

1  
2 Program at the New York City College of Technology of  
3 CUNY. The City University of New York, CUNY,  
4 provides many opportunities for immigrants to learn  
5 English, whether for academic purposes for work or to  
6 achieve basic literacy for greater participation in  
7 the city they now call home. One of these  
8 opportunities is the CUNY Adult Literacy High School  
9 Equivalency ESL Program, which is offered on 14  
10 campuses of the University including my own in  
11 Brooklyn, in all boroughs of the city. For more than  
12 30 years, this program has provided the critical  
13 pathway for immigrant adults and out of school youth  
14 to access the further education they need to enter  
15 the workforce or move up to more secure employment.

16           These students are New York City  
17 residents who have emigrated to New York City from  
18 all over the world speaking more than 100 different  
19 languages and who are parents, caregivers and leaders  
20 in their communities. They are also regular people  
21 leading the heroic and often difficult lives of  
22 immigrants who don't speak English for whom the  
23 culture is a puzzle, for whom employment  
24 opportunities are restricted, and for whom long  
25 waiting lists for an ESL class exists all over the

1  
2 city. Anyone who has ever learned a second language  
3 as an adult knows just how hard it is, and how long  
4 it takes. It is a long slide through the verb forms,  
5 learning the different kinds of language you need to  
6 speak to a boss to speak to a child's teacher, and  
7 what to say to the pharmacist or the doctor when you  
8 have a question. CUNY as well as other agencies  
9 provides an important lifeline for the adult English  
10 Language learners through their ESL and High School  
11 Equivalency programs.

12           These programs, free to students, are  
13 always funded on a shoe string with the necessity of  
14 turning away thousands of applicants from already  
15 overcrowded classrooms. Such New York City residents  
16 are asking only for the opportunity to improve their  
17 English language proficiency or earn a High School  
18 Equivalency diploma. The immigrants of this city  
19 depend on public funding to make their education  
20 possible. At the City University of New York, with  
21 the loss of City Council DACA funding, more than  
22 2,500 students who previously had a seat in one of  
23 our DACA programs as of June 30, will no longer have  
24 one. For DACA students what this means is an  
25 education interrupted once again. Just as learners

1  
2 are beginning to feel confident in their use of the  
3 language and their capacity to advocate for  
4 themselves or their ability to answer questions on  
5 the High School Equivalency exam. High School  
6 Equivalency exam [bell] their chances to continue  
7 their studies will be taken from them.

8           New York City leadership must provider  
9 greater educational opportunities to enable these  
10 adult immigrants to get a foothold into the labor  
11 force and move up economically, and impact the  
12 education and wellbeing of their children. And New  
13 York City needs the skills, perspectives and  
14 international understandings that adult immigrants  
15 bring with them in order to realize our full  
16 potential as a city. Steady adequate funding to  
17 address the needs of close to two million immigrants  
18 who speak less than adequate English is required. It  
19 is an investment in the future of this city that is  
20 worth making. Over the years, the New York City  
21 Council has been an important partner in the  
22 provision of adult literacy, High School Equivalency  
23 and the ESL classes--services. I am joining with  
24 others here today to urge you to reinstate CUNY's  
25 DACA funding for education services and to commit

1  
2 added resources to the overall for adult literacy in  
3 the city. We are asking you to build upon your  
4 involvement and upon your commitment to address the  
5 educational needs of the city's immigrant communities  
6 keeping in mind the struggles of your parents and  
7 grandparents, generations of newcomers to New York.  
8 We are asking for your help. We can't do this work  
9 without this increased support, and this generation  
10 of immigrants and their children, the next generation  
11 depend on it. Thank you for this opportunity to  
12 bring this message to you.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. So the  
14 clock is back on. Let's try to stay with the--within  
15 the three minutes. We have five panels of  
16 conversation to listen to and witnesses. Thank you.

17 ADRIANA BLANCATE-HAYWARD: Good  
18 afternoon. My name is Adriana Blancarte-Hayward, and  
19 I am the Outreach Manager for Immigrant Affairs for  
20 the New York Public Library. Thank you to the Chairs  
21 Carlos Menchaca, Maria Del Carmen Arroyo, Mathieu  
22 Eugene and Inez Barron as well as all the members of  
23 this committee and the City Council. Thank you for  
24 the opportunity to join you today and speak about  
25 what New Yorkers for Libraries is doing to help adult

1  
2 immigrants succeed. We are the nation's largest  
3 public library system with a unique combination of 88  
4 neighborhood branches and four scholar research  
5 centers serving all New Yorkers throughout locations  
6 in the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island.

7           We are a city of immigrants. 37% of us,  
8 3.1 million people were born in another country. 49%  
9 of all New Yorkers speaking a language other than  
10 English at home. To serve our diverse population,  
11 NYPL offers multiple services in many languages  
12 across the city. We work hard to make sure all  
13 immigrants are comfortable and safe in public  
14 libraries and we are proud to help meet their  
15 educational needs. Today, I will briefly talk about  
16 our five main initiatives to educate our adult  
17 immigrant community. First, are the English Literacy  
18 classes, which for more than 100 years NYPL had  
19 provided immigrants the opportunity to learn how to  
20 read and write in English. I brought to signs here  
21 just to show you from Early 20th Century from our  
22 COMPASS Programs that show advertised English and  
23 citizenship classes both in Polish and Italian.  
24 People come to the library to learn so they can  
25

1  
2 advance their careers, connect with their  
3 communities.

4           That was my personal case ten years ago  
5 when I came to the U.S., and to help the children  
6 succeed. In the past three years we have increased  
7 our English for speakers of other languages by 400%.  
8 We have classes in 34 branches, slightly more than  
9 10,000 student seats. 80% of our students they don't  
10 have any other place to go to learn English. We are  
11 one of the city's biggest providers after the  
12 Department of Education and CUNY. The library is  
13 open for an increase city funding so that we can  
14 continue expanding our formal literacy and language  
15 instruction as well as less structured drop-in  
16 programs such as the WANY developed by the Mayor's  
17 Office and CUNY. For technology training, since  
18 2012, we have expanded our technical program. We  
19 have it in 80 locations over 80 courses in many  
20 languages, Spanish and East Bengali. Materials are  
21 available for staff learning on the website in  
22 English, Spanish and in Russian and French.

23           We also launched in the spring a  
24 financial literacy program where we teach immigrants  
25 basic savings, budgeting, housing. And they have the

1  
2 opportunity to meet one-on-one with coaches. This  
3 program is presented in Spanish, Mandarin and  
4 Cantonese in 11 of our neighborhood branches. For  
5 small businesses, as we know nearly half of the  
6 city's 220,000 small business owners are immigrants.  
7 So we are partnering with New York City's Small  
8 Business Services providing free business courses at  
9 selected locations in multiple languages to assist  
10 them in applying for these funds. And finally, in  
11 partnership with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant  
12 Affairs and United States Citizenship and Immigration  
13 Services we have established new American corners at  
14 every library where we provide information and  
15 materials on citizenship and immigration as well as  
16 citizenship classes at some locations. I just want  
17 to say that through our diverse programs and  
18 services, NYPL is helping new immigrants find their  
19 way in New York City. As you make the final  
20 decisions about what to fund in this year's budget,  
21 please support libraries and the essential services  
22 that they are providing to the city's diverse and  
23 economic immigrant community. And thank you very  
24 much for this opportunity to testify today.

1  
2                   ARIANA ROSAS: Good afternoon. My name  
3 is Ariana Rosas and I'm Special Projects Associate at  
4 the New York Immigration Coalition. I want to thank  
5 you for the opportunity to testify today. The City  
6 of New York has always been defined and structured by  
7 its immigrant population. Immigrants account for  
8 nearly half of our city's workforce, but a  
9 significant portion of this population are low-wage  
10 earners who fall victim to exploitive labor practices  
11 due to low literacy rates, lack of English language  
12 ability and poor job skills. Without an adequate  
13 investment in adult literacy programs that offer  
14 these New Yorkers the literacy and numeracy skills  
15 that are required to better perform on their jobs,  
16 receive training and advance their career, the city  
17 is allowing our working poor communities to remain on  
18 the margins of society. English language skills also  
19 facilitate the way families communicate with their  
20 children's teachers, interact with medical  
21 professionals and law enforcement and otherwise make  
22 way for deeper levels of civic participation and  
23 engagement. Yet, in New York City today over 1.7  
24 million New Yorkers over the age of 18 lack English  
25 proficiency, a high school diploma or both. We are

1 not doing enough for these New Yorkers. The citywide  
2 deficit in accessible community-based adult literacy  
3 services became readily apparent following President  
4 Obama's 2012 DACA announcement. A key challenge for  
5 DACA enrollment citywide was that many immigrants  
6 didn't know their enrollment--didn't know that  
7 enrollment in municipally funded adult literacy  
8 program could meet the education requirement.  
9 However, following years of cuts to adult literacy  
10 programming, there was not sufficient capacity to  
11 serve those New Yorkers who needed to enroll in an  
12 adult literacy program. To address this need, the  
13 New York City Council in 2013 created a  
14 groundbreaking and nationally recognized initiative  
15 by investing \$18 million into DACA related outreach,  
16 legal and literacy services administered by DYCD and  
17 CUNY. The program's design was intentional in using  
18 adult literacy as an outreach vehicle as well as a  
19 safe classroom space where students could self-  
20 identify as potential---potentially DACA eligible and  
21 seek out the services of a legal provider in a  
22 coordinated network. Such a model is critical when  
23 serving this population of older age DACA eligible  
24 who are more likely to be parents, live in  
25

1  
2 overcrowded housing, live in absolute poverty, and to  
3 have never attended school who are readily--who are  
4 already in the workforce. Sorry. And need better  
5 incentives to reveal their status in order to become  
6 DACA eligible. Over the last two years this  
7 initiative has served over 10,000 New Yorkers.  
8 However, despite this success, the current Fiscal  
9 Year 2016 Budget includes a cut of \$4.75 million and  
10 shifts the program administration to HRA and MOIA.  
11 Such a cut will result in approximately 4,100  
12 students losing access to their English Language and  
13 High School Equivalency--Equivalency courses. Such a  
14 cut also comes at an acutely--acutely inopportune  
15 time with President Obama's November Executive Action  
16 set to take effect once the court injunction is  
17 lifted. The planned loss of literacy seats will be  
18 devastating to thousands of hard working New Yorkers  
19 and their families particularly DACA eligible young  
20 adults and DAPA eligible parents who may need  
21 incentives to apply such as access to adult literacy  
22 class [bell]. And that would offer the skills to  
23 earn a better job and encourage participating in DAPA  
24 in order to enter the formal workforce. In closing,  
25 basic literacy skills translate into direct personal

1  
2 economic growth, and deeper economic revenues for the  
3 city. Families with literacy skills tend to be more  
4 well informed, feel empowered and become more active  
5 participants in the community and local economy. But  
6 this requires the City Council's committed investment  
7 in the future of its residents. If the City and the  
8 Administration are serious about bringing 800,000 out  
9 poverty, this is where it starts.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. We  
11 have a series of questions. I'm going to do two and  
12 hand it over to the rest of the chairs, and then I'll  
13 come back for a second round. My first question,  
14 actually I'll just start here with Ms. Rosas. On the  
15 budget cuts we've been very visible and vocal on this  
16 issue in the last few weeks. And on the cuts  
17 particularly that are affecting, or expressed in your  
18 testimony, how did you-- In--in just the  
19 conversation with the Administration, we heard--we  
20 heard earlier how--how--how do you--how are you  
21 reconciling what we hear today from the  
22 Administration on the different focus areas? And  
23 essentially members of our community accessing the  
24 services just in a different way? How--how do you  
25 feel about that--that response?

