

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

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March 8, 2017
Start: 10:19 a.m.
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

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

ANDY L. KING
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Elizabeth S. Crowley
Julissa Ferreras-Copeland
Peter A. Koo
Stephen T. Levin
Costa G. Constantinides
Laurie A. Cumbo
Helen K. Rosenthal

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

Tony Marx, President & CEO
New York Public Library

Linda Johnson, President & CEO
Brooklyn Public Library

Dennis Walcott, President & CEO
Queens Public Library

Najat (Nancy) Matari, Customer Service Specialist
Langston Hughes Community Library & Cultural Center

Adrianna, Library Worker

Nina Marris, Parkchester Branch
New York Public Library

Janelle Welch, Neighborhood Library Supervisor, NLS
Crown Heights Branch, Brooklyn Public Library

Adrianna Mitchell, Neighborhood Library Supervisor
Brighton Beach Branch, Brooklyn Public Library

Tom Finkelppearl, Commissioner
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

Marissa Richardson, Member of Leadership
Urban Librarians Unite

Carl Goodman, Executive Director
Museum of the Moving Image
Chair, Cultural Institutions Group

Andrea Louie
Asian-American Arts Alliance
Co-Chair, New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

Samuel Manning, Appearing for:
Katherine Green
Arts East New York

Lisa Levy, Director
Advocacy and Engagement
Center for Arts Education

Jenny Lolitas
Art New York

Kat Parker
League of Independent Theater

Mart Morena Vega

Fran Garber Cohen, President
Board of Directors Chairman
Regina Opera Company located
Sunset Park, Brooklyn

Amy Fiore, Director of Development
TADA Youth Theater

Heather Woodfield
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

David Johnson, Executive Director
Exploring the Metropolis

Claudia DiSalvo, President
Community United to Protect Theodore Roosevelt Park

Faith Steinberg

Judith Kalamandre

Regina Carp

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[sound check, pause][background comments]

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, for the
record, I'll good morning again. Good morning,
everyone.

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COUNCIL MEMBERS/AUDIENCE: [in unison]
Good morning.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And welcome to
the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
International Intergroup Relations, and our
Preliminary Budget oversight hearings for Fiscal Year
2018. My name is Jimmy Van Bramer, and I'm very
proud to be the Chair of the Cultural Affairs,
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Committee and this committee is now [gavel] in
session. I am thrilled to be joined by Council
Member Andy King, who is the chair of the Select
Committee on Libraries as well as members of the
committee Peter Koo from Queens and Elizabeth Crowley
also from Queens, and more members will be joining
throughout the day, and we are first going to hear
from the Public Library Systems, but before we hear
from them, I'll say a few words, and also, I know the
sergeant-at-arms has already said that if you want to
cheer or you hear something that you agree with, we

1 don't allow raucous applause in the City Council, but
2 you can lift your hands and fingers and do that. So
3 why don't we practice. Do you all believe in
4 libraries? Do we—do we think that libraries make a
5 difference in the lives of everyday New Yorkers? And
6 have libraries always been there for immigrant
7 communities in the city of New York? And do you
8 think that libraries could do even more for those
9 most vulnerable in our society if they were open
10 seven days a week? So I think that ends this hearing
11 on libraries. [laughter] So, thank you all for being
12 here. I want to say that we've had some great
13 successes for libraries, and I want to just mention
14 that a little bit because that wouldn't have happened
15 if we didn't have hearings like this one where so
16 many of you came to show your support for libraries.
17 So let's jut take a brief stock. The budget for
18 libraries right now, includes \$366.1 million, which
19 is funding our six-day service, and having a—a
20 baseline is a tremendous victory for you all, for us
21 all and—and really for all New York, which is what
22 this campaign is about, investing in all New Yorkers.

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24 In addition in the Four-Year Capital
25 Plan, there's nearly \$900 million for our libraries,

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2 which is a substantial increase. Is it all that we
3 need? No. Do we need more capital funding for our
4 libraries to make sure they're all in a state of good
5 rapport—good repair. Absolutely, and that's part of
6 what this hearing is about, looking at where we are
7 at in terms of those two numbers, the expense and
8 capital numbers, and where we really need to be, and—
9 and what can be accomplished if we were to achieve
10 the level of funding that we need, and what libraries
11 would be able to do. We know that libraries make a
12 difference every hour, every day, every minute that
13 they're open, and the more that we can expand those
14 hours and days of service, the more people who will
15 be helped. Now, this goes for all five boroughs, but
16 I'm very proud to represent a district in Queens, and
17 we certainly in Queens know and appreciate the value
18 of having a diverse community, the incredible
19 richness that immigrants bring to our city, and there
20 are far too many people who are afraid, who are
21 fearful, who are uncertain at the very least in the
22 current national political climate. And it's so
23 important to have real sanctuaries in our city,
24 places of refuge where everyone regardless of their
25 status can go as an equal person as someone who can

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2 and will be received with open arms, and who will
3 receive all of the support that they need. Libraries
4 have always done that for our city. Libraries have
5 always been that place. In fact, libraries our
6 public libraries in all five boroughs are for many in
7 our immigrant communities the first place they turn
8 to because we are trusted. We are the sanctuaries in
9 our sanctuary city, and in order to do that work most
10 effectively, libraries can and should I believe be
11 open seven days a week because those emergencies,
12 those very real fears for people's lives and
13 wellbeing and—and the lives of their children, they
14 don't take a day off on Sunday. Those—those fears
15 exist everyday, and some of those crises will exist
16 unfortunately everyday. Having the libraries open
17 every day is incredibly important, and so I look
18 forward to working with my colleagues, with our three
19 systems and really all New Yorkers to make sure that
20 all New Yorkers get the library services they so
21 desperately need and deserve and particularly in this
22 moment where few serve our immigrant communities so
23 comprehensively in the way that libraries can. This
24 is a particularly critical juncture for libraries and
25 really for our city, and by investing in libraries

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2 and investing in the lives of all New Yorkers, we're
3 really speaking to our values, our New York values.
4 Some might say our Queens values, our Brooklyn
5 values, our Staten Island values, Manhattan values
6 and Bronx values. So we will hear from our three
7 systems shortly, but I want to invite my colleague,
8 although I know he's a bit under the weather. So we—
9 we thank for his participation and—and his ability to
10 say a few words Council Member and my fellow chair
11 Andy King.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
13 Excuse me. I left my voice in the Bronx so forgive
14 me. Good morning and welcome again. I'm Council
15 Member Andy King, and I gratefully each and every one
16 of for showing up today. As the Chair of the Select
17 Committee on Libraries, this morning we'll be
18 reviewing to project the budget of the library for
19 Fiscal Year 2018. Fiscal Year 2016 was a big year
20 for our libraries. The Council and the
21 Administration provided an historic increase in
22 funding for all our city libraries. This increase
23 meant that for the first time in a decade every
24 single public library across the five boroughs were
25 able to open for six days a week. In Fiscal Years

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2 2017, the Administration baselined the funding
3 ensuring six-day service for every public library
4 across the city and increase in headcount and hours
5 of operation and to encourage growth and program
6 attendance. As a vital system in our city, public
7 libraries provide a broad range of services to all
8 New Yorkers. This goes beyond access to books. New
9 York City's libraries are more access for patrons and
10 they need some of the most working parents who bring
11 their children to the libraries on weekends, and for
12 busy professionals and students who are unable to
13 access—who are able to access resources in the
14 evening. Recognizing their importance to New York, I
15 was glad that the Council was able to negotiate with
16 Administration on an increase allowing us to focus
17 our efforts on how we can maximize our abilities to
18 server those most in need. Our library system
19 provides a range of programs through the communities
20 and participate in a variety-various initiative such
21 as Adult Basic Education, Early Childhood Literacy
22 initiatives and Broadband Technology Opportunities
23 Program. It is therefore essential that the library
24 systems are fully funded. In a few minutes we will
25 hear more from the three systems on this specifically

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2 and so on the budget. I hope to hear specifically on
3 the updates on new programs launched, updated
4 performances, measures and target on how the
5 libraries have implemented the City Council's Video
6 Visitation Initiative. I'd also like to hear the
7 libraries' update to the Council on major capital
8 projects highlighted in the Capital Plan. In
9 closing, I would like to thank my staff, the
10 committee staff, everyone who is wearing an orange
11 pin today, everyone who has an orange T-shirt on,
12 everybody who is just here who supports libraries,
13 and now I look further—I look forward to hearing
14 testimony from Presidents Row. Thank you. Good
15 bless and thank you Mr. Chair. [coughing]

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
17 much, Council Member for bravely fighting your way
18 through that statement. I want to recognize the
19 staff from the committee who are here: Aminta
20 Kilawan, our counsel, Chloe Rivera, our Analyst and
21 Aliya Allia who is Finance Analyst and my staff Matt
22 Wallace, my Chief of Staff and Andrea Speja (sp?), my
23 Deputy Chief of Staff, all who have a hand in making
24 these hearings possible. So with that, we will hear
25 from our three library systems, and I will allow them

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2 to choose which order they go in, but here today are
3 Linda Johnson from the Brooklyn Public Library,
4 Dennis Walcott from the Queens Public Library and
5 Tony Marx from the New York Public Library, and I
6 believe enough hands went up for all three of them,
7 right or is that Brooklyn situation going like that.
8 [laughter, background comments]

9 MALE SPEAKER: It's that kind of guess
10 again.

11 TONY MARX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
12 Thank you for your support, for the City Council's
13 support for the Mayor's support. We're honored to be
14 here to testify. You have my written testimony to
15 respond to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget. The City
16 Council working with the Mayor, I recognize the
17 unique role of libraries where you've made eloquent
18 statements already this morning, and we thank you for
19 that and for the amazing support. But we all know
20 there is more that can be done. We need to offer
21 everyone free access to opportunity, to knowledge, to
22 reliable information and to education, and there are
23 no institutions in this city that do that more
24 regularly for more of our citizens than the our
25 library systems, and given what is happening in this

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2 country, and in this world today, that could not be
3 more important than it is today. We serve and
4 respect all New Yorkers. We are the place where all
5 New Yorkers come together in a moment when the
6 country seems be fracturing rather than coming
7 together. And we provide what every neighborhood and
8 citizen needs, books, of course, but English Language
9 instruction. At the New York Public Library we've
10 increased those 500% in the last few years as well as
11 citizenship classes, WiFi hotspots. Job search.
12 We're working in homeless shelters, we're working in
13 Rikers Island, we're doing early literacy, after
14 school, homework help, technology training, all in a
15 variety a of languages, and all for free thanks to
16 the amazing support of the leaders of New York and
17 its citizens and taxpayers. Let's remember who those
18 people are. Forty percent of New Yorkers are
19 immigrants, or let me rephrase: We are all
20 immigrants or the children or grandchildren of
21 immigrants. In this moment in history I do not need
22 to belabor in this cham—in this Chamber how essential
23 it is that that community feel not only respected,
24 but welcomed, served and protected. We can't do that
25 if the buildings are in bad shape. We can't do that

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2 with more of our amazing staff, so many of whom are
3 here today, and we can't do that if the doors are
4 closed. So, let me not pull my punches. I'm not know
5 known for pulling my punches. In New York City in
6 2017 given what is happening in this country and this
7 city, the idea that we are closed in most of our
8 libraries on one of the two days that most people are
9 free to come and avail themselves of our essential
10 services is in my view—and I believe would have been
11 in Andrew Carnegie's view. Outrageous. So let's get
12 to it. It comes down to individuals. So think—let
13 me introduce you to Asmar Raman (sp?) whose family
14 moved to the Bronx from Bangladesh ten years ago.
15 There she is. She and her husband, her elder
16 daughter and younger daughter, who is almost two
17 visit Moshulu Library close to where I grew up
18 regularly for books and literary services, and the—
19 the family, all of the family feels served by the
20 library, and protected and respected by the library.
21 Or Chantelle Hodge, a high school senior from
22 Washington Heights, even closer to where I grew up,
23 who came from the Caribbean after her father passed
24 away, and it was in the Washington Heights Library
25 that she found sanctuary—sanctuary. She became a

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2 mentor and part of our Literacy Leaders Program, and
3 she is now the first person in her family to go to
4 college at SUNY Buffalo, and we couldn't be prouder
5 of that pipeline. We are working the Department of
6 Homeless Services for instance at our Morrisania
7 branch. We' going into the homeless shelters, and
8 we're hearing from those folks who need more of our
9 help and again great leadership from the city that as
10 one mother said, their-her daughter cannot fall
11 behind just because I am going through hard times.
12 Or the family from Yemen where the Mus-where a Muslim
13 teenager come to the Bronx Library because it's the
14 place where he can avoid being harassed by other
15 students in his school and community. So, from so
16 many New Yorkers libraries are the essential service.
17 They are not just safe spaces to learn and grow and
18 have open doors, and our doors need to be open. They
19 are the spaces for opportunity. They are unique and
20 irrepresed and irreplaceable, and we have been proud
21 to partner with the city and with the City Council in
22 particular, the New York Public Library. The
23 libraries are the biggest source of IDNYC and we
24 believe all New Yorkers should have those IDs in
25 order to rally around those communities who feel

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2 threatened. We want all New Yorkers to come to the
3 libraries, which they already do in record numbers.
4 This is so much more we can do whether it's working
5 in homeless shelters or Rikers Island or working in
6 the NYCHA complexes, working with Your First Readers
7 for Early Literacy Program. We are so grateful to be
8 at this place where we got an historic increase. It
9 wasn't a full restoration o where we had originally
10 been, but it was an historic increase and an
11 historically baselined, and we couldn't be more
12 grateful to the Mayor for the baselining because we
13 know that that demonstrated his understanding of
14 exactly how we are moving the values of the Mayor and
15 the City Council forward, and we've already seen more
16 results from that, more hours, more days of service,
17 more scheduled renovations. Thanks to you all, 217
18 branches of public libraries of the city of New York
19 are now open six days a week, nearly 40 million
20 physical visits, high circulation, increased English
21 language instruction and tech training and after
22 school programs. But again, in this moment in
23 history when so many of our fellow citizens are
24 feeling under threat, it is the moment when the city
25 needs to double down as the leader in this country

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2 and saying we will invest in all of our citizens. We
3 will protect them, we respect them, and we will help
4 them to advance. We won't be distracted and we won't
5 allow them to be distracted by leaking roofs. We
6 will not allow them to come to the libraries and find
7 the doors closed. The city has more libraries than
8 it has ever before, and thank you all for your
9 leadership in making that possible. But the city's
10 needs, its citizens needs are greater than more-than
11 ever. We are in every neighborhood. We serve every
12 New York. We are meeting so many of those needs, and
13 with your continued leadership and the leadership of
14 the Mayor, we hope to continue to move forward
15 because we are ready to address the challenges of the
16 day. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Tony, you missed your
18 standing ovation. [laughter] So good morning, Mr.
19 Chair and good members of the Council. My name is
20 Dennis Walcott. It's a pleasure to be here as usual,
21 and to share with you our story, and you have our
22 testimony and my testimony before you. I will only
23 read a slight bit of the testimony and just talk
24 about a couple of points, but before I do, I want to
25 thank all of you for your leadership and your

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1 participation and your feedback, your dialogue in the
2 last week and a half two weeks in the borough of
3 Queens we have met with Council Member Koo, Council
4 Member Crowley, Council Member Van Bramer and others
5 sharing stories about libraries in their district,
6 and responding to questions and concerns and the
7 positives of what's going on in your respective
8 districts, and we're always there for you. I want to
9 pick up on a word that is both in our slides and Tony
10 mentioned as well, and Linda will talk about as well,
11 and that's the invest and investment because we're
12 not just here asking. We're saying to you we want
13 that investment in New Yorkers and investment in our
14 libraries and what it represents. And Fiscal Year
15 2016 was a busy year for us in Queens. We welcomed
16 over \$11.2 million customers at our 65 libraries and
17 facilities. We conducted over 68,000 program
18 sessions that attracted over \$1.1 million
19 participants, the highest amount ever recorded. Now
20 we circulated over 13 million materials and hosted
21 more than three million public access computer
22 sessions, connected over 477,000 people to the
23 Internet. We served 5,500 adult learners including
24 1,700 students who participated in our structured 12-

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2 week ESL program across 38 of our community
3 libraries. 865 customers completed job skills
4 training. Moreover, because of the significant
5 investment, again investment made by the New York
6 City Council and Mayor de Blasio to provide six-day
7 service to all New Yorkers. The average operating
8 hours per week at our community libraries increase to
9 46 with over 1.3 million people visiting Queens
10 Library on Saturdays along. Through January 31st of
11 this current fiscal year, we've circulated over
12 902,000 materials on Saturdays up 16% compared to the
13 same time last year and have welcome just under
14 711,000 customers through our doors, up 19% compared
15 to the same time last year. It is clear that
16 Saturday service is extremely popular with our
17 customers, and just two weeks ago at our Elmhurst
18 Library we had a Lunar New Year celebration where in
19 day we had 4,000 people who came through our door at
20 our Elmhurst Library to participate and celebrate the
21 Lunar New Year. Amazing numbers that would not have
22 been possible without the investment of the City
23 Council last year. So when we ask you to consider
24 deeply in New York City's Investment in its
25 libraries, we are asking you to support not just the

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2 services and programs that benefit our customers and
3 our patrons but those that benefit all New Yorkers
4 and strengthen the city as a whole. When the city
5 needed space for Universal Pre-K, who was there? Our
6 libraries. Our libraries were there and provided it.
7 When the city needed space for the wildly successful
8 IDNYC program, again who was there? Our libraries
9 and our libraries were able to provide excellent
10 opportunities for people to get their IDs. When the
11 city needed safe inviting spaces for the Department
12 of Corrections Video Visitation, which allows
13 children and relatives to read with their loved ones
14 who are incarcerated at Rikers through a live video
15 feed who was there but our libraries. Our libraries
16 are there to provide those services. When the city
17 wanted us to provide services and assistance to
18 homeless families, parent and children, they came to
19 the libraries and we were there for all of our people
20 to make sure that we were there for the homeless
21 population. And when the City Council wanted a
22 partner for its excellent City's First Readers
23 Program, which makes sure kids are able to read and
24 be ready by the time they enter school, who was there
25 but our libraries. Our libraries are there all