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[pause]

ARIANA ROSAS: Thank you. Well, I think it's important to continue to provide adult literacy classes, and I think a safe space where people could self-identify as opposed to--you know, many of us who are working for community-based organizations aren't lawyers aren't really keeping or allowed to sort of moving forward with that process if someone is self-identifying. But I do think it's important to continue to provide a service that not only--that is open to the community who is wanting to learn a different language. Not just specific to DACA--to the DACA eligible population, but that is an important component of that.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So, are you referring directly to the kind of legal--legal services model--

ARIANA ROSAS: [interposing] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --that--that--so just to kind of--tell--tell me more about your reactions to the kind of legal services front end outreach plan, and get closer to the mic, if you can.

ARIANA ROSAS: Oh, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

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ARIANA ROSAS: Um, sorry. Is this--

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]

This is going to be a question we're going to ask  
over and over again so prepare.

ARIANA ROSAS: [laughs] Really. Again,  
I mean I feel like it's important to maintain not  
anonymity, but the confidence of the community in  
being able to again provide a service not only for  
young adults, but the older adult population. And I  
think by focusing on legal we're really sort of  
leaving a large population of people who could be  
potentially--who could benefit but also potentially--  
I'm sorry. [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Go ahead.

ARIANA ROSAS: But yeah, sorry, I--

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yeah, and I--I  
guess what I want to say is that I think we agree. I  
think--I think we agree in a big way, and we're going  
to be hearing that confirmed over and over again. So  
that's an important piece to--to underline. And for  
CUNY I want to ask was the Administration--has the  
Administration reached out as thought partner in this  
kind of evolution as they start shifting the--the  
kind of focus areas. And for example the Mexican

1 information or the information about the Mexican  
2 population being a high population with no education  
3 and the requirement for our educational pieces. Have  
4 you been in conversations with the Administration in  
5 helping develop their strategy?  
6

7 ROBERT SMITH: No.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay. Keep going.

9 ROBERT SMITH: We did meet and say we  
10 should get together and talk.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yeah, absolutely,  
12 which we're going to--we're going to recommend  
13 strongly.

14 ROBERT SMITH: And I'm very happy to  
15 contribute in any way that I can.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And you already  
17 have with this testimony. This is incredible work,  
18 and thank you. Council Member Arroyo.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you, Mr.  
20 Chair. Just to be clear, this is not a budget  
21 hearing, right, but it seems to be kind of the  
22 conversation. CUNY is asking for money and the  
23 Public Libraries are asking for money, and the non-  
24 profit organization are asking for money. And the  
25 concern that I--I have in the discussion that we're

1  
2 having today. As you heard my questions to the  
3 Administration the translation of the services from  
4 one agency to the other, and how do we ensure that  
5 those--that that transition is executed successfully.  
6 And what I found interesting is that CUNY was not  
7 part of that conversation given the programs and--and  
8 the wealth of services that CUNY provides. So my,  
9 you know, my questions is well, where are you in this  
10 conversation? And were you engaged in any discussion  
11 with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs or  
12 Workforce Development around HRA or DYCD? And the  
13 answer is no. No--no engagement whatsoever. Yes?

14 ROBERT SMITH: Not with me. No, I--I  
15 haven't. I don't want to speak for all of CUNY, but  
16 for the project that I'm working on, no.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: I'm sorry, but if I  
18 see someone providing me testimony a letterhead of an  
19 organization or an entity, I'm assuming that you're  
20 representing that entity. So, you're asking CUNY and  
21 the Library system is asking--you're asking for  
22 funding. Well, where does your--the--your entity's  
23 funding get divided, and how much of that is your  
24 system putting into immigrant services adult  
25 literacy. Notwithstanding what the Council can do

1  
2 and fund, what's your entity's commitment to lifting  
3 this service delivery system?

4           ROBERTO HERRERAS: I'm here to speak on  
5 behalf of Dr. Leslee Oppenheim, but I can speak on my  
6 behalf in terms of what I know locally at my program  
7 at City Tech. We have a range of services for  
8 students who are DACA eligible that includes programs  
9 that are funded through other sources including  
10 private sources. We also refer--we provide the  
11 outreach recruitment and the education piece for DACA  
12 students and then we also refer the students with the  
13 legal piece to CUNY Citizenship Now. So, I think  
14 that there are many opportunities for students who  
15 enter the program through DACA or in any other way to  
16 attain other kinds of services. I also manage a CUNY  
17 Language Immersion program, which is funding through  
18 tax levy. And that is for students who are  
19 interested in going to college, and we do provide  
20 counseling and support to help students access pretty  
21 much everything that's available to them within CUNY.

22           CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. So since  
23 you're here, I guess you can take a message back to  
24 the folks at CUNY since, you know, you have their  
25 letterhead on your testimony, right. What--what are-

1  
2 -in--in the Administration's testimony, I only heard  
3 La Guardia referenced. I'm sure that every other  
4 CUNY institution has some level of adult literacy  
5 services. What is the CUNY portfolio at the  
6 different institutions so we can--and--and what is  
7 the funding necessary to maintain that portfolio  
8 whether through private dollars or the CUNY  
9 administration making a commitment to designate some  
10 of that funding directly what the Council can do in  
11 collaboration with the Administration. Because if we  
12 don't--if we don't understand the universe of what's  
13 available, we're not going to understand what gap  
14 exists. We're hearing there's a gap, but how deep is  
15 that gap, and how much is required to bridge it to  
16 bring a level of service that's going to address the  
17 number of individuals that we would need to serve.  
18 If they all came forward today, I have a sense that  
19 we're in trouble. We're not going to be able to  
20 respond to the need that that's going to create. So  
21 I don't beat up the messenger, but I think it's  
22 important that we get our hands around the depth of  
23 the need. So that we can eliminate that barrier of  
24 the lack of access to adult education--to education  
25 for individuals that could be eligible. And thank

1 you for your testimony, and for the work that you do.

2 I love CUNY just so that you don't get it twisted.

3 I'm--I'm a CUNY fan. [laughs] Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4  
5 ROBERT SMITH: And I would like to  
6 respond to one other thing. The--the one--the theme  
7 I keep hearing is that there's going to be a  
8 transition, and that the services will be offered in  
9 a new way. The build it and they will come theory is  
10 not going to work. If you just have more legal  
11 service or more, you know, if even there was more  
12 adult ed, if you do not have the bridges for people  
13 to cross to get that. And if you do not have the  
14 knowledge of the community to be able to help those  
15 people not only find out about that, but usher them  
16 through the DACA process. Gathering your--if you've  
17 been hiding your life for the last years, how do you  
18 gather the documents to demonstrate that that life  
19 exists. It's going to be a labor intensive process,  
20 and the social--there's mountains of social science  
21 research that how that one-on-one counseling is going  
22 to be one of the--a very effective piece of this. So  
23 I just wanted to respond to the general question  
24 that--that at least two of the chairs have put. But  
25 I think build it and they will come is theory, but

1 action that are not going to work on this project.

2 We--we need the knowledge that these community  
3 organizations have.

4  
5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Chair Barron.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Mr.

7 Chair. Thank the panel for coming to provide  
8 testimony. My questions are for Mr. Garena. Did I  
9 pronounce that correctly? Yes. You said that--we  
10 know that CUNY has programs on 14 campuses. So,  
11 which of the campuses that don't have programs? Are  
12 all of the senior colleges and junior colleges  
13 included in that? And if not, which ones are not?

14 ROBERTO GARENA : I don't have the  
15 information in front of me, but I could get that.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Okay,  
17 if you could ask CUNY to give me a listing so that I  
18 could identify where there might be some that do not  
19 have the program. I'd be interested to know which  
20 ones might not be on the list and how we can  
21 accommodate them. Do you know which campuses has the  
22 greatest number of students who are taking or making  
23 themselves available of the programs that you're  
24 offering in terms of the programs here that we're  
25 talking about?

1  
2 ROBERTO GARENA : No, I can only talk  
3 about mine. We have about 250 per year.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: 250 at City Tech.

5 ROBERTO GARENA : Yeah, at City Tech.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And are these  
7 programs--do they have a specific course curriculum  
8 over 10 weeks, 20 weeks, the semester, the year? Are  
9 they designated with a specific timeline or is it  
10 based on the need of the students and when they feel  
11 that they're eligible to take a course or a class  
12 rather or test? Do they then do that?

13 ROBERTO GUERENA: There are different  
14 schedules on different offerings and, of course, it's  
15 always dependent on the student's ability to--to take  
16 the classes and whatever schedule is best for them.  
17 We offer classes day time, evening and Saturdays as  
18 well.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: At your particular  
20 location are all students accommodated, or do you  
21 know if there's wait list?

22 ROBERTO GUERENA: There's always a wait  
23 list.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: There's always a  
25 wait list. Okay. And so for those that are on the

1  
2 wait list, do you know how long they have to wait  
3 before they get serviced?

4 ROBERTO GUERENA: It varies but for ESL  
5 it could be a year or more in some cases.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: It's a year?

7 ROBERTO GUERENA: Or more. This has  
8 always been true. I--I've been in the field for  
9 about 35 years, and when I used to work at La Guardia  
10 the waiting list was even longer. So, it was as much  
11 as three years. So, it's--it's absurd. We try to  
12 refer students to other programs, but they're equally  
13 challenged in terms of how many students they can  
14 serve.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Do you have any data  
16 on those students that pass the test would then move  
17 on and enroll in one of the CUNY institutions?

18 ROBERTO GUERENA: Which test?

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: The language test,  
20 the High School Equivalency. Once they complete the  
21 preparation for High School Equivalency exam and pass  
22 that and get their GED or HSE, do we have any data on  
23 how many of those students who are graduates of the  
24 program who now have that basic high school degree  
25 move on and become students at a CUNY institution?

1  
2           ROBERTO GUERENA: I can provide you with  
3 information, but that is information we do collect  
4 and we have in a database.

5           CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great. If you could  
6 share that with our committee, we would appreciate  
7 that as well. And the question in terms of the CUNY  
8 Citizenship Now program that CUNY has operated for so  
9 many years, I understand that's no longer going to be  
10 operated by CUNY.

11           ROBERTO GUERENA: I'm not aware of that.

12           CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I think that  
13 there might be another organization that's going to  
14 be partnering with CUNY, but we'll look into that and  
15 we'll see how that is structured. And I would like  
16 to know what would be the relationship between CUNY  
17 if, in fact, another agency is going to take that  
18 over? And finally, what is your relationship beyond  
19 the campus sites that you have, what is your  
20 relationship with other organization that provide  
21 these services. Do you offer any support to them?  
22 Do you offer professional development to other  
23 programs that are related to this in any way?

24           ROBERTO GUERENA: We work with different  
25 agencies including the library. We work with the

1 Mexican Consulate who also provides us with students.  
2 We have affiliations with lots of CBOs and other CUNY  
3 campuses, the whole range of programs throughout the  
4 city.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And finally, as you  
7 talked about private funds that are supporting some  
8 of these programs, are they designated to any  
9 particular programs? And how does that work? Is the  
10 money dispersed through the 14 campuses or is it  
11 targeted to a particular--

12 ROBERTO GUERENA: [interposing] Just at  
13 City Tech. We--we have a unique program. It's  
14 called a hospitality program. It's a partnership  
15 with the Mexican Consulate in the town of Puebla and  
16 Goya Foods. So that's the private partner.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

18 ROBERTO GUERENA: And also CUNY provides  
19 some funding, and it's basically for students who are  
20 looking to get into the hospitality industry. Many  
21 of them work in restaurants. All of them are Mexican  
22 Nationals.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much.