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2 people all hours of the day. But unfortunately for a
3 majority of our libraries not on Sunday, and I raise
4 these examples to illustrate how intertwined our
5 goals are for all New Yorkers. We want the same
6 thing, which is to provide excellent services and
7 resources to make lives better. We're here before
8 you today to ask you to continue that investment, to
9 build on the investment the city has already made in
10 our three great library systems. As Tony said, our
11 customers need us now more than ever before
12 especially in this climate. The fear is palpable out
13 there as far as people everyday wondering what life
14 holds for them. What is the future? What does it
15 mean, and that is why we're seeing \$34 million in
16 additional operating funds to support our three
17 library systems next year to allow for more of our
18 libraries to be open seven days a week. We've shown
19 it with our Saturday programs and our Saturday
20 services that we can produce and the same thing can
21 be said when we have the ability to produce on
22 Sundays as well. Right, only 14 libraries in the
23 city of New York are open 7 days a week. The
24 additional funding we're requesting will allow a
25 least one library in each of the City Council's

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2 districts to be have openings seven days a week for a
3 total of 53 city libraries out of the city's 217
4 libraries. That's only a quarter of all the
5 libraries, but this would be a very good start, but
6 more importantly a great investment. Think about the
7 impact those additional hours could have on New
8 Yorkers in terms of programing and services that we
9 offer, and we offer in conjunction with your
10 leadership and the leadership of the executive side
11 of government as well. With these additional hours,
12 we could offer more story time for babies and
13 children. Workshops that help parents get
14 assimilated in this country, health programs,
15 computer classes that teach customers how to use the
16 Internet, Excel and Word, ESL classes, literacy
17 classes, job skills, workshops and technology as
18 well, and just to have our doors open for open for
19 people who just need a place to go. As the Majority
20 Leader said, that sanctuary that safety net, the
21 comfort of coming into our libraries, and all of us
22 can share stories about customers who come in and
23 just looking for that safe haven to be in, and that's
24 what we represent to all New Yorkers. We could also
25 have time for more entrepreneurship classes for

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2 immigrants as well. The photo in this slide was
3 taking the day this cohort of immigrant New Yorkers
4 graduated for our Ready for Business Program in which
5 students learned about all aspects of starting a small
6 business and eventually create their own business
7 plans. In Queens we're about to start our Jamaica
8 Feast Program in another couple of months where we'll
9 be teaching people how to both start their own
10 restaurants as well as if they have a desire to have
11 a food truck business as well, and then training them
12 and then providing them the opportunity to open up a
13 site in the borough of Queens as well. That would
14 not be possible without a great investment by all of
15 you. But to make these programs truly great, we need
16 to be able to provide them in spaces that are
17 conducive to learning and inspiration and Linda will
18 talk about that and all the great work that the
19 libraries do and the spaces required to do them. So
20 thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify.
21 [laughter]

22 LINDA JOHNSON: Good morning. Thank you
23 to Speaker Mark-Viverito for, Majority Leader and
24 Cultural Affairs and wonderful advocate for our
25 libraries, Jimmy Van Bramer and Subcommittee Chari

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2 Andy King and, of course to our Brooklyn Delegation
3 and the entire City Council for supporting New York
4 City's libraries, and to actually enabling us to open
5 six days a week, which has been a real boost to the
6 work that we're doing throughout the borough. We are
7 grateful for your leadership, which resulted in
8 baselining our expense funding and preserving that
9 citywide six-day service. We thank you on behalf of
10 all of our patrons particularly the thousands of
11 working families who are now able to visit their
12 local libraries on weekends. And while baselining
13 was important this year, we must go a step further
14 because no city can truly be great without world
15 class libraries. The budget request we submit today
16 will not reverse decades of neglect nor instantly
17 restore the city's 217 public libraries to a state of
18 good repair. But meeting our requests, we'll
19 continue the progress we set in motion two years ago
20 when you increased our budgets for the first time in
21 a decade. With Brooklyn's share of the three
22 systems' \$34 million expense funding request, we will
23 be able to expand seven-day service to approximately
24 one-third of our branches. Nearly every community in
25 Brooklyn would have access to a library every day of

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2 the week, but the real benefit of seven-day service
3 is what happens inside our branches on the weekend.
4 We will be able to open our doors wider than ever to
5 children, families, job seekers, immigrants, seniors,
6 teens and all of other patrons who turn to us because
7 the library contributes something of value to their
8 lives. If you visit our branches on a Saturday or a
9 Sunday, as I know many of you do, you see what a
10 difference our expanded hours have made in the lives
11 our patrons. Our services have never been more in
12 demand. Despite the fact that children are
13 increasingly playing and learning with electronic
14 devices our Story Time Programs are standing room
15 only. Even as news outlets report the continued
16 growth of America's economy, our job search and
17 resume writing work-workshops are full. And I am
18 sorry to say that our immigrant attorneys are nearly
19 overwhelmed as frightened people turn to us for
20 trustworthy reliable information. Libraries have
21 always been a place where New Yorkers can feel safe
22 and welcome. Never have we felt a stronger need to
23 be there for people who are fearful of what the
24 future may bring. More people are coming to the
25 library than ever before, and they need us more than

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2 ever. Unfortunately, our ability to serve the public
3 is greatly compromised by the physical state of our
4 buildings. Most are plagued by maintenance issues,
5 equipment failure and drab uninspiring interiors.
6 Our Capital Funding request is comprised of two
7 separate asks. Each is essential the future of
8 library service in New York City. First, the three
9 library systems are requesting a total of \$120
10 million in funding this year, \$40 million for each of
11 the three systems, funds that would be devoted to
12 state of good repair work in branches throughout the
13 city. For Brooklyn Public Library \$40 million is
14 more than twice what we typically receive. We will
15 use the funds to address some of our most critical
16 capital needs including failing infrastructure and
17 equipment that has long exceeded its useful life.
18 Sadly, these needs persist throughout the borough.
19 At Brownsville Library, for example, the HVAC system
20 has failed. We enforced to employ ugly, noisy
21 chillers just to make the building comfortable for
22 patrons and staff. We have chose Brownville as one
23 of the five Brooklyn libraries that will receive a
24 full overhaul thanks to our inclusion in the most
25 recent ten-year plan. The bad news is that we do not

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2 have sufficient resources to address similar problems
3 at dozens of other locations throughout the borough
4 including libraries like McKinley Park Branch in
5 Southwestern Brooklyn. This small library is one of
6 our busiest. Its children's programs are full of
7 young families, many of them recently immigrants.
8 Its ESL classes are in high demand drawing 40 to 80
9 attendees per session. McKinley Park should be a
10 centerpiece of our system, an example of what
11 libraries can do for their community, but the
12 building's condition is frankly an embarrassment. It
13 requires a new roof, HVAC system and boiler, and it
14 would benefit from the new lighting, from new
15 lighting, shelving, furniture and flooring. But at—
16 but at our present level of funding we cannot perform
17 necessary preventative maintenance because other
18 systems are in even more dire condition. We know
19 that the only way the roof will be repaired at
20 McKinley Park or the HVAC system replaced at Saratoga
21 or the boiler at Carol Gardens is if we are forced to
22 respond to an emergency. The branches I have
23 mentioned comprise only a portion of Brooklyn Public
24 Library's \$280 million in unfunded capital needs
25 including \$80 million in emergency repairs, which

1 brings me to the second piece of—the—the three
2 systems' capital ask. A total ten-year Capital Plan
3 allocation of an additional \$1.2 billion for all
4 three systems. The Administration's inclusions of
5 libraries in the most Ten-Year Plan, was a very
6 encouraging development. It allowed us to prepare
7 and plan for the future. Yet the investment amounted
8 less than one-quarter of the system's total capital
9 need and does not address the critical maintenance
10 issues we are confronted with throughout the city. We
11 would be grateful for your support of our collective
12 ten-year capital request of which Brooklyn Public
13 Library's portion is \$325 million. Of that \$325
14 million, \$200 million will be applied to critical
15 infrastructure needs, HVAC systems, roof replacement
16 and ADA accessibility. \$100 million will fund
17 improvements at Central Library, which at 350,000
18 square feet is the largest and busiest public library
19 in Brooklyn with more than 1.3 million annual visits
20 and \$25 million will purchase new technology for the
21 branches, computers, self-checkout machines and other
22 equipment that our patrons and staff depend on. We
23 are not asking for luxuries, but for the tools we
24 need to provide the residents of this great city the
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1
2 library service they deserve. Your support of our
3 two capital asks: \$120 million for the three systems
4 this year, and \$1.2 billion additional dollars in the
5 Ten-Year Capital Plan is essential to the future of
6 New York City's most democratic institutions. There
7 has never been a better time for this city to stand
8 up for its values by supporting public libraries.
9 Thank goodness libraries are place where intellectual
10 curiosity is celebrated, where wisdom is a virtue and
11 civility prevails. The values define public
12 libraries and have for centuries. They will endure
13 here regardless of what happens elsewhere because we
14 and our librarians believe in these values, and will
15 fight for them. I'm proud of the way librarians have
16 served Brooklyn Public Library's patrons over the
17 past several months. To cite only one example, the
18 staff at Bay Ridge Library spoke for all of us when
19 they posted a sign outside the branch that read: You
20 are welcome here. You are loved. New York City's
21 libraries are and will always be a safe haven for the
22 undocumented, a provider of hope for the unemployed,
23 and a source of endless wonder for children just
24 beginning to explore the world around them. In
25 Brooklyn a little girl can see at the library people

1 who look, speak and dress differently than she, yet
2 come here for the same reason she does: To read
3 books, to make friends, to learn and to have fun.
4 Libraries teach not only literacy but empathy. Every
5 day we welcome people to our branches who arrive in
6 this country hungry for opportunity. We also welcome
7 those who simply arrive hungry. We serve immigrants
8 who have little knowledge of English and no prospects
9 for employment. They do not understand their rights
10 and, therefore, cannot assert them. In many cases,
11 libraries are the only civic institution they trust.
12 We can reach them and we want to do more for them.
13 In a city's budget—if a city's budget is an
14 expression of its values, I hope this year we will
15 express ourselves forcefully by supporting libraries
16 and the people who need them most. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So informally,
19 let me just say I think you all got roughly equal
20 amount of applause from the crowd although Brooklyn
21 may be a little bit more. I'm just saying a little
22 bit more. Brooklyn is fired up this morning for
23 libraries. Nice. So, let me start the questioning
24 and—and I know some members are needing to check into
25 Education, which is going on right behind that door,

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2 and will be back and forth. Some others are—are
3 still approaching. So let me just ask all three of
4 you, and some of you alluded to it in your testimony
5 with respect to immigration attorneys being quite
6 busy. What—what kind of need or increases can you
7 speak to that you've seen over the last three or four
8 months or so where New Yorkers are—are needing
9 libraries are more than ever where maybe you—you've
10 seen stories—I don't know if you have—where folks are
11 frightened and they're coming to the libraries.
12 Your—your frontline staff at the circulation desk
13 and—and throughout the library are—are maybe
14 interfacing with more people with more serious
15 concerns than they have in the past, and I wonder if
16 the three of you can all—all speak to that.

17 TONY MARX: Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to.
18 So about 1.4 million adult New Yorkers lack English
19 language skills at the level that they seek to have
20 them. Half of the immigrant population over the age
21 of 24 feels that they do not have the English
22 proficiency that they want, and as we've all said,
23 they look to the library as the place that they feel
24 safe and respected and served and Sunday service is
25 part of how we can expand that because so many of

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2 them are working during the week when—when we are
3 open and might have time to come on—on Sundays.
4 Partly, this is building on what we've already done.
5 At NYPL a 500% increase in English language
6 instruction over the last few years. We've expanded
7 150% our tech training. Again, so many of the
8 immigrants who are coming into New York need those
9 skills. We're working with the Mayor's Office of
10 Immigrant Affairs. We have—in just seven months
11 we've set up 366 one-on-one appointments for people
12 looking for services and advice in the libraries
13 because they feel safe coming to those libraries for
14 those services. We're currently in conversation with
15 the NYU Law School about how we can get more people
16 in the libraries and trained in the libraries to
17 provide people with those kinds of legal services,
18 and we hear from all of our friends in this community
19 and we work with so many partners in this area
20 increasingly now under these circumstances that
21 Sunday is a crucial day for those folks to be able to
22 come, and that they feel safest coming to the library
23 for those services because they are—they're
24 surrounded by all New Yorkers who are welcoming them
25 as—as part of this community. Whether it's more

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2 legal services, whether it's more English language
3 classes, citizenship classes, which we'd like to have
4 at 30 locations. Our Ambassador Pilot Program and
5 moving into other languages, all of that is what seed
6 to do, but if we're not open, we can't do it. If we
7 are open, then we are committed to doing it.

8 LINDA JOHNSON: As-as you heard in my
9 testimony, we have—we have 40 to 80 people attending
10 English languages classes. That is an extraordinary
11 people in a single class. We need more sources to be
12 able to offer more classes. We are seeing year over
13 year almost a doubling of citizens, people signing up
14 for citizenship classes, conversation classes and
15 immigrant services and, of course, as we mentioned,
16 legal services. There is something palpable that is
17 going on right now, and our frontline staff is—can
18 sense it and, therefore, is working under extreme
19 stress. The—the sense in the community and the
20 people who are frequenting the libraries is
21 definitely heightened and it is—it's have a ripple
22 effect on the people who are serving them. And I
23 think that it's incumbent upon all of us to be sure
24 that we provide the resources that we can so that the

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2 services that we offer can be delivered everybody who
3 is demanding them.

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: So I would like to
5 approach the question a little differently in that I
6 think it's around four Fridays ago we hosted an event
7 where we basically had a number of our community
8 based partners at the library to provide services and
9 address questions that people may have around their
10 fear of what's going on right now, and we had close
11 to 2 to 300 in attendance looking to get guidance
12 from the New York Civil Liberties Union, the
13 Immigration Coalition, the Borough President's office
14 and others finding out what's going on, and what's
15 the reality? How do we address these particular
16 questions? I think the demand is tremendous as far
17 as people looking for information and looking for
18 services, and I think it positioned us in Queens as
19 well as our sister and brother libraries to be that
20 resource for the individuals who want the
21 information. If anything we do consistently is
22 provide information whether it's information through
23 books, information through people, information
24 through resources and material, and we've seen it, we
25 feel it. People have questions. People come to us

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2 with fear in their eyes. I'm never seen uptick it
3 the traffic coming through our doors [coughs] as far
4 as people asking information, and I hear it from our
5 managers as well. We've had training sessions dealing
6 with what one can do or what one can or cannot do.
7 If someone comes and asks questions around someone's
8 status and we need to continue that, and I think
9 again as both Linda and Tony indicated, if we expand
10 our hours and our days that allows us to provide all
11 those services and address the concerns. Two Fridays
12 ago we hosted something very unusual for us in that
13 we had to tell of our libraries, if not every library
14 at 10 o'clock go outside and staff welcomed people
15 in. We put signs and started welcoming folks to our
16 library so that way people know we have an open door
17 for all individuals. So both from the concrete
18 numbers that I talked about earlier but just for the
19 examples that I just talked about and others have
20 talked about, the demand is there. I think fear is
21 there, and I think people view us as the resource to
22 address the questions and to respond to that fear
23 that's out there in immigrant communities.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So there's no
25 doubt that there's the demand, and that the situation

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2 that—that we all find ourselves in is suddenly much
3 more dire and—and urgent, but particularly for—for
4 many in our immigrant communities both undocumented
5 and—and documented I know even of some friends who
6 have not with citizens but Green cards holders or—
7 and—and suddenly they feel frightened enough that now
8 they're—they're undertaking that process, which, of
9 course is a difficult process and an expensive
10 process, and that's—even if you don't have an
11 immigration attorney, which most people can't afford,
12 just the fee alone to—to become a citizen is quite
13 burdensome for some. So—so the \$34 million ask and
14 to the moment how would you hire, assuming you would
15 hire additional people who—with—with some specialties
16 and some expertise in these areas. Talk to me a
17 little bit each system event how you would—you would
18 allocate this \$34 million and—and how would you bulk
19 up the immigration related services that you already
20 provide? Would you hire more immigration attorneys?
21 Would you have folks guiding people through the
22 citizenship process, and—and obviously your English
23 language and business classes as well, but that's
24 going to take more staff, and I assume that you all
25 have thought that through.

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2 TONY MARX: So, yes. The—the—the lion's
3 share, of course, of this request is for staff and
4 we've been in conversation with our—our great
5 colleagues at DC37 about how to do that. We have a
6 sense that from the investment at NYPL it increased
7 Sunday branches, a small number, four last year. We
8 had 60,000 additional visits. If we can do what
9 we're talking about here we—we think we can achieve
10 600,000 additional visits, and again we know that
11 the—the most pressing need of folks who are eager to
12 take that up are the immigrant community and lots of
13 poor New Yorkers who need more space, more time, more
14 services. So a lot of that—a lot of that is going to
15 go to staff to open up our—our branches, but
16 increasingly those staff have been trained to also do
17 program. We have more education program staff, which
18 is why ESL and other programs have exploded in terms
19 of our availability in the neighborhoods. Yes, more
20 legal services is something that—that we've talked
21 about. Partly that will be on us, but partly it
22 will—we will be able to turn to the various partners
23 that are private NGOs that the City supports who are
24 eager to increase their services to these
25 communities, but don't necessarily have a place to do

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2 it especially on the weekends or a place where
3 everyone feels welcome and unthreatened to come in
4 and get those services. So there may-not only will
5 we be able to-to do more, but by having our doors
6 open, we'll be able to help other organizations do
7 more and that's a-a set of partnerships that we've
8 been investing heavily and we'd like to invest in
9 considerably more, but we have to be open to do that.

10 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes, I would echo what
11 Tony has just said about the ability to collaborate
12 on the weekends and to have other organizations that
13 are specializing in particular areas that are helpful
14 to-helpful to our-our patrons and be there for our
15 patrons on the weekends. We want to hire additional
16 staff as well. A New Americans Library and Immigrant
17 Outreach librarians who speak multiple languages. As
18 a borough's diversity dictates, over half the people
19 in Brooklyn speak a language other than English at
20 home, and we would like to be able to expand services
21 to-to new Americans with more English conversation
22 groups and citizenship preparation classes, Know Your
23 Rights session, translation services and multi-
24 lingual materials in all of our branches. We would
25 seek Board of Immigration Appeal Accreditation, which

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2 his a new thing that libraries are doing so that we
3 would be able to give advice to patrons seeking our
4 support and to free up some of the work that's being
5 done by the lawyers on this topic. We now have waits
6 for up to a month for—for patrons to actually get
7 time with the lawyers who are working in the
8 branches. So, yes, this is, of course, about doors
9 open and lights on, but more importantly about the
10 staff that we can hired to support the work that
11 we've been for generations.