24 ROBERTO GUERENA: You're welcome.  
25

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1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Mr.  
3 Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you so much  
5 to this panel. We're going onto head to the next  
6 panel, and there's a follow up here that you've kind  
7 of given us for development in our next hearing that  
8 we'll hopefully come back in the fall for. So next  
9 for the panel Freddy Acevedo, Adult Literacy Turning  
10 Point; Lawrence Fish, Shorefront Y; Miriam, Arab-  
11 American Family Support Center; and Irfan Ahmed,  
12 Arab-American Family Support Center as well. And you  
13 can--we can have you sit over here, please.

14 [background comments, pause]

15 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And I'll read off  
16 the names for the next panel. So you can get ready.  
17 Louis Welz, COJO of Flatbush; Kevin Douglas, United  
18 Neighborhood; Nelson Yu, Community--Queens Community  
19 House and the Leah Herbert--Herrera. That's for the  
20 next--that's for the next panel. So just--you're--  
21 you're on--you're on deck for the next panel. Okay,  
22 and we can begin here on the left.

23 [pause]

24 LAWRENCE FISH: Can you hear me? Hi.  
25 Thank you. I want to just read what I had written

1  
2 yesterday and I had a few more comments that  
3 developed while I was listening. Hello, and thank  
4 you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is  
5 Lawrence Fish. I'm the Director of Adult Education,  
6 Vocation and Citizenship Services at the Shorefront  
7 YM-YWHA at Brighton Manhattan-Beach in Brooklyn, and  
8 I'm testifying on behalf of our adult literacy  
9 programs. At the Shorefront Y we have a large adult  
10 education program in Brooklyn. We provide classes  
11 and related services to over 1,000 unduplicated  
12 adults yearly with limited English proficiency  
13 through programs including ESL, ESOL, ABE, Adult  
14 Basic Ed, English language, civics. We are funded  
15 for these programs by DYCD, by the New York State  
16 Education Department through the Federal Workforce  
17 Investment Opportunity Initiative, WIOI--WIOI  
18 dollars. And we also receive Department of Homeland  
19 Security OCIS funding for citizenship classes and  
20 services. Our literacy programs run at full  
21 capacity. We have a long ongoing waiting list for  
22 classes of at least 400 students seeking literacy  
23 program services at any given time. Without regular  
24 outreach. Outreach would be--if we did formal  
25 outreach we'd have a lot more I'm sure. There is

1 clearly a tremendous need for literacy services in  
2 our area and throughout New York City. The loss to  
3 New York City through cuts in the Executive Budget  
4 for adult education is immediately damaging and a  
5 long-term disaster for our communities. Whereas,  
6 already stated more than one in five adults over the  
7 age of 18 in New York, 1.7 million have limited  
8 English proficiency or a lack of high school  
9 education or equivalency or both. Especially hard  
10 hit by these cuts specifically is the 2 point--  
11 specifically the \$2.8 cut in funding to DYCD, and the  
12 elimination of the DYCD Young Immigrant Literacy  
13 Program, which informally was known as DACA and is a  
14 DACA program for DACA, potential DACA applicants  
15 administered by DCYD. And a transferring  
16 continuation of only a small portion of these  
17 fundings level to HRA. The results--the results and  
18 the burden of the cuts hitting the population most at  
19 risk and in need in our city, young undocumented  
20 adults or young adults residing in New York City  
21 illegally who benefit from these well spent literacy  
22 dollars will have to remain in the shadows. Will be  
23 less likely to complete a high school education or  
24 obtain and HSE. Will be less likely to attend post-

1 secondary training and education. Will be less able  
2 to effectively negotiate health systems and practice  
3 preventive health or make healthy life choices. Will  
4 be less able to [bell] earn a living wage. Less able  
5 to find meaningful regular employment and develop  
6 careers.  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Mr. Fish, I know  
9 we have it written as well.

10 LAWRENCE FISH: Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Can you just wrap  
12 up with any kind of final thoughts maybe? Some  
13 critical ones especially some--

14 LAWRENCE FISH: Well, I have--I would  
15 bring a few cases, a few personal stories from two.  
16 Can we just spend a few paragraphs on this?

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay.

18 LAWRENCE FISH: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Just focus on one  
20 kind of sailing point.

21 LAWRENCE FISH: It catches the range of  
22 people that we're talking about. I want to tell you  
23 about today is an auspicious day for one of our DACA  
24 young immigrant students including for our DACA class  
25 student, Anastasia Tomaliovich [sp?]. She was hoping

1 to give testimony, but was unable to attend. She was  
2 starting community college at Kingsborough. She  
3 attended DACA classes this year in the morning as her  
4 children were in UPK and her husband worked  
5 construction. She and her family will have a better  
6 future and so will our community. I want to tell you  
7 about another student. This is on page 2, I guess,  
8 Eliana, whose last name--she doesn't know that I'm  
9 testifying about her. Who was one of those who came  
10 out of the shadows and obtained DACA status with the  
11 help of our--us and the Brooklyn Defender Services,  
12 BDS, as part of the DACA funding. Eliana is an  
13 immigrant who at least speaks English.  
14 Unfortunately, she struggles and miserable in school,  
15 dropped out of high school. We see that she writes  
16 poorly and terrible at math. She's hoping to get an  
17 HSE some day, but for the year she attended our ABE  
18 classes and additional volunteer tutoring in basic  
19 math and she says she gets up everyday and works on  
20 her math before going to work. She spent a year  
21 learning the times tables and getting better at  
22 working with addition, subtraction and negative and  
23 positive numbers. Watching how hard she tries, how  
24 diligent and how persistent she is despite her slow  
25

1  
2 progress and frustration. I suspect she has an  
3 undiagnosed brain disability and realize may never  
4 achieve an HSE. Also, as I'm led to understand, it  
5 will be a very expensive diagnosing any specific  
6 disability or that there are very limited services  
7 for this kind of situation. However, she has  
8 obtained a job at an ethnic bakery. She makes donuts  
9 and related baked goods. In the fall she was  
10 suspended and almost lost her job. She burned trays  
11 of product and miscalculated ingredients. Now, that  
12 no longer happens. She is studying. She is working.  
13 She has legal employment status, although be it  
14 insecure. I want to tell you that there is range of  
15 the 127 people that we enrolled in this DACA program.  
16 There is that full range. People who are now  
17 starting. Three of them today actually I think at  
18 community college or this week, and those who may  
19 never apply for DACA may never tell us who they are  
20 exactly. There is a reluctance to show documents.  
21 People come slowly. They're tentative. They don't  
22 like it when we require even SDYCD [sic] required  
23 sign in sheets, attendance sheets, a request for  
24 follow-up surveys and tracking and outcome. They're  
25 very reluctant, but slowly they come to the offices.

1  
2 They find the people the trust. They start to talk  
3 to us. We get their agreement. It's soft. We work  
4 with social service. We connect to them, NYLAG or  
5 Brooklyn Defenders or Urban Justice Center, and we  
6 have people that we talk to there. And they make  
7 appointments and switch the work towards legal  
8 services. And I also get worried about how this is  
9 going to happen under the MOIA HRA connection. It's  
10 taken a couple of years to get this up and going, and  
11 now I'm worrying about what the shift is going to  
12 mean, and are these people going to stay more in the  
13 shadows. I can understand how legal services once  
14 they're applying to come out, but these people are in  
15 the shadows. I don't want them pushed back. I want  
16 these warm programs. You--you don't need all--in  
17 order to see what's going on, all you have to do is  
18 visit our program, walk down the hall, look in the  
19 classrooms, see 15, 20, 25 students, a teacher.  
20 They're all actively engaged. That's all it takes to  
21 know that the program is working. It's--it's a--just  
22 17 and I was really impressed by the--by the  
23 sophistication of--of you Councilman Menchaca, and of  
24 the other members who seem to really understand  
25 what's at the depth of this problem. I just really

1  
2 though, oh, really, you guys already get it. So I  
3 was very happy.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Mr.  
5 Fish.

6 LAWRENCE FISH: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And--and--and I'll  
8 say this a couple more times later, but this is--this  
9 is a true vanguard. These chairs really represent  
10 the different committee relationships, committee  
11 focus areas, and we do get it--

12 LAWRENCE FISH: [interposing] I know you  
13 do.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --in that way. So  
15 thank you so much for that testimony and that  
16 personalization. We're going to move onto the next,  
17 and you can focus on any kind of even responses to  
18 what you've been hearing today especially from the  
19 Administration. What we want to do is get new ideas  
20 in testimony, and especially if you have already  
21 submitted testimony. Instead of reading it, maybe  
22 focusing on some areas that will be helpful in  
23 pushing this conversation forward. I'll ask if you  
24 can do that. Thank you.

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1  
2           LAWRENCE FISH: Even right now I should  
3 continue or the next person? The next person, yeah.  
4 [laughter]

5           CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Mr. Fish, you got--  
6 -you got some ample time today.

7           LAWRENCE FISH: [off mic] I appreciate  
8 it.

9           CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And--and very  
10 thoughtful remarks, too, by the way. We're going to  
11 keep you in the list of--of return--

12           LAWRENCE FISH: [interposing]

13           CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay.

14           CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: And if you could in  
15 your remarks. Also one of the things that we're  
16 wondering is were you engaged in a conversation by  
17 the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs or HRA about  
18 transition of potential obstacles that that would  
19 create? As you're speaking, all of you come back  
20 with that. Answer that question as part of your  
21 comments.

22           FREDDY ACEVEDO: Ready?

23           CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay.

24           FREDDY ACEVEDO: Hi, my name is Freddy  
25 Acevedo. I'm a current Turning Point student. We're

1 based out of Brooklyn, Sunset Park and I myself I'm a  
2 dyslexic individual. Academically school was  
3 something that never necessarily came easy to me, and  
4 I did end up dropping out of high school. However,  
5 at the age of 22, I don't know--it was I literally  
6 woke up and I started kind of reflecting on where I  
7 was in life, and where I wanted to be and what my  
8 options were long term, and I really thought I needed  
9 to get my education together at that point. So I  
10 ended up finding Turning Point through a reference, a  
11 former graduate who obtained their HSE, and I wanted  
12 to check it out because they told me that, you know,  
13 they do cater to dyslexic students. And if they do  
14 have any kind of learning disabilities actually. And  
15 before I came to Turning Point, I was working retail.  
16 I was working retail for five years. Just dead-end  
17 jobs really going nowhere, and that's not what I  
18 wanted to do. So Turning Point in the classroom they  
19 actually--I was able to--I have everything that I  
20 need for HSE except for my math. So I'm very proud  
21 of that. They helped me accomplish, you know,  
22 everything academically that I really needed to and  
23 they still helped me to do so. But other than that,  
24 my personal development outside of the classroom,  
25

1 which is really why I wanted to come and testify  
2 today. Because if you were to ask me a year ago  
3 about--about when I got started, would I even be ever  
4 able to sit up here and talk to you people--to talk  
5 to the City Council about, you know, being an  
6 advocate for an academic institution. I would never  
7 be able to do that and, you know, here I am today  
8 able to do that. And it wouldn't be the case without  
9 the personal development that I got at Turning Point.  
10 When I first--when I first came to Turning Point, you  
11 know, I thought I would just try to get my HSE and  
12 move on. But I never realized that now I'm actually  
13 looking at colleges as an option. Whereas, before I  
14 did that, I never thought college was going to be an  
15 option. Because like I said earlier, academics was  
16 never something that came easily. So, you know,  
17 thanks to Turning Point, now I'm looking at college  
18 and the--the potential future that I can have  
19 available to me. Prior to when I started, I could  
20 say Turning Point really saved the quality of life  
21 that I [bell] look forward to.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Freddy,  
24 and we wish you--we wish you luck.