12 DENNIS WALCOTT: So we project in Queens
13 that we'll be hiring approximately 100 new people
14 creating new jobs, and in those areas of folks,
15 seven-day service, but expanding a variety of our
16 programs as well including as both Tony and Linda
17 have indicated, translation services. Also, we feel
18 it's important to attract people to the libraries,
19 and in addition to the services that have been
20 articulated already taking a look at how we can
21 expand the number of hot spots, mobile hot spots to
22 attract people, the materials budget will increase as
23 well. The NAP Service, the New American Services.
24 We're looking to expand on Sunday the Job Business
25 Academy that we have also providing services.

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2 Translation services are extremely important and
3 making sure we have the available people for
4 translation services, and as Linda indicated and Tony
5 had indicated looking to expand our partnerships with
6 our fellow CBOs as far as making sure they know the
7 doors are open and, therefore, they are welcome to
8 provide the type of advocacy services that we may not
9 be able to provide, but others may be able to provide
10 so that we will be a repository for people to come in
11 and then get those expert services similar to what we
12 have now where the immigration lawyers who were there
13 at the Queens Library on Thursday at the various
14 community libraries, and other locations as well.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So you briefly
16 touched on this in your testimony I believe one of
17 you, but obviously the-the-the homeless crisis in our
18 city is-is one that affects-affects our city in-in so
19 many different ways, but obviously I know with my
20 experience in libraries that libraries are incredibly
21 use, and-and are-are a real valuable tool in both
22 lifting up those who are currently homeless. And so
23 I'm wondering if-if-if you could speak to that.
24 Obviously, with the-the-with the crisis that we see

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2 in our city that may have some—some impact on
3 libraries.

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: Uh-huh.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Maybe you've
6 increased your services as you—as you work with the
7 homeless, whether those who come through the doors
8 or—or the services you're providing to shelters or—or
9 young people who—who may find themselves homeless.
10 I'm wondering if you can speak to that and—and
11 whether or not you'd be able to help the city more as
12 it seeks to help those who are homeless if you were
13 to be open seven days a week.

14 DENNIS WALCOTT: So let me start with
15 that, if I may, because one of the things that we
16 have been able to do is really work very closely with
17 the people who are homeless and by doing that having
18 our doors open as often as possible so that they do
19 not just get the support but information as well, and
20 I have a couple of examples I wanted to share because
21 I—I promised Linda and Tony I would never talk about
22 this again. So I won't talk about it but the—no, no,
23 I'm not going to talk about my office on the main
24 floor. [laughter] I'm not going to—I promised you I
25 would not talk about that again. But being on the

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2 floor on a regular basis, I see a lot of our regular
3 customers who have a variety of needs who are
4 homeless, who may have mental health challenges, may
5 have other emotional issues, and how we interact with
6 them with the expertise of our librarians and other
7 staff to address their particular needs, and they
8 feel safe in our libraries. They feel safe in coming
9 in and asking for support. They feel in getting the
10 material to sit and read. They feel safe in trying
11 to share their story and what's going on. So by
12 expanding the day to Sunday, I think we offer more
13 people the opportunity to both get that safety net in
14 coming into our libraries to receive those services,
15 but more importantly to move them along the continuum
16 of being self-sufficient as well whether it's a job
17 referral or other type of supports. Personally, I
18 know there are a number of people that I know who are
19 regular customers who have specific needs, and we're
20 able to tie in a librarian or someone else on staff
21 who has that expertise to help those individuals. Or
22 I'll give you a real example. One time a gentleman
23 came up to me and he had taken something out of the
24 media section of our library, and it had his homeless
25 shelter listed on, and so then Nick and I, our chief

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2 librarian talked about that because the gentleman
3 said, you know, you shouldn't be identifying that I'm
4 living in a shelter and I said, you know, you're
5 right , and he had the ability to share that
6 information that safety was there on his part in
7 thinking he could share the, and then he got the
8 accountability that he needed because then the next
9 time he took something out that wasn't identified. I
10 think that's what we offer our customers who are
11 homeless, and they're our customers. They're our
12 regular patrons who are there, and they have that
13 ability to escape, but also to get information.
14 That's what we represent. We represent that civil
15 aspect of society of providing both information and a
16 safe haven for individuals to take that next step
17 forward, and I think that's what a Sunday service
18 will do as well. And giving people more of an
19 opportunity to come in and get that type of feedback
20 and information and then moving them along to address
21 their particular need.

22 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, in addition to
23 seven-day service, the library in-in Brooklyn have
24 recently created what we call deposit collections
25 that we're actually putting in shelters for the

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2 shelters that are in our—in our borough. We also
3 have been working with social workers to help
4 ameliorate some of the problems that serving the
5 homeless create not only for staff, but also for
6 other library patrons. We're working with Breaking
7 Ground in partnership with them training staff, and
8 then also—training staff also to refer homeless
9 people to the social service agencies that are
10 actually in the business of—of—of supporting that
11 group of people. But we do know first hand that
12 there are many homeless people who spend their days
13 in the library and we welcome them, and hope that
14 they will derive many of the same benefits that all
15 of our patrons do at the library and, of course,
16 Sunday is no different from any other day of the week
17 in terms of needing a place to go, staying warm in
18 the winter and comfortable in the summer.

19 TONY MARX: If you're homeless, you're
20 homeless on Sundays as well, and if you're homeless,
21 the only place where you could come and find shelter
22 and respect and be able to read and think and write
23 to have access to free computers you can't otherwise
24 afford, the educational programs that we've bee
25 massively expanding including college prep programs,

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2 college advisory programs for your kids so that they
3 have a better chance of-of finding their place in the
4 world. All of that depends on the doors being open,
5 but it's also when we ware open. Our staff are being
6 increasingly proactive on the homeless front whether
7 it's helping the city in counting homeless children
8 in particular, right. You got to know what your-
9 what-what the issues, what scale of it is. Since-in
10 the last two years our branch staff have been going
11 and doing programs in ten homeless shelters. In
12 2016, we expanded to seven additional shelters. So
13 people coming in, staff going, and in-interestingly
14 also looking at how books can go out. So the My
15 Libraries NYC program, which doubled last year in its
16 provision from the three of us into the public
17 schools of our circulating collection. We're also
18 looking at whether we can do that in homeless
19 shelters as well. Why shouldn't there be libraries
20 right there. We want you to come in. We're ready to
21 go out, and we want you reading wherever you are.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [coughs] Thank
23 you for that. I think the work that libraries do
24 with respect to the homeless population in the City
25 of New York is-is underappreciated, and-and not fully

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2 known by very many people. I want to ask a capital
3 question, and then we're going to go to Chair King
4 and--and the members of the committee, but speak to me
5 a little bit about the increase you received, and I'm
6 proud that we fought with you all, and--and--and the
7 Administration put some funding into the Ten-Year
8 Capital Budget. What you've been able to do with
9 that and--and how quickly you're able to spend that
10 funding, and--and actually start to improve the
11 branches that so desperately need improvement like
12 the one you showed before, Linda, and--and if you were
13 to get the--the two capital requests, how quickly
14 these neighborhoods could see improvements in those
15 neighborhood libraries?

16 LINDA JOHNSON: [pause] Since I seem to
17 be the queen of capital for good reason, I'll begin.
18 So we deeply appreciate being included in the Ten-
19 Year Plan if for no other reason that it allows us to
20 actually plan for our future in stead of, you know,
21 sort of being up in the air from one year to the next
22 about what kind of funding we would get and how we
23 could use that money. So Brooklyn Public Library
24 identified five libraries that it would tack--tackle
25 with the--with the--the ten-year money. Brownsville

1 will benefit from that. I'm forgetting the—the five
2 different neighborhoods, but we're excited and we're
3 working on these projects today. The way the money
4 was allocated, however, in the first year of the Ten-
5 Year plan we got—actually ended up with less money
6 than we ordinarily would have because of the way it
7 was structured. And so in the first year of the plan
8 we actually were at deficit and we're in that
9 untenable situation of just handling emergencies as
10 they arose. Of course, we always have a plan for
11 each year. It's just how quickly we have to abandon
12 the plan in order to take care of—of the pressing
13 issues. So a part of our ask is for our central
14 library, which is, as I said, 350,000 square feet,
15 and attracts 1.3 million visits a year. It is, you
16 know, a very large piece of our system, and the
17 building is 75 years old and magnificent, but in bad
18 need of repair. It would be great if we had
19 elevators we could count on, if we had bathrooms that
20 were sufficient and, you know, so I—I know sometimes
21 these projects seem like vanity projects, but in this
22 case I will tell you that while we do need to
23 restored the building, we really need to make it
24 functional as well. Over half that space in that
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2 building is not accessible to the public, and that's
3 a sin. And what we've done is we've moved many of the
4 more labor intensive work that you used to be done at
5 the Central Library out of the building so that we
6 can free up space for our patrons, which is, you
7 know, really-really critical. We will-with a
8 reliable recurring source-source of funding be able
9 to tackle the buildings and bring them into a state
10 of good repair and then really, you know, pie in the
11 sky would be able dot preventative work. So that
12 instead of dealing with problems when they were the
13 most expensive, we were actually able to-to hit them
14 earlier and do them more efficiently and-and actually
15 have them cost less to fix. I will say that it's a
16 challenge sometimes getting these projects completed
17 on time and on budget, but I will thank my team for
18 their tireless work in trying to push these projects
19 forward.

20 TONY MARX: Mr. Chairman, so we're very
21 delighted to have an opening this spring on projects
22 with thanks to the support of the City Council, the
23 Mayor and individual members of the City Council. In
24 Woodstock major renovate-renovation of Schaumburg and
25 in Washington Heights are coming up in terms of our

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2 work ongoing in Charleston, Roosevelt Island,
3 Woodlawn, Westchester Square, Macomb's Bridge and Van
4 Courtlandt. Thanks to the initial investment and the
5 Ten-Year Capital Plan we will be spending \$20 million
6 each on a complete renovation of 5 Carnegie branches
7 on the 25th Street, Fort Washington, Hunts Point,
8 Fort Washington and Melrose. We're going to do those
9 as pass-throughs, which means we're also going to
10 invest private money and that means at least from
11 our—from our records we'll be able to do those in
12 roughly twice the—twice as fast and at roughly half
13 the cost. That is good for the libraries. It's good
14 for the citizens and it's good for the elected
15 officials who have been investing in these. Coming
16 up in terms of our ask, not only are we asking for an
17 increased—a recurring fund for basic maintenance
18 because if our librarians are running around putting
19 pales under leaky roofs ,they can't be serving the
20 public in all the ways that we've been discussion.
21 So we—we want to like get that done, and then in
22 terms of the next major capital investments, we are
23 going to be focusing on Edenwald, Hamilton Fish, West
24 New Brighton, West Farms, Francis Martin, Spuyten
25 Duyvil, County Culhane, and Muhlenberg. So there's

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2 great work ahead. I think it is fair to say, you
3 know, too much need has been pent up in terms of
4 physical renovations. The City Council and the Mayor
5 have made great investments in helping to building
6 momentum so that we can be more efficient, more
7 planful, more effective, more-cost-effective and it
8 is time to continue on that so that we can ahead of
9 the curve that we let get ahead of us over too many
10 decades.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So-

12 LINDA JOHNSON: [off mic]

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Uh-huh, yep.

14 Linda, did you want to add something?

15 LINDA JOHNSON: I do want to add
16 something because as jealous as I am of all those
17 projects, I want to say the thing that really is
18 disheartening about libraries that are not in good
19 states of repair the ones that have gotten ahead of
20 us, we had a 400—we had 400 hours of lost service
21 last year because libraries were closed unexpected,
22 and that's—that's really what this gets at. Thirty-
23 eight projects that are underway are currently at
24 risk of stalling because of funding issues.
25 Shortfalls that occur because of the lag of time that

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2 occurs between planning for a project and actually
3 beginning that project. And 41 out of 59 buildings
4 had unplanned closures. So, you know, while it's
5 important to talk about inspiring buildings and heat
6 and all of those things. Really, if we get money on
7 the expense side, which allows us to be open seven
8 days a week, which are desperate for, as you've heard
9 this morning, it also needs to be complemented by
10 capital money that allows our buildings to be opened
11 as scheduled.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely. I
13 want to recognize we've been joined by Council Member
14 Brad Lander from Brooklyn. Were folks waving just at
15 the mention of that name? Wow, look at that, Brad.
16 [laughter] That's I think a Brooklyn situation here
17 today. So, Tony, you said when you—you're doing
18 these five projects as pass-throughs, and that when
19 you do them as pass-throughs it's twice as fast and
20 half the cost.

21 TONY MARX: So---

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So why don't you
23 do all of your projects as pass-throughs. [laughter]

24 TONY MARX: I don't—I don't we could
25 manage that, sir, but I do think we could—we are

1 prepared and we would like to work with you to manage
2 to do more or of our projects. Again, the bang for
3 the buck for the citizens of New York. The—the track
4 record is clear. In the projects we are not
5 managing, the average time is over six years, and the
6 average cost per square foot is \$770. When we manage
7 those projects it's a little over two years. So less
8 than half the time and about \$411 and, of course, we
9 know the faster you get construction done, also the
10 cheaper it can be because you're not letting costs
11 escalate over time. We can give you lots of examples
12 of that. We—we know this is a complicated public
13 policy issue. We know that the City Council and the
14 Mayor are focused on it, and we all want to do
15 better. We all recognize that if we can do for
16 instance the Washington Heights renovation as we did
17 in half the time of the project in Woodstock—in the
18 Woodstock branch, again Woodstock deserves better
19 than that. Similarly, the Roosevelt Island branch,
20 which has taken long, Westchester Square, which has
21 take way too long. When the citizens of New York
22 invest their capital funds and the elected officials
23 their budget for those capital funds, and you do not
24 get a project done in time and on budget, everyone
25

1
2 suffers from that. And we need to make sure that we
3 can find a way to ensure that that does not happen.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So it is fair to
5 say that all three systems would like to pursue more
6 pass-through projects?

7 TONY MARX: We actually cannot be clear.
8 What we would like to discuss with the City Council
9 and the Mayor and I think it started to discuss is
10 treat us in terms of the capital allocation as if we
11 were part of the city agencies. So enable us to
12 manage those projects we can manage to get you better
13 results faster and cheaper, right? We'll still rely
14 on DDC where we need to rely on them. Pass-throughs
15 have their own complications, as you know, in terms
16 of money upfront that not all of us are going to have
17 to do everything that we seek to do.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Dennis—

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] So the
20 answer is yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs] And,
22 Dennis, did you want to address the questions that
23 the other two did in terms of--?

24 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure. So when I first
25 started last year, one of the first things I heard

1
2 about was the issue of capital, and our colleagues
3 who are here from the borough of Queens as well as
4 our customers are constantly asking us questions
5 about what's the status of all the capital project?
6 Where a things at? They've been long delayed, and so
7 we put a capital tracker program in place that's on
8 our website that lists basically the approximate time
9 frame and status of our capital projects, and right
10 now in the borough of Queens we have approximately
11 100 to 110 capital projects going on both big and
12 small, and I think a fairly decent job in managing
13 them and moving some projects that have been long
14 delayed out of that long delayed column into
15 hopefully closing very soon. So, in a number of our
16 districts and the members who are here from Queens,
17 we meet with you individually, and we present you our
18 capital books that give an update on the status of
19 the projects as well as future needs as well. So
20 similar to my colleagues, and you know, a lot of the
21 money that's been allocated already has been
22 allocated for HVAC systems, roof condensers,
23 furniture, new buildings and we have a number of
24 projects that are coming to closure. Hopefully, in
25 another several months we'll be opening up our Kew

1
2 Gardens Hills branch. In another several months
3 we'll be opening up our brand new library in your
4 district in Hunter's Point. We'll be closing out
5 some renovations. We've just reopened East Elmhurst.
6 So we've allocated the money to get the job done, but
7 we still have some serious needs. So we're looking
8 at needs in Fresh Meadows of heating and ventilation,
9 the air conditioning control and the Maspeth heating,
10 ventilation and air conditioning control and roof
11 replacement. In Astoria, one of the big challenges
12 is our accessibility renovation and working on that.
13 The age-old problem, and this is one of the things
14 that I definitely want to work on to solve is the
15 expansion of the Corona Library as well because
16 that's a big challenge, and we have some creative
17 ideas. Also addressing the needs in Rego Park,
18 another serious over-demand library that we need to
19 expand as well. Seaside HVAC, Langston Hughes façade
20 restoration. Astoria, as I indicated accessibility
21 renovation. So we have a number of ideas and plans
22 for the use of the capital dollars, and as my
23 colleagues indicated, we do the work a lot faster if
24 we pass-throughs, but as you know, we need a match if
25 we have state dollars to do that, and that's part of

1
2 the challenge as well. SO we look forward to any
3 type of discussion around flexibility alone in that
4 line.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and
6 right on cue, he must have anticipated that you were
7 going to talk about the Astoria Library accessibility
8 projects--

9 DENNIS WALCOTT: That's why I said it
10 twice [laughter] because I saw him walk in.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member
12 Costa Constantinides has joined us. So I'm going to
13 pass it off to--to my colleagues. We're going to in
14 order have Council Member King, Koo, Crowley, Lander,
15 and I know that Council Member Constantinides has a
16 few other commitments as well, but if we can work
17 that out. Let me just say in closing one thing these
18 are not vanity projects. I know that, we know that
19 these are basic operating and capital needs that we
20 need to have all of the se libraries functioning at
21 maximum capacity, and--and at a bare minimum not
22 leaking or not freezing. So, the need is absolutely
23 demonstrable and absolutely worth the investment on
24 behalf of the people of the city of New York, and--and
25 we need to do this. The other thing I want t say I