25 FREDDY ACEVEDO: Thank you.

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IRFAN AHMED: Good afternoon. I wish to  
thank the Chairs and council members for holding this  
over--important oversight hearing on how New York  
City is educating its adult immigrant communities.  
My name is Irfan Ahmed and I'm with the Arab-American  
Family Support Center, and we stand in solidarity  
with the NYCCAL Community Partners with Students, who  
are all present today on this very important issue.  
We wish to draw attention to the adult education  
needs of the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim and South  
Asian population of New York City, which from here on  
in I will refer to with the acronym AMEMSA.  
According to the New York City Department of Planning  
the number of Arabs immigrants increased by one-third  
between 2007 and 2011, making it one of the fastest  
growing immigrant groups in the city. For South  
Asians we also see an increase between 1900 and 2010  
particularly Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Indians.  
Last but not least according to the Office of English  
Language Learners in their Demographic Report of  
2013-2014, it indicated that among the top five  
languages spoken in New York City Bengali and Arabic  
is at third and fourth place after Spanish and  
Chinese respectively. What we draw from our

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1  
2 experience of providing adult education and literacy  
3 services is that we recognize that there is a great  
4 need of English Language services. Unfortunately,  
5 many are put on waiting lists because we don't have  
6 the capacity or funding to help them. We have also  
7 attracted a very unique population of AMENSA women.  
8 We provide women only classes as well that are  
9 culturally competent and tailored to their needs.  
10 However, if those classes--if funding does not  
11 continue and those classes are not offered, they will  
12 be turned away. We recognize that many of the  
13 populations come from part of the world that is  
14 facing civil war, conflagration and conflict that has  
15 upended and disrupted their lives. These are  
16 populations that want stability, and a chance to  
17 restart their lives. We in particular look at our  
18 youth in which the U.S. Bureau surveyed households to  
19 determine which areas were linguistically isolated  
20 for children. Meaning that they were not in contact  
21 with English speakers over the age of 14 who spoke  
22 English very well such as their parents. The top  
23 ranked neighborhoods were Bensonhurst, Bayridge,  
24 Elmhurst, Coney Island, Jackson Heights and Sunset  
25 Park. All areas also know to have large AMEMSA

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1  
2 communities. We want to be beside them as they pursue  
3 their path toward self-sufficiency. and empower them  
4 along the way. We call upon city leaders to adhere  
5 to the recommendations of NYCCAL and restore and  
6 expand adult education funding. [speaking foreign  
7 language] Thank you.

8 [pause]

9 IRFAN AHMED: I would like to pass it on  
10 to one of our students who comes to our center. Her  
11 name is Mary.

12 [background comments]

13 MIRIAM: Good afternoon. My name is  
14 Miriam, and I am happy to be here today. I'm from  
15 Saudia [sic] and I am happy to learn English.  
16 English is important for me because it will help me  
17 to get a job. I--I need English so I can help with  
18 my--I can help my kids with their homework. I am  
19 excited my new life in America. AMEMSA helped--  
20 helped me stand up on my own two feet. With your  
21 help--with your help I get energy and improvement to  
22 become start--to become independent on my own. I  
23 want to thank you for your support.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: To both Mr. Freddy  
25 and Ms. Miriam, thank you so much for your testimony

1  
2 today. I think in so many ways it's so important to  
3 put a face to the conversation, to the policy  
4 measures and both of you are examples of--of the  
5 benefits of the work that we're trying to do. And so  
6 I want to thank both of you for your courage today to  
7 be part of the City Council conversation. And I want  
8 to make sure that we have-- So are there any  
9 questions here from the council members? No. No  
10 Council member--no questions? And--and back to the  
11 original question that Council Member Arroyo was  
12 asking about whether or not you were approached by  
13 the Administration to be part of conversations, have  
14 you--have you been able to be part of any  
15 conversations about that--the new restructuring?

16 IRFAN AHMED: From my understanding not  
17 as of yet. We're trying to raise our profile so we  
18 can get more involved in these conversations because  
19 we think they're very important for our pop--the  
20 populations that we serve.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, great.  
22 Thank you, and again--

23 LAWRENCE FISH: [interposing] And from  
24 [laughs] and from my own experience also we were--we  
25 were really happy to see that some continuation of

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5 DACA would be, or a variation would be considered,  
6 but it's kind of dismaying to hear just oh, it's  
7 going to move to MOIA and be administered by HRA. And  
8 we thought, well, how is that really going to work.  
9 I know it's---

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] And  
11 that's what we're--

12 LAWRENCE FISH: --to be smooth.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And that's what  
14 we're unpacking today, which is great.

15 LAWRENCE FISH: Yeah, I see you did.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: We're going to get  
17 under the hood on this one for sure. Thank you so  
18 much.

19 [pause]

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: We've also been  
21 joined, we're looking at the next panel up. And  
22 we've been joined by the Honorable Rosanno Lopez  
23 Leon, from Puerto. We'll give her a big round of  
24 applause for being here today. [applause] She's a  
25 senator in Puerto Rico, and we're just so happy that  
you're here, and joining us in this very, very, very  
important conversation that I'm sure also has very  
similar roots and discussion in Puerto Rico. So

1  
2 thank you for being here today. Okay, let's start  
3 from the left.

4           LOUIS WELZ: Is it on? Good afternoon  
5 and thank you Chairs Menchaca, Arroyo, Eugene and  
6 Barron and members of the City Council who are here  
7 for the opportunity to testify today. My name is  
8 Louis Welz, Chief Executive Officer of COJO Flatbush.  
9 I am testifying on behalf of COJO Flatbush and in  
10 support of other community-based organizations that  
11 provide English language classes for immigrants and  
12 their families. In 2014, nearly 100 adult immigrants  
13 and poor English speakers benefitted from COJO's  
14 adult literacy classes. Our work in the Adult  
15 Literacy Initiative has made our organization a  
16 trusted and familiar center for immigrants seeking  
17 this essential service. The city's funding for this  
18 program was transferred to our adult education  
19 contracts, but that contract is only--is only to  
20 provide HSE preparation and as a result, HSE  
21 preparation and as a result our vital Adult Literacy  
22 classes will close on June 30th.

23           I'm here today to tell the Council that  
24 the Adult Literacy Initiative is a--is vital to our  
25 Brooklyn community and critical to the success of the

1 city and its residents. It is a grave error not to  
2 increase our investment in adult education  
3 particularly on a national level President Obama has  
4 been pushing the country to adopt Comprehensive  
5 National Immigration Reform, advocating for young  
6 immigrants and families to gain a pathway to  
7 citizenship. The de Blasio Administration has also  
8 been at the forefront in integrating immigrants  
9 through education and creating access to better  
10 opportunities. However, unless we continue to  
11 provide means such as the Adult Literacy Program to  
12 help immigrants integrate, they will remain a  
13 desperate underclass in our society. Over 50% of the  
14 communities we serve in Brooklyn are comprised of  
15 immigrants.  
16

17           Almost a third do not speak English well  
18 or at all. Our students come to class speaking Udu,  
19 Hebrew, Bashdu [sic], French, Arabic, Russian, Farsi,  
20 Cantonese, Spanish, Hindi and the list goes on. Our  
21 community is diverse. We all share a common goal of  
22 learning English. They often leer--the live near or  
23 under the Federal Poverty Level, struggling to find  
24 jobs and exploited in the process. They work in  
25 unhealthy conditions in nail salons and for little

1 pay, particularly as bus boys or car wash employees.  
2 They are unaware and unable to access social services  
3 for their families and denied the rights, duties and  
4 protections that U.S. citizens take for granted. For  
5 these immigrants learning to speak and read English  
6 is the foundation of success for themselves and their  
7 families. Last month we asked our students to tell  
8 us what learning English meant for them, and I took a  
9 random of four examples. I can find a job if I speak  
10 English.  
11

12 We are able to advocate for ourselves and  
13 avoid human rights abuses. I can help my children  
14 with their homework. We are able to understand our  
15 doctors and keep ourselves and our families healthy.  
16 In short, adult literacy allows--allows immigrants to  
17 access the education, services and gainful  
18 employment. It also protects their children, the  
19 next generation of New Yorkers because adult literacy  
20 among parents is the greatest determinant of  
21 children's future success outweighing other factors  
22 such as neighborhood and family income. To reduce  
23 this program's scope will only deepen the very  
24 inequality that Mayor de Blasio and our leaders in  
25 the City Council are working to fight. And leave

1  
2 these families with little hope to become productive  
3 and prosperous community members. COJO strongly  
4 urges you to find a way to invest to expand the City  
5 Council's Adult Literacy Initiative for COJO and  
6 other community provides that provides these--that  
7 provide these classes throughout the city. Thank  
8 you.

9 [background comments]

10 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Before you begin,  
11 were you involved in the conversation with the  
12 Administration at any level around the transition of-  
13 -transitioning of adult literacy from DYCD to HRA?

14 LOUIS WELZ: I think you would be happy  
15 to find out the way we found out. We put in--as they  
16 merged the two contracts, we submitted our work  
17 scope, and we got an email back say no, no, no ESLs  
18 any more. It's only HSE. So, no, there was no  
19 conversation, it's just that we were just--we were  
20 told what to do.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [off mic] Thank  
23 you.

24 NELSON YU: All right, good afternoon.  
25 My name is Nelson Yu. I am the Director of Adult

1 Education and Immigration at the Queens Community  
2 House. Thank you for this opportunity to share with  
3 you about our Queens Community House and the program  
4 we offer. QCH has been providing adult ESL literacy  
5 classes for over 26 years. The majority of the  
6 students are from Queens Community Districts 3 and 4.  
7 These districts include areas of Corona, Elmhurst,  
8 Forest Hills and Jackson Heights. These four  
9 neighborhoods alone have alone have a foreign born  
10 population over 50% with Elmhurst having 71% of the  
11 population foreign born. Te vast majority of  
12 immigrants in these areas come from countries  
13 demonstrating low English proficiency. Accord to the  
14 New York City Department of Planning's New York's  
15 newest New Yorkers while 6% of New York City's native  
16 born residents are not proficient in English. Over  
17 50% of the city's foreign born residents lack English  
18 proficiency.

19  
20 QCH's student includes populations with  
21 the highest rates of English proficiency over 50%  
22 Mexicans; 82% Ecuadorian; 75% Chinese; 74%  
23 Dominicans--70, and Bangladeshis at 58%. Our program  
24 provides intensive English language instruction  
25 taught by experienced dedicated and passionate

1  
2 professionals most of whom worked full-time at one  
3 point, but due to cuts in adult education, we have to  
4 continually cut salaries and work hours. This  
5 greatly affects not only our dedicated QCH  
6 instructors, but limits the amount of instruction we  
7 provide for the community. Therefore, negatively  
8 impacting the educational consistency and attainment  
9 for our adult English learners. Our students also  
10 have limited income. Sampling a group of 107  
11 students, 36% reported an income below 125% of the  
12 Federal Poverty Level. Many in the sample are  
13 employed but in low-wage jobs.