1
2 think Dennis mentioned this in brief, but every time
3 the city of New York has needed you as libraries, you
4 have been there whether it's for Pre-K or IDNYC, the-
5 the way you serve those who are homeless in the city
6 of New York in ways that few do, the way you work
7 with jails and prisons and those who are criminal
8 justice involved, the way that you absolutely make
9 the difference for so many immigrants in the city of
10 New York, those who are documented, those who are
11 undocumented. Libraries are there for the city of
12 New York whenever the city of New York calls, right?
13 The library workers are there for the people of the
14 city of New York every single time the city of New
15 York comes calling, and-and so I just want to say
16 while some of these numbers seem big to some people,
17 given the overall city budget, and-and the scale of
18 that and then given what you all do for the people of
19 the city of New York these are not exorbitant numbers
20 at all, right? These are numbers that reflect your
21 value and our investing in libraries and all New
22 Yorkers is a statement about our values, and-and what
23 the city of New York stands today more than ever, and
24 what we should always stand for. So I just want to

1 say that in closing, and pass it off to Chair King
2 before we move onto other council members.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Chair, and
5 I appreciate it. Excuse me again for the raspiness.
6 I'm going to keep it about three questions, and then
7 I'm going to defer. My topics are the video-video-
8 video visitation. I'd like to know how successful
9 has the video visitation been. I'd like know have
10 you been able for those families who have
11 participated in a video visitation have you been able
12 to encourage them to use other services within the
13 library system because they may not have ever come
14 into a library but they did come in for this
15 particular video visitation. So how, are we allowed
16 to-to participate whether it's library cards or any
17 other thing that they could utilize there? Secondly,
18 I'd like to know do you track the ethnic breakdown of
19 those who come in to use the video visitation to find
20 who's actually coming in to use-to use it? Those
21 are-those are pretty much my program-programming
22 questions. And my capital question is as I hear that
23 one of the biggest challenges that you have with
24 construction comes to design and construction. The-
25 the slowdown of being able to compete projects that

1
2 have been fully funded usually goes back to design
3 and construction because of the many projects they
4 take on for the whole city. So my question is if
5 it's not mandated by law that you use design and
6 construction, do you have a plan or can create a plan
7 that allows you to complete your projects in a timely
8 manner that design and construction might hinder?

9 Thank you.

10 DENNIS WALCOTT: So with video visitation
11 since December, and I want to thank the Speaker and
12 all the Council Members because I think this has been
13 an outstanding program. In Queens we've already had
14 41 visits. We've served 49 children in 36 families
15 in four of our locations so the Central Office in Far
16 Rockaway, Long Island City and Ridgewood and to
17 answer your other question, I do not and we do not
18 keep track of the demographics of the population
19 being served. But I can tell you it's been really
20 worthwhile in the water. The person who is
21 coordinating that initiative for us I Queens is here,
22 and we talk on a regular basis and it's just
23 extremely satisfying and you can just feel the
24 emotion in the room when people are there, and even
25 though we're not in the room directly you know, it's

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2 being an emotional connection and all types of
3 families are being connected as a result of that.

4 And to answer the other part of your question around
5 the other library services, we encourage people once
6 they're in the door to take full advantage of all the
7 services that are available, and especially at our
8 community libraries. It's a lot smaller than

9 central, and so there's the opportunity for them to
10 participate in the various programs, and learn about
11 it, and we have a lot of literature out there for
12 people to take full advantage of. So we encourage
13 the full participation of those who come through
14 video visitation and the overall library itself.

15 Connected to the construction question, as indicated
16 in your prior testimony that we can do it a lot
17 faster and cheaper, as Tony indicated and I think we
18 need to have—this is a very comprehensive
19 conversation solely on that issues because I think
20 based on law and other issues, there are ways to
21 possibly do it better, but we also work within the
22 system as well. Just yesterday our team as part of
23 its monthly meeting, the meeting DDC and our
24 understanding of the projects and then they report up
25 to me as far as which projects are outliers, where we

1
2 are in making sure we meet our goals and timelines.
3 So we've very specific as far as making sure we're
4 both accountable within Queens Public Library., but
5 also with DDC and the Commissioner and I talk on a
6 regular basis. So we think we can do it a lot
7 faster. As Tony indicate also in his testimony, we
8 don't want it all either because are realists, and so
9 we want to put a realistic system in place. And
10 finally, I'm spoiled (sic). I was at DOE. We had
11 the School Construction Authority and we we're able
12 to build very complex schools in a three-year period
13 of time, but a lot of that also went to the funding
14 cycles as well in that you have a budget set up, and
15 you know you have, for example, in the Bronx when we
16 did it with a three-school complex up in the Bronx
17 and we built it an athletic field as well, and we
18 were able to do that in a three-year period of time,
19 and also remediate the land that these schools were
20 going to be located on, and we did that roughly for
21 \$250 million, but was done in a three-year period of
22 time. And I'm not blaming anyone, but I think it's
23 shameful that it takes us up to nine years, ten years
24 to build a library. I shouldn't be that way, and we
25 have to do better, and I think we're very open to

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2 looking at ways to do it better or to even fix
3 projects that are not necessarily new construction as
4 well.

5 TONY MARX: As he said, the—we are for
6 video visitations this has, you know, it's been so
7 inspiring to watch families coming back together in
8 this way. It's not a perfect way, but in this way,
9 the way in which people who have been incarcerated
10 feel respected, feel a connection and feel a set of
11 alternative lives and opportunities opening for them.
12 We—we started with six locations. We're—we're about
13 to add two additional locations. We've added a
14 couple staff and, of course, we encourage people as
15 is always the case to use all of our library
16 services. You know, whether it's a—a mother bringing
17 in her child for an after school program or to be
18 part of a visitation program that says oh, let me
19 take some books out, or let me use the computer or
20 let me get English language instruction while I'm
21 here. Those are great synergies, and we look for
22 those.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: Excuse me, Mr. Sprint
24 (sic) out of those six, what boroughs are they in?

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2 TONY MARX: So our current six locations
3 Mariner's Harbor at 125th Street, Hunts Point, Grand
4 Concourse, Hamilton Grange and Tompkins Square, and
5 the two that we're looking at to add are Parkchester
6 and either Upper Manhattan or the South Bronx. So we
7 should talk, Mr. Chairman. The—in terms of the—the
8 sort of DVC and construction questions, again I've—
9 I've made clear what our track record is. I think we
10 probably have done more of this as pass-throughs and
11 independently than the other systems for a while now.
12 There are projects that we need to continue to work
13 with DDC. If we didn't continue to work with DDC,
14 we'd need to explore opportunities to do that with
15 others, but where we can, we are happy to do these
16 projects self-managed, and I think our track record
17 there has been extraordinary, but also our capacity
18 is extraordinary. So the Mid Manhattan gut
19 renovation, which will provide all New Yorkers
20 because people from all five boroughs come to Midtown
21 to use the Mid Manhattan, which has been in bad
22 condition for decades. That's \$150 million of city
23 investment. We're putting in more than \$50 million
24 of private investment. We're doing it as a pass-
25 through, and we will get that construction done in

1
2 two years, which is astonishing. You have a net-
3 we're talking about roughly \$200,000 square feet.

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. Did you want to
5 answer?

6 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes, thank you. On the-
7 on the tele-visits we call it tele-story the Brooklyn
8 Public Library has been doing this work for many
9 years. We are at 12 locations, and while we're
10 tracking who is using the services, we're not
11 tracking it by-by ethnicity. We are, of course,
12 encouraging everybody who comes in to do those visits
13 to use other library services, and-and I just want to
14 point out that at the core of that-of the video
15 visit, of course is a book. It's an opportunity for
16 a child of an incarcerated parent to read with that
17 parent, to make the book and literacy the central-
18 the-the focus of the visit which, of course, is so
19 important because we're in everything we do trying to
20 encourage students to be reading at-at the younger
21 stages. So it's a-it's a powerful-it's a powerful
22 program on many levels. With respect to capital or
23 I-I should also mention that we have these deposit
24 collections that I talked about in the context of the
25 homeless question. We also have pop-up libraries on

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2 Rikers Island. So we're not only doing—we're not
3 only bringing families together, we're also actually
4 leaving collections at Rikers for—for the prisoners.
5 On the capital side, you know, we have horror
6 stories, the kind of stories that when you read you
7 can't believe are true. Like when I told that a
8 project is being delayed for the fifth time or that
9 it's going to cost three times what we were initially
10 quoted, you know, you—you really think you're in some
11 alternative universe, but these are real stories.
12 The Rugby Branch in particular, which is just
13 beginning construction now, that project started in
14 2005, and it was supposed to take a year and a half,
15 and now we're being told it will take three. So, for
16 that—every story like that we also have the great
17 story that we can tell about a project that we
18 handled ourselves even though we're relatively new to
19 that world. And the information commons in the
20 Central Library in particular was—was built on time
21 and on budget in a very short period of time with
22 \$3.2 million of capital money. So our plan in a
23 perfect world would be to choose the projects that we
24 wanted to handle as pass-throughs, the—the, you know,
25 whit the full renovations, the new construction, and

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2 then to continue to partner with city agencies, you
3 know, such as DDC to do the roofs and the HVAC
4 systems and the boilers.