14           Eighteen percent of our student base is  
15 between 18 to 24 years. Many students are parents  
16 seeking to better engage in their children's  
17 schooling and interested in becoming more involved in  
18 the local communities. English is a necessary tool  
19 for retaining employment, advancing in work,  
20 enrolling in vocational training and education  
21 opportunities leading to substantial employment,  
22 supporting their children's educational achievement,  
23 and being engaged citizens. The demand for English  
24 classes will only continue rise based on the increase  
25 in immigration pattern. A big concern of ours is the

1  
2 cut to Young Adult Literacy. Without a competent  
3 level of English, young adults struggle to career  
4 jobs, salaries that can afford them and their  
5 families a basic standard of living. Our students  
6 are in firm belief that securing a good job with  
7 benefits to support themselves and their family  
8 English competency must--is a necessary skill.

9           Our courses provide these individuals  
10 with the tools and confidence necessary to succeed in  
11 American society. Many of our students are also  
12 parents, parents that want desperately to understand  
13 and support their child through school. A level of  
14 disconnect has developed between parent and child and  
15 the school because of this. Immigrant children are  
16 in Americanized school systems. Imagine going to a  
17 parent/teacher conference [bell] and not  
18 understanding what the teacher is saying about your  
19 child. Without the proper education, English  
20 competency for these parents has not developed.  
21 Parents are having difficulties helping their child  
22 succeed in schools. As educators we all know, as  
23 parent's--a parent's involvement is just as important  
24 as a teachers. As parents we want to be supportive  
25 and help our children grow. Based on recent

1 testimonials from our current students, it's one the  
2 biggest factors to why they out in these classes is  
3 to help their child. Two more paragraphs.

4  
5 Queens Community House is about the  
6 Community. Our students are fully embraced and are  
7 welcome in the QHC--QCH family beyond just a  
8 registered student. One previous student of ours now  
9 works with our Housing Department at QCH. Students  
10 now are currently serving as volunteers to help  
11 advocate for our educational programs. Without  
12 continued support and funding, the embodiment of  
13 community cannot thrive in our diverse community.  
14 These English programs are not to teach English, but  
15 helps promote the embodiment of community in this--  
16 in--across Queens. The Queens Community House has  
17 programming for everyone of all ages from youth  
18 programming to senior care. We serve sons,  
19 daughters, grandparent and parents alike. We want to  
20 continue to do so. A cut in this funding would mean  
21 cutting out parents and young adults in the family  
22 community picture. Please continue the support and  
23 funding for the families and help their communities.  
24 On behalf of the Queens Community House, I thank you  
25 for your time.

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1  
2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you and can  
3 you answer that question as well whether or not you  
4 were part of the conversations in this?

5 NELSON YU: The simple answer is no.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay. Thank you.  
7 Kevin.

8 KEVIN DOUGLAS: Hi, good afternoon. My  
9 name is Kevin Douglas. I'm with United Neighborhood  
10 Houses of New York. I want to thank Chairs Menchaca,  
11 Arroyo, Barron and also Eugene for hosting this  
12 afternoon's hearing. I'll just start off with a  
13 couple of quick notes. We're a part of the New York  
14 City Coalition for Adult Literacy and fully endorse  
15 and support the recommendations we hear from our  
16 group leaders. So I'm not going to get into a lot of  
17 the detail about why literacy matter, and just sort  
18 of say--speak to that. To the question about whether  
19 we were engaged, I would say there wasn't a proactive  
20 engagement from the Administration directly to  
21 providers and advocates in the field, but in their  
22 sort of defense, they did make themselves available  
23 when we reached out and asked for that conversation.  
24 So we have had conversations with numerous  
25 commissioners from the City and representatives of

1  
2 the Mayor. We haven't been crazy or happy about sort  
3 of the conversation results and really some of the  
4 cuts that we see in the budget, but there was a  
5 dialogue. And then just a final quick housekeeping  
6 note, if you will, is if you look around the room  
7 today, you'll see a lot of the students have pieces  
8 of paper that say Literacy Lifts and it talks about  
9 their own individual stories. We would really  
10 encourage you to go on Twitter Literacy Lifts in New  
11 York City, and really look at some of the stories  
12 about literacy matters to them so much. For  
13 purposes--

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [off mic] What is  
15 it? [sic]

16 KEVIN DOUGLAS: What the hashtag is  
17 Literacy Lifts NYC.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Literacy Lifts NYC  
19 hashtag. Got it. Thank you.

20 KEVIN DOUGLAS: Thank you. So for my  
21 testimony there's three quick sections. I'm just  
22 going to highlight a couple parts. One is just  
23 looking at the adult education as a whole, DACA and  
24 the Adult Literacy Initiative. In terms of adult  
25 education in the city, one of the main takeaways for

1  
2 the Council should be just the significant lack of  
3 the investment in adult literacy services. We  
4 actually were at a point several years ago where the  
5 city was putting out an RFP for literacy services and  
6 had no baseline money in it. The only money in that  
7 RFP was the Council restoration money and federal  
8 pass through. And one of the sort of frustrating  
9 things to sort of sit in the crowd in the hearings  
10 over the year has been to hear the City talk about  
11 the amount of money available for adult literacy.  
12 And it not being clear I think to the Council that  
13 the money wasn't city, and there was no city tax  
14 investment. And much of the funding was for young  
15 adults. So they were not really looking at the full  
16 literacy population.

17           And I think part of the reason for that  
18 is that there has been a real lack of executive  
19 ownership in the Administration for this or the prior  
20 one for adult literacy. And we saw the Mayor's  
21 Office of Adult Education. That was eliminated in  
22 the last administration and folded into OHCD, Office  
23 of Human Capital Development, which is the precursor  
24 for the Office of Workforce Development today. And  
25 we hear from the Literacy Advisor from that office

1  
2 today who really did a great job talking about sort  
3 of the work they're doing. But the fact remains we  
4 don't have a singular point of leadership or  
5 executive ownership in the city that says this is  
6 important, this is a priority. And I think that's  
7 something the Council should really look as you look  
8 at the question of city educates immigrants.

9           Something that wasn't raised at all today  
10 I think is important for you also to be aware of is  
11 the fact that federal policy is going to make it  
12 incredibly more difficult for immigrant New Yorkers  
13 to be served. Under the Workforce Innovation and  
14 Opportunity Act it's likely that the policy has been  
15 set forward and it will not allow the city to serve  
16 undocumented individuals. It would also make it very  
17 difficult to serve those who are at the lowest levels  
18 of literacy. [bell] So it will almost be a creaming  
19 effect. So this is another trend I think for the  
20 Council to take a look at. I reckon my time has  
21 expired so my last two points on DACA. One of the  
22 sort of critiques we've heard about the DACA program  
23 is sort of the lack of data on the number of DACA  
24 eligibles who actually served and moved forward. And  
25 we think it's just really important to note that this

1  
2 was actually sort of by design and a recognition that  
3 the population in question, you know, needs to be  
4 part of a broader constituency, and it needs to be  
5 part of a broader community of people serving--  
6 seeking literacy services.

7           And we think that was an important part  
8 of the success of the model is that literacy is  
9 available to immigrants at large, and people weren't  
10 sort of asked to raise their hand and self-identify  
11 and say I'm documented and I'm going to be in an  
12 undocumented literacy class. And we really want to  
13 make sure that the Administration really carefully  
14 considers that in the design of the program moving  
15 forward. The last piece on DACA and you guys had  
16 asked about this is about this sort of transparency  
17 in the transition. We are very concerned that there  
18 was very little communication to the field and to  
19 this day, today I don't think you got answers to the  
20 questions about what the new program model is going  
21 to look like, and how programs will be administered.  
22 We heard a lot about sort of plans and designs, but  
23 we don't know what those are. We have contracts that  
24 end next week, and provider students have nowhere to  
25 go. I did hear the Administration speak to the 4,100

1  
2 who will lose literacy services next week and what  
3 the plan is for them, and I hope that this Council  
4 will continue to really work with them in the weeks  
5 going forward. Thank you.

6 LEAH ABER: Good afternoon and thank you  
7 Chairs Menchaca, Arroyo, Barron and Eugene and  
8 members of the City Council for the opportunity to  
9 testify today. My name is Leah Aber and I'm the  
10 Interim Chief Program Officer at Opportunities for a  
11 Better Tomorrow, a workforce development and  
12 immigrant services organization and also a member of  
13 NYCCAL. Just to quickly answer the question asked  
14 before, I was at the same meetings as Kevin and echo  
15 his sentiments. Since 2001, OBT has been--has been  
16 providing ESOL classes and adult literacy classes to  
17 over--and we now serve over 800 adults in Sunset Park  
18 Eastwood, Williamsburg and Bushwick. With DACA or  
19 DYCD funding cut of \$2.8 million, we're set to lose  
20 approximately 100 of those slots next week.  
21 Philosophy slots will have a devastating impact on  
22 our immigrant communities, particularly the  
23 communities we serve. There's a huge need in our  
24 communities and across the city as a whole. All of  
25 our programs have huge waiting lists of hundreds of

1  
2 people. There's nowhere to send anyone. All of the  
3 providers have really wait lists and it's something  
4 that's concerning as this transition moves forward  
5 especially around DACA.

6           These hundred seats that we are--we might  
7 lose in a week are more than just English classes.  
8 They're an entryway to a whole host of community  
9 resources and services. It's really--and it's really  
10 important that we provide this resource to immigrants  
11 in our communities to integrate them linguistically  
12 and economically into the U.S. society. When  
13 immigrants enroll in English classes at one of our  
14 locations that offer and take advantage of their  
15 services that we provide including workshops on  
16 financial literacy, affordable housing and access to  
17 legal services as many of them are getting harassed  
18 and evicted out of their homes in gentrifying areas.  
19 Healthcare and also immigration services. The  
20 majority of our ESOL students are working and they're  
21 looking--they're also looking for better employment.  
22 They're looking to earn their High School Equivalency  
23 diploma, which is needed in most entry level  
24 positions now. And in addition, we're able to  
25 supplement our programs with job developers that help

1  
2 them with job placement assistance, job training, and  
3 also we offer advanced and basic computer skills  
4 classes.

5           So the loss of these ESOL slots will also  
6 mean the connection to other important services that  
7 we provide immigrants in our community. And would  
8 say probably the most important thing is that the  
9 cuts to the DACA Initiative are also a cut for a  
10 vital point of entry for many of those who are  
11 seeking DACA and DAPA services. As Robert Smith had  
12 mentioned earlier in his testimony as someone is more  
13 educated, they are likely to engage in DACA and  
14 eventually DAPA services. It's very frightening.  
15 There's a lot of myths and miscommunication around  
16 DACA. And being able to provide a whole host of  
17 services and especially ESOL services that many  
18 people are looking for in our community has been--has  
19 allowed us to make referrals for [bell] for DACA. I  
20 would say that we estimate over the last two years  
21 we've served over 100 eligible young adults who would  
22 qualify for DACA, who weren't referred to us by  
23 another organization or legal services. We were  
24 actually the ones who enabled--were able to meet

1  
2 those services. So thank you again for allowing me  
3 to testify.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you to the  
5 panel. I just want to underscore a couple of pieces  
6 that we can just keep on underscore is the--the  
7 entryway is really the--the kind of connection to and  
8 the gateway to other services because you are on the  
9 ground and really not losing your focus as we develop  
10 this new--this new model, this new outreach model.  
11 And then the other questions on your waiting lists,  
12 if one of you could just talk a little bit about--  
13 maybe Kevin you can talk a little bit the waiting  
14 lists. We heard over a year wait list. If you have  
15 any more to kind of expand on that piece. It seems  
16 to be the major urgent component to all this.

17 KEVIN DOUGLAS: Sure. So I think it was  
18 actually pretty shocking that the Administration  
19 shared the numbers today. 80,000 people served in  
20 New York City and 1.7 million in need. So that off  
21 the bat kind of tells you what you need to know. It  
22 sort of the way providers typically approach to the  
23 wait list are one of two ways. One, they say we're  
24 not going to have a wait list. They don't want to  
25 create a false sense of hope for people unless they

1  
2 know that it actually means something. And for those  
3 who do have a wait list, it's often as you've heard a  
4 two-year or longer. As a coalition, we did an  
5 informal survey at the field last some of the CUNY  
6 programs, libraries, CBOs and what we found from them  
7 were just that small subset over 80,000 inquiries  
8 each year for services, and over 14,000 people were  
9 put on wait lists. So just in this very small survey  
10 we did within our own small field, it really just  
11 demonstrated that there's a significant wait list for  
12 services.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. Thank  
14 you for that. Chair Arroyo, please.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you, Mr.  
16 Chair. So United Neighborhood Council I think as an  
17 umbrella organization and for the organizations  
18 sitting here individually. How many of you stand to  
19 lose the contract as of the end of this month, and  
20 how much are we talking about in terms of funding  
21 individually and the United Neighborhood Houses if  
22 you know the impact to your universe of member  
23 organizations?

24 LEAH ABER: So--so we have no information  
25 on whether or not we will lose our contract. We

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5 assume that since there's been a huge funding cut  
6 that we will, but we still don't know as of next  
7 week. We have a \$120,000 contract for--

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Say that again.

9 LEAH ABER: We have a \$120,000 contract  
10 for the first piece.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: No the first part  
12 that you have.

13 LEAH ABER: [interposing] We--we don't  
14 have--

15 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Today is the 22nd of  
16 June. The fiscal year ends the end of this month,  
17 and today you don't know if you're going to have a  
18 contract moving into next fiscal year?

19 LEAH ABER: Correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Is that true for all  
21 of you? And United Neighborhood Houses if you can at  
22 some point get us a report on your member  
23 organizations what--what is the funding that we are  
24 concerned about.

25 KEVIN DOUGLAS: Absolutely, and I--and I  
can say for right now at least we have over half a  
dozen organizations meeting today Queens Community  
House, Shorefront Y, who are testifying; Arab-

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1  
2 American Family Support Center, and each of them is  
3 at risk at least of losing one or more contracts.

4 Many of them are contracted both for the ESOL as well  
5 as HSE or ABE, and the collective loss to our system  
6 is over \$700,000. But I will certainly get the  
7 specifics to you.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay. Council  
10 Member Barron. No questions? Okay. I will move  
11 onto our next panel. Thank you so much. Our next  
12 panel is Jennifer Valdes, Northern Manhattan  
13 Improvement; David Hunt [sic], Queens Community  
14 House; Sandy Myers, UJA Federation of New York,  
15 NYCCAL. Please come, and then for--for the--the last  
16 panel after that and if you have not submitted a  
17 slip, please do so. The last panel will be Sierra  
18 Stoneman-Bell from Make the Road; Jocelyn Mendoza,  
19 Make the Road; Margarita from NYLAG; and Maria  
20 Goodell, MFY Legal Services and that will be our  
21 final panel.

22 [background comments]

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And we're so  
24 excited that our--our great council member from the  
25

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1  
2 Upper West Side Helen Rose--Rosenthal is here as  
3 well. Thank you so much for joining us today.

4           DAVID HUNT: Good afternoon honorable  
5 City Council members, Chair Menchaca, Chair Arroyo,  
6 Chair Barron. Thank you for this opportunity. I am  
7 a Peruvian immigrant and an American citizen. I work  
8 as an ESL teacher or ESOL teacher, an immigration  
9 specialist at Queens Community House. I have  
10 submitted testimony. I would like to depart a little  
11 bit from this testimony and answer some of your  
12 questions. On Thursday I participated in an  
13 immigration task force meeting with the Mayor--  
14 Mayor's Office of the New Immigration Affairs or  
15 Immigrant Affairs. And the impression I got was the  
16 policy now is going to be geared towards volunteers  
17 and--and providing services through volunteers. To  
18 me it seems like the wrong approach, but there's no  
19 backbone, no structure to their approach. Volunteers  
20 just by definition are not people who are making  
21 money[laughs] and, therefore, cannot be relied upon  
22 to provide the type of stability and consistency that  
23 our students and immigrant community deserve. I--I  
24 wanted to also refer to the first panel member who  
25 testified. I believe his name is Malberto Alinde.

1 He talked about how he got involved in the criminal  
2 justice system before being a teacher and immigration  
3 specialist for QCH. I worked as a mitigation court  
4 expert/court advocate for my own agency and for a  
5 non-profit agency called the Osborne Association. My  
6 agency was called Defense Advocacy Services. Through  
7 15 years I--I can tell that the problem with  
8 delinquency and deviant behavior stems partly or  
9 largely due to the fact that there's a lack of  
10 communication between parents and children especially  
11 immigrant parents. They're not able to communicate  
12 with their children. Their children, therefore, find  
13 another family outside of the household and start  
14 getting into trouble. A lot of my students nowadays  
15 they are in class to inspire their children, and also  
16 to prepare to communicate with their children  
17 effectively. Once they reach that critical age where  
18 they--they will look for support and independence  
19 outside the home. So classes are empowering. A  
20 system that does not consider the empowerment of  
21 immigrants as the centerpiece is a system that is  
22 bound to fail, or at least not be effective. So it  
23 will be a waste of money. It will be a waste of  
24 time. It will be a waste of resources, and it will  
25

1  
2 be a waste of the tremendous potential that  
3 immigrants have. I'm an immigrant. I had to learn  
4 English as a second language. Now, I teach English.  
5 I worked professionally in state and federal courts  
6 for 15 years. People pay me to write, to persuade  
7 judges and prosecutors, and now I'm teaching and now  
8 I'm helping other immigrants who want to become  
9 citizens, who want to apply for DACA. I think that  
10 from what I've heard our leaders in the City Council  
11 are on the right track. You guys know of the  
12 tremendous need for services, for more funds. And I-  
13 -I commend you for your efforts and your leadership  
14 in getting us the funds we need to serve our  
15 immigrant community. It is absolutely critical that  
16 we serve our immigrant community not only for their  
17 benefit, also for the benefit of the city. The  
18 immigrants are the foundation of the city. Even  
19 Republican mayors recognize that. And--and so we  
20 need your help. We need you to stand up for us, and  
21 the immigrants will not disappoint. They came here a  
22 long way to pursue their dreams, and they will  
23 realize their dreams if you give them the tools. Now  
24 an emphasis on interpreters and translators is not  
25 empowering. It is helpful, it is necessary, but it's

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2 not necessarily empowering. And we want to empower  
3 our students to be self-reliant American citizens,  
4 and I hope that you help us in that endeavor. [bell]

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: We're on--we're  
6 on--we're on the same page here. Thank you so much  
7 for your testimony. Thank you.

8 JENNIFER ANZARDO VALDES: Good afternoon.  
9 My name is Jennifer Anzardo Valdes and I'm the Senior  
10 Immigration Attorney at Northern Manhattan  
11 Improvement Corporation. NMIC was founded in 1979  
12 and has continuously offered quality education and  
13 legal services to Upper Manhattan and the Bronx  
14 communities. We provide an array of services to low-  
15 income community members including social services,  
16 legal services, adult education program, and  
17 workforce programs. Last the year alone, NMIC has  
18 served hundreds of clients, many who are documented  
19 and undocumented immigrants. The immigrant  
20 communities that we serve are concentrated in the  
21 Bronx and Upper Manhattan, which has the fourth  
22 largest foreign born population in the city. In the  
23 Washington Heights community 34% of the students in  
24 the public system--public school system are

25

1  
2 registered as English Language Learners, the highest  
3 percentage in all New York City.

4           Adult education and legal programs are  
5 imperative for our community to gain the literacy,  
6 skills and the stability necessary to enter the  
7 hyper-competitive New York City job market. NMIC is  
8 very grateful to the City Council for its past adult  
9 education and legal DACA events, which have allowed  
10 us to create literacy programs that meet the ever-  
11 growing needs of our community. Currently, NMIC's  
12 Education Department offers ESL classes, pre-High  
13 School Equivalency, High School Equivalency classes  
14 and post-secondary placement into college and  
15 employment. Through the past DACA funding increases,  
16 NMIC was able to expand on their educational offering  
17 and increase the number of community members we are  
18 able to serve. Over the last year alone, NMIC's  
19 Adult Education Program has served over 200 DACA  
20 eligible clients. In our experience, 80% of the  
21 youth participants in the Council funded programs  
22 have increased their literacy level by at least one  
23 grade. In addition to academic instruction, DACA  
24 funding has allowed participants to receive one-on-  
25 one counseling directly with case managers. This has

1  
2 increased the collaboration between NMIC's Education  
3 and Legal Departments as DACA eligible participants  
4 are assisted in assessing the multiple services  
5 offered at NMIC including education, legal job  
6 training and placement, as well as referrals to  
7 partner agencies throughout Upper Manhattan and the  
8 Bronx.

9           The case of Elsie and her family present  
10 an example of how our clients have benefitted from  
11 DACA funding. Elsie is a 22-year-old mother of three  
12 children from Pueblo, Mexico. She arrived in the  
13 United States at the age of six, and was unaware of  
14 her possibility for immigration relief. During one  
15 of her HSE classes, a representative from NMIC's  
16 Legal Department made a presentation to the class on  
17 ways to address their immigration status. Elsie  
18 requested an appointment, and personal screening from  
19 a NIMC legal member who determined she was eligible  
20 to apply for DACA. At the time filing an  
21 application, Elsie was unemployed and struggling to  
22 make ends meet for her three children. Thanks to the  
23 Council supported DACA funding, NMIC was able to  
24 assist Elsie with application fees. In December of  
25 2014, Elsie passed her HSE exam and her DACA

1 application was also approved. She now has an  
2 employment authorization card, and was able to obtain  
3 a Social Security number. She has benefitted  
4 tremendously for this approval.  
5

6           Through the services she received from  
7 NMIC she is now employed full time thinking about  
8 college and on a sure pathway to self-sufficiency.  
9 [bell] Unfortunately, due to limited funding not all  
10 of our community members have been able to access  
11 services like Elsie. This limited access has left us  
12 with a current wait list of over 1,000 students  
13 seeking educational services. We expect this need to  
14 greatly increase due to the Executive Actions Plant  
15 to expand DACA and this new initiatives for DAPA.  
16 Almost half of the people who are estimated to be  
17 eligible for DACA and DAPA reside in the communities  
18 primarily reserved by NMIC. The availability of sets  
19 in the ESOL and HSE programs will be crucial to allow  
20 students to apply for DACA. Additionally, though  
21 DACA does not have an educational component, the  
22 skills learned in the education programs will be  
23 crucial for these adults to gain lawful employment  
24 status and to enter the workforce. With the loss of  
25

1  
2 funding for these programs NMIC will not be allowed  
3 to meet the demand in the community.

4 I know my time has wound up. So I just  
5 wanted to skip over to our recommendations, which is  
6 that we agree with the New York City Coalition for  
7 Adult Literacy and recommend that the Literacy  
8 Program of the DACA funding should be expanded to \$20  
9 million over the next two years. We also recommend  
10 an increase in funding for expansion of legal  
11 services for DACA and DAPA eligible persons. And we  
12 recommend that funding for the literacy portion to  
13 include funding for case management. These services  
14 are essential to assist the removable barriers that  
15 prevent smooth integration into employment. Case  
16 management focuses on final development, education  
17 opportunity, and employment preparation. Finally, we  
18 believe that these expansions of the aforementioned  
19 services are essential to successful implementation  
20 and seamless transition into the formal economy for  
21 most individuals. Thank you.

22 SANDY MYERS: Hi, everyone. Good  
23 afternoon and thank you to Chairs Menchaca, Arroyo,  
24 Barron and Eugene for the opportunity to testify  
25 today. So my name is Sandy Myers. I'm the Associate

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2 Director of Government Relations at the UJA  
3 Federation, and today testifying on behalf of NYCCAL,  
4 the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy. But  
5 UJA Federation also recommends the same--the same  
6 outcomes for this. So, just to be clear, I want to  
7 lay out what the NYCCAL recommendations are, and what  
8 we would really like to see included in the final  
9 budget negotiations and hopefully in the--in the  
10 Adopted Budget. So first, we're looking for a  
11 restoration of \$4.7 million for the 4,100 slots that  
12 were cut from DYCD and CUNY. The second is a \$5  
13 million enhancement to the City Council's Adult  
14 Literacy Initiative to create additional seats and  
15 that would really complement the city's workforce  
16 goals. So I'm go into those a little bit towards the  
17 end of my testimony, but just wanted that to be at  
18 the front. So as we heard many times today, we're  
19 really concerned about the 1.7 million New Yorkers  
20 who lack English proficiency, their High School  
21 Equivalency or both, and we really want to see a  
22 robust investment in trying to help that community  
23 meet its needs. As many of you saw, the recent New  
24 York Times articles about nail salon workers, really  
25 highlighted the abuse and exploitation that many

1 workers face with limited English proficiency  
2 everyday on the job. We also know that with limited  
3 English adults face numerous obstacles accessing a  
4 range of city services. And I also want to draw your  
5 attention to the other piece of my testimony, which I  
6 included. This beautifully colored photographic,  
7 which really highlights all the investments that  
8 adult education help complement and how it really has  
9 roles in so many other aspects of day-to-day life  
10 from health to economic mobility, the budget,  
11 employment, workforce, aging. So on and so forth.  
12 So I would encourage you to use this, council members  
13 and staff in your final days of budget advocacy and  
14 really try to push this forward. But we know some of  
15 the statistics that we know from research and working  
16 in the field is that wages are 25% higher for adults  
17 who complete their high school degree or its  
18 equivalent. There is also a long-term investment in-  
19 -long-term benefit for the city in that every high  
20 school equivalency that's earned generated a net  
21 economic benefit of \$324,000 back to the city over  
22 the course of the course of that individual's  
23 lifetime. So despite that, we're concerned that  
24  
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1  
2 there still continue to be cuts to this program, and  
3 at the same time we're not meeting the growing need.

4           So to spend a minute on the DACA  
5 Initiative. So despite the success of this program,  
6 which I know you heard from folks today, we're  
7 concerned that budget includes a cut of \$2.8 million  
8 to DYCD and just under \$2 million for CUNY. And then  
9 shifts the program administration to HRA and MOIA. I  
10 want also to underscore that the cut will mean  
11 another approximately 4,100 immigrants and adults.  
12 Students will lose access to these classes in the  
13 next two weeks, and they will be cut short of meeting  
14 their goal whether they learn English and are  
15 ultimately earning their High School Equivalency  
16 degree. So we're very concerned about this, and as  
17 you heard from programs, they haven't even been  
18 notified yet about the cuts. So, we're recommending  
19 that restoration. You also heard from providers that  
20 the initiative was really structured in a way to best  
21 meet the undocumented population. [bell] We've have  
22 used literacy at that low barrier entry point for  
23 programs to be able to or for students to be able to  
24 access the programs. And they really benefitted from  
25 that, and there's a benefit of having classes that

1  
2 are not just structured for undocumented immigrants,  
3 but really for people who are in need more generally.

4           So I'll wrap up quickly. So the other  
5 part is around the Adult Literacy Initiative. We  
6 really feel like this is a critical goal for a step  
7 in helping the city meet its workforce goals both  
8 from the Mayor's Office that you heard about before,  
9 as well as the City Council. And for adults who need  
10 that extra step before being able to access  
11 employment. This would be a critical first step that  
12 we would love to have the Council's support for.  
13 I'll stop there. Thank you.

14           CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you for your  
15 testimony. I've heard three different numbers as it  
16 relates to what you're seeking and looking for, for  
17 there to be a restoration. I've heard \$5 million.  
18 I've heard \$4.75 million and \$20 million. So is the  
19 20 a combination of the first two, and an addition or  
20 what are we looking for?

21           SANDY MYERS: Sure. So we would love to  
22 see a robust investment. For now the \$20 million was  
23 our ask kind of pre-exec of what we were really  
24 hoping to see included since the initial investment  
25 was for \$20 million. Right now, our big focus on--is

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5 on restoring the cut. So that's the \$4.75 million and  
6 that supports the 4,100 slots, and that's an ask of,  
7 you know, of the city. We would love to see the  
8 Council and the Administration really work together  
9 on that. And then the other ask is the \$5 million  
10 City Council Initiative. So those are the two  
11 numbers that you should have in your model [sic] ,  
12 \$4.75--

13 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: [interposing] So,  
14 \$4.75 is asking the Administration to put back what  
15 they are eliminating?

16 SANDY MYERS: Yes. We would love to see  
17 that restored by the Administration, and if the  
18 Council were able to pick that up, we would certainly  
19 not turn that down either.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: That's \$10 million  
21 basically?

22 SANDY MYERS: Right, a total.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Okay. Thank you.

24 SANDY MYERS: Sure.

25 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you and--and  
as we--as we kind of run out these numbers, these--  
these numbers are connected to, and I--and I keep on  
coming back to the wait list conversation--

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SANDY MYERS: [interposing] Uh-huh.

3

4

CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --but this is what  
we're talking about. The wait list really is  
connected to the robust funding. It takes it back to  
DYCD or I should say the previous DACA initiative-

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SANDY MYERS: [interposing] Right.

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CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --funding. So my-  
-my question is--is this where we are, and just the  
restoration and enhancement for funding, does that  
get us to the wait list if for the last two years  
we've--we've been kind of in an initiative process  
with both legal and educational services? And really  
what's--how do we define that gap if--if we're seeing  
the growth in--in need for adult education?

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SANDY MYERS: Yeah. Go ahead and I'll--  
I'll add.

DAVID HUNT: Well, we definitely need  
more funding. When I started at QCH--first of all, I  
forgot to mention I used to be a volunteer at QCH.  
When I was working as a litigation expert, my full  
ESL tutor from John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
worked at the Assistant Director of Adult Education,  
and they didn't have funding for citizenship classes.  
They didn't have funding for a lot of things. So, I

1  
2 figured, you know, let me go into--I taught in  
3 citizenship class for free for year. So when I  
4 started at QCH working for QCH, there were five  
5 levels of classes. Now, there are three and now we  
6 are probably going to go down even lower than that.  
7 That's the waiting list. How to bridge the gap, more  
8 funding. More classes, more teachers. And yes, more  
9 volunteers. I'm sure there are people in the  
10 community who are willing to help, but not all  
11 volunteers are going to teach. Not all of them can  
12 handle the pressure of teaching. Teaching is not  
13 easy. So, more funding is the answer. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, and  
15 like I said, this is not a budget hearing, but the  
16 budget component talks about the policy pieces and  
17 we've already talked about the build it they will  
18 come process is just not going to work.

19 SANDY MYERS: Right.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So we keep on  
21 hearing that. So thank you so much for reiterating  
22 that and making that a strong point. I know that we  
23 have a MOIA representative here, too. So they'll be  
24 taking back notes as we continue this conversation  
25 because we are all--we are all working together on

1  
2 this. Okay. I think that's it for this panel, and  
3 if we can get our final panel.

4 DAVID HUNT: Thank you so much.

5 SANDY MYERS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you so much  
7 for your testimony today. The last panel, Margarita  
8 from NYLAG, Myra, Jocelyn and

9 [background comments, noise, pause]

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: We can start--  
11 start with you on the left. Thank you.

12 JOCELYN MENDOZA: Hi. Good afternoon.  
13 My name is Jocelyn Mendoza. I have been an immigrant  
14 for 16 years. I come [sic] at Seedco and I am a  
15 transgender woman, and I study in the Make the Road  
16 New York to attain my High School Equivalency and  
17 diploma for one year now. I also am a student in  
18 English at the same time. This is class is very  
19 important because I want to find a better job. In  
20 the past, I work and this is why I want to have  
21 something better now because as a trans woman I  
22 suffer discrimination in the workplace. I want to go  
23 to college to have some more opportunities. In our  
24 class--in the class at Make the Road New York, people  
25 have recently obtained their High School Equivalency.

1 People want to get better jobs. People want to  
2 college or training programs. People want--want to  
3 be able to help their--the families. People want to  
4 get better wages. This class--this is class very  
5 important in the immigrant community including those  
6 who are in the community. Thousands of students are  
7 on the waiting list for class. They want to study  
8 starting now. Our communities can't wait any longer.  
9 Make the Road needs the resources and the  
10 opportunities to the immigrant community. For me,  
11 this means being like a second home. Thank you for  
12 your support for this class because I couldn't afford  
13 to pay for study. I hope the city will continue  
14 supporting a free class like ours. We need the Mayor  
15 and the city to continue to give more funds to this  
16 program. Thank you.

18 SIERRA STONEMAN-BELL: Hi, I'm Sierra  
19 Stoneman-Bell. I'm the Director of Adult Education  
20 and Career Pathways at Make the Road New York. You  
21 just heard from Jocelyn who's one of our students.  
22 Thank you for holding this hearing, and just raising  
23 this issue up as an important one. Given the timing  
24 of the hearing, I know budget negotiations are going  
25 on and this is not a budget hearing. But I'm just

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1 going to highlight the--the same budget priorities  
2 that go along with what you just heard from the  
3 Coalition for Adult Literacy. One is to restore the  
4 \$4.5--\$4.75 million for adult literacy classes for  
5 4,100 immigrant students, and to really avoid any  
6 disruption in services for those students who are  
7 currently studying. And as you heard earlier, we  
8 also have--we have classes running right now that  
9 will end this month, and we don't know what the--we  
10 don't know what to tell students at this point except  
11 that things are unclear. The--the second priority is  
12 to continue. The City Council has been a great  
13 supporter of adult literacy services, and we--we hope  
14 you will continue that and increase your support with  
15 \$5 million to the Council initiative. Make the Road  
16 Adult Education is a core part of our work to give  
17 community members the tools they need to live and  
18 succeed in the city. We have a large program of  
19 about 1,700 students. Each year, most immigrants  
20 from Latin America take our classes to learn English,  
21 to earn a High School Equivalency diploma, and to  
22 prepare for the U.S. Citizenship exam. Again, the  
23 theme of waiting list. We often have as many as 500  
24 students on the waiting list for new classes. And,  
25

1  
2 you know, our students study for many reasons. To  
3 improve their language skills and gain confidence, to  
4 access better jobs and wages, to get a diploma and go  
5 to college, and to be able to communicate with their  
6 children's teachers and doctors, and to learn about  
7 U.S. culture and how to navigate a new complex city.  
8 I handed in also a series of short blurbs that  
9 students wrote about, you know, why they take these  
10 classes and what they mean to them. So I mean a lot  
11 of those themes come out, but it's nice to actually  
12 see it in their own words. I encourage you to read  
13 those. You know, the--the economic and social  
14 benefits have been really well documented. I'm not  
15 going to go over them again, but I think the other  
16 piece is that it's a very--it's a very low cost with  
17 a huge benefit both for individuals and for the city  
18 as a whole. And the city has made really important  
19 recent progress with pro-immigrant policies. We want  
20 to see this continue, and I think adult education is  
21 a really core piece of that, and a piece of the  
22 opportunity structure in our city. And so, the--  
23 these proposed cuts to the city's DACA Adult Literacy  
24 program are--are out of sync with the current vision  
25 put forth by the city. So we really want to see

1 those reversed. We're--we're very concerned that  
2 almost 70% of the adult literacy component of that  
3 initiative has been slated for elimination and this  
4 kind of new--new plan. [bell] And for our program  
5 we will be forced to close the doors to 130 High  
6 School Equivalency and Adult Basic Education students  
7 who are studying for that program in Queens. And  
8 that would obviously be very damaging to--to our  
9 community. And I won't--I won't go over the  
10 workforce piece again. But again, I just want to  
11 stress that obviously we need a robust adult  
12 education system. It's the foundation of any  
13 effective workforce development system as well.  
14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We invite  
15 all or any of you to come to our program at any point  
16 if you want to see the work in action and see the  
17 impact on people's lives in our community. And we're  
18 really counting on you all to lead the way, and we  
19 hope for some good results on the budget. Thank you.

21 MAIA GOODELL: Good afternoon  
22 Chairpersons and members of the committee. Thank you  
23 so much for having this important hearing. My name  
24 is Maia Goodell. I'm from MFY Legal Services. Many  
25 of you know MFY envisions a society in which no one

1  
2 is denied justice because he or she cannot afford an  
3 attorney. MFY provides free legal assistance to  
4 residents of New York City. At this point, more than  
5 10,000 a year, but we also work to end the root  
6 causes of inequality. And we recognize that one of  
7 the ways to do that is through education, and  
8 specifically legal education. We submit this  
9 testimony focusing on the work of my project, which  
10 is workplace justice. Which may speak a little bit  
11 to the intersection between education and legal  
12 services that we've--we're hearing a little bit  
13 opposed to each other.

14 MFY is committed to innovative outreach  
15 and education about immigrants' legal rights. For  
16 example, we just started a medical legal partnership-  
17 -an immigration clinic where we work with medical  
18 providers to identify DACA and other eligible  
19 immigrants. But we do want to highlight another key  
20 area of need today, which is training and employment  
21 rights. So, first of all and probably obviously  
22 immigrant New Yorkers benefit from information about  
23 their employment rights. We've heard a lot about the  
24 high levels of immigrant participation in the  
25 workforce more than their native born counterparts.

1  
2 And yet more likely to be lower paid and working in  
3 high risk jobs. MFY serves hundreds of low-wage  
4 immigrants in job categories like nail salons,  
5 restaurants and other job categories with high rates  
6 of labor violations.

7           In MFY's experience, immigrants are less  
8 likely to be familiar with basic rights like minimum  
9 wage, overtime premiums and prohibitions on  
10 discrimination. And informing them of their rights  
11 can actually avoid violations from the outside. One  
12 quick example. We were giving a training to an ESL  
13 class. A worker came up to us afterwards and said,  
14 Is that really the minimum wage because I'm making so  
15 much less than that? We said, yeah that is the  
16 minimum wage, and it's illegal, and we talked to him  
17 about his legal rights to be protected against  
18 retaliation. He spoke to his employer, and his  
19 employer immediately raised his pay from \$7.25 an  
20 hour to \$8.50 an hour, which was then more than the  
21 minimum wage.

22           So I think that also highlights that  
23 avoiding disputes helps New York's businesses and  
24 courts and agencies. So we educate workers about  
25 what the law doesn't require. They may be familiar

1  
2 with very different legal regimes that may, for  
3 example, require something like just cause, which, of  
4 course, is very different than our employment at will  
5 here in New York. We recognize that many immigrants  
6 are small business owners who benefit from hearing  
7 about their legal rights. So, we understand that  
8 they don't have the [bell] the opportunity to do a  
9 lot of formal course work in that. That's why we do  
10 one-on-one and small clinics and workshops and go out  
11 to ESL classes and other community-based  
12 organizations. Thank you for holding this important  
13 hearing, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

14 MARGARITA GUERROS: Okay, good afternoon  
15 Chairpersons and members of the committee. My name  
16 is Margarita Guerros. I'm a staff attorney with New  
17 York Legal Assistance Group. We a non-profit legal  
18 office that last year handled 42,000 case for New  
19 York residents. Over half of them were New York  
20 residents. As a legal service provider, our  
21 interaction with the Literacy Initiative, which we've  
22 been fortunate to be a part of since the beginning,  
23 it's primarily in terms of access. Where can our  
24 clients get access to these services, and what's the  
25 best place for them to be? One of my clients,

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1 Manuel, he's--he applauds the way that these are  
2 atypical learners. He came in from Mexico at the age  
3 of 14 alone. No family in the United States. He was  
4 working up to three jobs at a time from the age of  
5 14, and then shortly a few years afterwards he began  
6 raising one of his younger brothers by himself. He  
7 was fortunate at the age of 24 to attend one of  
8 DCYD's DACA programs where he learned that he was  
9 eligible for relief, and where he was able to receive  
10 literacy services. His class met at night. It took  
11 him about two years to finish it, and once he finally  
12 received his GED, he was able to find a job at a  
13 hotel in Times Square. He now works at the reception  
14 desk and his younger brother that he raised graduated  
15 high school. As we have spoken about repeatedly,  
16 these programs have wait lists. One of the benefits  
17 to the old DYCD's DACA program that we hope will  
18 continue is that our students get priority over these  
19 wait lists. And these we were able to place students  
20 who need help immediately, and we have trusted  
21 partners that we're able refer them to. The best  
22 programs meet at all hours of the day. Many of them  
23 provide childcare, and many of them provide access to  
24 other services such labor organizations. But, of  
25

1 course, the best programs have the longest wait  
2 lists, and the longest commutes for students who  
3 already, you know, barely sleep. And some of our  
4 students unfortunately still don't have access at for  
5 an assortment of reasons. For example, my own legal  
6 site is with Translatina Network, which is a  
7 organization for transgender Hispanic Women. One of  
8 my clients told me that she deliberately goes into  
9 unfriendly programs so they get used to the idea of  
10 transgender women as human beings. So that other  
11 girls can follow her. You know, this particular  
12 woman she's one of my heroes, but I wish she didn't  
13 have to--she didn't feel the need to do this for  
14 other people. You know, we really hope that the City  
15 continues to invest in these programs. That they  
16 become available to everyone regardless of where they  
17 come from.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. So  
20 this concludes our panel discussion, and I just to  
21 say again thank you so much for your courage for  
22 being here, for continuing the advocacy for standing  
23 on the steps of City Hall as we continue to send this  
24 very, very strong message that focus and  
25 determination is a important. So thank you so much.

1  
2 And I'm going to--I'm going to give it over to the--  
3 the Co-Chairs and I'll have the final word, and I'll  
4 hand it over to Council Member--Chair Barron.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Mr.  
6 Chair. I just want to thank all those who came to  
7 present testimony on this very important topic. We  
8 know that this is not a budget hearing, but we  
9 certainly know that we need money to achieve the  
10 objectives that we've heard talked about here today.  
11 And we're certainly going to advocate on behalf of  
12 what you've presented to us. So we know that as  
13 residents are marginalized, they're also often times  
14 abused and denied their rights. So, we're going to  
15 continue to fight so that we can have adequate  
16 funding to continue these programs. Thank you, Mr.  
17 Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you, Council  
19 Member Barron, and thank you for you for your  
20 partnership in this conversation, Chair Menchaca and  
21 Eugene. Thank you all for your testimony. The  
22 public portion of these hearings are my favorite part  
23 of the hearings because the Administration comes with  
24 a script and you don't. And often the information  
25 you provide for us helps us move the conversation

1 forward. Always in the spirit of being part of the  
2 solution, not part of the problem. So I thank you  
3 for your valuable input, and we will follow up with a  
4 conversation on this transition, and how successful  
5 it's been. So that we can discuss the challenges in  
6 the things that come up in the implementation  
7 process, and take the conversation back about how  
8 much more money you want. Or, you think we should  
9 invest that we certainly believe is funding well  
10 invested in our city. So thank you, Mr. Chair, for  
11 your leadership and thank you all for your time.

12  
13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And as we--as we  
14 close this hearing, this was a hearing that I think  
15 resonated in every borough, in every community  
16 crossing language--languages and immigrant  
17 populations. This is why I enjoy this work as the  
18 Chair of the Immigration Committee. And let's not  
19 forget also that this is a good day right now for  
20 immigrants in the city. We have accomplished so much  
21 in this Administration and partnership, and that's  
22 why we're demanding even more. We're not here to say  
23 that we've done enough, that our job is done. IDNYC  
24 has really proven some incredible fetes for a large  
25 municipality like this, and we're not going to stop

1 there. And what we're not going to do is either  
2 create models that don't work and/or that worked for  
3 one program that are obviously going to work for  
4 another program. And so, what we're going to do is  
5 challenge every piece of it, which is why we're  
6 including you as part of this conversation. So that  
7 if we do say something like the build it they will  
8 come does not work, that we come back and to really--  
9 and reshape it. And those conversations are  
10 important and we heard that today loud and clear.  
11 And that these community-based organization on the  
12 ground are offering these opportunities and these  
13 open doors and these relations that I think Mr. Fish  
14 said it over and over again, which is good. That we  
15 have to hold hands for our community members. And  
16 that relationship does not happen overnight. And so  
17 the branding concept does not seem right in this  
18 conversation. The other piece I want to underscore  
19 is the fact that we need a point person that our  
20 Chair Council Member Arroyo really pointed out the  
21 fact that we just do not have the lines connecting at  
22 every level. We feel good on the legal services. I  
23 get that. We don't feel good on the adult education  
24 components. And so all of us, this vanguard here,  
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2 Chair Barron, Chair Eugene, Chair Arroyo and myself  
3 are going to continue to point that out. And so that  
4 lack of accountability and leadership is an integral  
5 component in making this happen, and it's incredibly  
6 complex. And it's taken us time to get to this point,  
7 but we're here and we understand this issue. And  
8 then finally just as a person note for me being a  
9 Mexican-American in this city representing this  
10 population we heard today the true issue here on all  
11 the population. But looking at the urgency for the  
12 Mexican population is a--is a huge issue, and I'm  
13 thankful that the City Council is going to look at  
14 this as well as we look at that population that does  
15 not have the adult education necessary to even be  
16 able to apply for DACA or any of the other programs  
17 that come their way. That is a huge issue for the  
18 city, and we have to hit that straight on. And so,  
19 as we continue to move forward, I really leave you  
20 with the words of one of the members of the one of  
21 the ESOL classes through Sunset who got the chance to  
22 ride on a train here a couple weeks ago when we had  
23 that big--that big press conference. And she was  
24 talking to me about what she wanted for us to  
25 champion. She wants a better job. We talked about

1 that today. She wants to be able to help her kids  
2 with their homework. She wants to be able to  
3 participate in the PTAs with--with confidence. And  
4 finally, she's like, you know what, I--I want to find  
5 love. She's also single and she want to find love.  
6 And so, when I think about this is--this is just how  
7 we live as New Yorkers. These are all the pieces  
8 that make us New Yorkers, and there should be nothing  
9 as a hurdle to stop us from making that happen. And  
10 so, I applaud you all for your testimony today, and  
11 we look forward to reaching some victories short term  
12 now and in the very near future. Thank you so much.

14 [applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: It now ended.

16 This hearing has now ended.

17 [gavel]

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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 June 25, 2015