5 CHAIRPERSON KING: So let me just quickly
6 follow-follow up. So in 2016, as I understand it,
7 out of the \$28.7 million that you allocated which
8 comes out at 7-7.1% in the Capital Plan. Excuse me.
9 I'm-I'm trying to figure out, you-you committed that
10 7.1% to try to get this work done. Is there a way to
11 allocate more as opposed to just committing 7.1 of
12 the Annual Capital Plan out of the \$407 million?
13 Does it make sense what I'm asking?

14 LINDA JOHNSON: I'm not sure. Are you
15 talking about the commitment rate at DDC?

16 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yeah.

17 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah. Boy, we would love
18 that rate to be higher. We feel a little powerless
19 in that-in that context.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: So, I [coughs] got it.
21 I guess is there a way in the future not that you
22 have to answer it now, that we can maybe come up with
23 if there is an alternative to design and construction
24 to move projects through? Maybe you ought to see if-
25 -whether there are smaller projects that you guys can

1
2 take on, or again, if it's not by law you're required
3 to have all your projects to through, maybe you can
4 find an alternative option. I'm not saying there's
5 one out here, but maybe we could find it because
6 again, we 19 years to have a library built is-is
7 ridiculous especially since we fund them in its
8 entirety.

9 LINDA JOHNSON: So-so we're eager to
10 follow a model that is closer to what New York Public
11 Library is doing, which is to-to handle the-the
12 larger projects as pass-throughs meaning that we
13 would contribute the-the required amount of non-city
14 money to the project that would allow us to do the
15 design and to do the construction, and in the process
16 with the hope of reducing the time of the project by
17 as much as 50% and the cost by a similar amount.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, I know we're
19 committed and I aim to do all we can to direct our
20 bills and get these things done in a timely manner.
21 So I want to thank Presidents Row for testifying
22 today, and the Bible says the number 7 is the number
23 is the number of completion. So library services
24 want be complete until we get seven days of every
25 week. So God bless and thank you.

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Chair King and now we're going to go to the members. We are going to go on a five-minute clock starting now. I see some of the Cultural folks have started to join us in the crowd. So it's an opportunity for some cross-pollination and-and libraries and culture go so well together. So welcome to all of you. Obviously, your hearing will commence when-when this one is over, and we're going a little bit longer, but that's okay because this is very important, and we will spend as much time on-on the cultural piece as well. So, we're going to start with Council Member Crowley, Council Member Lander and I want to-what's that'? Oh, I'm sorry. Council Member Koo, you are right. Council Member Koo is here, then Council Member Crowley, then Council Member Lander, and I want to recognize Council Member Rosenthal who was here, but is now taking part in some very important events on the steps as well, and we acknowledged Council Member Constantinides. So once again, it's Koo, Crowley and Lander in that order.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you Chair Van Bramer for your leadership and your strong advocacy for Cultural Affairs and the Libraries. We all know

1
2 libraries are very important. You know, we must—we
3 can name a thousand reasons why libraries are
4 important. Libraries are the cornerstones of a
5 healthy and stable community. Especially in New York
6 city. New York City is such a diverse city. We have
7 people from all over the world who want to come here.
8 Their dream is to come to New York City or to come to
9 New York—come to America. Being such a diverse city,
10 when immigrants use libraries as a gateway to a
11 community, they can go there to learn English, find
12 jobs do all kinds of programs or even get DVDs to—to
13 go home to—to watch on TV. Those are important
14 programs, and also the libraries are—as I said the
15 champion for the—our youth providing a lot programs,
16 summer programs, and weekend programs, and this will
17 help fix the economic divide between all of us
18 because knowledge is power, and when you have
19 knowledge, you know, the sky is the limit. So, you
20 come to the conclusion that libraries are so
21 important and it's so important for immigrants
22 especially during this time when we have so much
23 political turmoil from Washington, DC and between DC
24 and our city. So it's important for your—your
25 leadership to keep up all these programs, especially

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2 for what it delivers. I live in City of Flushing,
3 which is Council District 20, which is 60% Asian-
4 Americans, and among the 60% Asian-Americans, 60% are
5 Chinese-Americans. That shows you in all different
6 districts there are different demographics and each
7 Council District is different. So my question is
8 because of different demographics what is the policy
9 of hiring librarians and staff in each different
10 areas where eastern—maybe Flushing is different than
11 Sunset Park or in Bayside. So every area has
12 different demographics and my—so the first question
13 is I want to know do you have a policy of hiring
14 multi-lingual personnel? The second question is what
15 is the policy of collecting books other than in
16 languages—you know, books in languages other than
17 English because I'm very happy that in Flushing
18 Library we have so many books written in Chinese.
19 And so our people, the old people, especially senior
20 citizens, their—because of their language deficiency
21 they cannot read books in English, but they—they do
22 read a lot of books Chinese. So they—you—you will
23 keep them happy. When they go home they can read
24 books. That just something for them to do. So those

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2 are the two questions, the person's role and then the
3 books policy.

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure. So I'll take the
5 first attempt to respond. One, we have a non-
6 discriminatory policy. So we just hire based on
7 qualification and I mean the beauty of Queens and all
8 of our systems is that we have a great diverse staff
9 that often you see people here in the audience who
10 will represent that and those who are back in our
11 libraries who couldn't make it down here. And so, the
12 beauty is that the staff is diverse, they're mixed
13 all over our libraries, and especially in the borough
14 of Queens. I have the unique pleasure of being
15 really a fly watching our staff work in outfitting
16 Elmhurst when Elmhurst was about to open at the end
17 of December, and watching the staging of the books
18 and materials at Elmhurst, and looking at the
19 diversity of the materials in the languages that are
20 spoken in the community and throughout that
21 particular catchment are, and so all of our libraries
22 reflect that diversity as well not just in the
23 material or books not just in the online information
24 but in the newspapers as well. When I go to visit
25 Flushing, and I take great pride in watching the

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2 customers in Flushing who are there reading
3 newspapers in their local language, and what it means
4 to them to have that connection to home. I take
5 great pride in the partnerships in Queens that we've
6 been able to develop with the various consul-generals
7 of the various countries in partnering with them, and
8 having linkages to the home countries as well. So we
9 really applaud the diversity, but we expand that
10 diversity by making sure we have a variety of
11 vehicles to share information and having staff that
12 are reflective of the great city of New York that
13 speak all languages, and that look like the city of
14 New York.

15 TONY MARX: Exactly the same in the New
16 York Public Library. We don't discriminate, but we-
17 we're delighted to have very multi-lingual staff. We
18 need to, and we are proud of the diversity not only
19 of our staff, but of our users and of our
20 collections, and every neighborhood that keeps
21 shifting as New Yorkers move around and different
22 waves of immigrants move to different places, and
23 it's part of what keeps up so vibrant. So absolutely
24 central to our efforts.

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LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, I would echo that.
So we are always looking for librarians who speak
more than one language, but it's not a requirement.
We're actually looking for the very best librarians
that are in the field and are quite proud of the
staff that we've recruited in the last couple of
years thanks in-to such a big degree to the increase
in the budget that the City Council was so
instrumental in getting us. But we have in-in recent
years increased the number of story times that we do
in multiple languages and, of course, we're all
investing in collections that are in-in our case over
30 languages to make sure that while we are in some
ways helping our patrons become acclimated and-and
assimilated into the world that New York provides,
we're also giving them that connection to home that-
that-that quality that a book in a-in a first
language provides to somebody who's otherwise feeling
isolated. So it is a matter of-of a balance, and I
think that we're doing it on both sides.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you and thank
you for your leadership, and thank you Chair Van
Bramer for your leadership, too.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
3 much, Council Member Koo, who I might add has been an
4 incredible advocate for libraries. We met long
5 before we were both elected officials with his
6 incredible support for the Flushing Library. Now we
7 are going to go to Council Member Crowley.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you to
9 both of our Chairs, and to the library systems for
10 what they do for our city. I am going to race
11 through my questions. I don't want to be rude, but I
12 may cut you off just because I'm on a clock, and I
13 know we need to get the Department of Cultural
14 Affairs in for questions. So, first, I'm a little
15 disappointed that we don't have the information that
16 I'm looking for in your testimony nor in our
17 committee report. We just don't get the information
18 about staffing and your budget, be it either your
19 capital budget or your entire expense budget included
20 in the information that we have. So, it's, you know,
21 I do understand that we as a city give you \$366
22 million. We did, anyway, in the past fiscal year,
23 but I don't know exactly how much of that goes
24 towards employees, how many employees you have or
25 what other funding you get from other sources. So

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2 the quick answer to a long question would be just how
3 much of your total budget for expense is the city
4 giving you. So if the city is giving 90% of your
5 total budget that would be answer. So you could just
6 let me know what that answer is, and it's just
7 expense.

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: So I think it varies by
9 system and we're roughly 94%, the city.

10 LINDA JOHNSON: And Brooklyn is 85%.

11 TONY MARX: The New York Public Library
12 is about 50% because we're privately funding a
13 majority of the research libraries for all five
14 boroughs.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Great good to
16 know. So certainly when it comes to Queens Library
17 and the Brooklyn Library since we're more than half,
18 and I even thing—and just to clarify with Manhattan
19 and New York Library, if you took out the research
20 institutions the city is funding closer to 80 or 90%
21 of you expense the entirety. Good. So I—I believe
22 since we're giving so much more it's almost like a
23 city agency. We need more information. You know,
24 when I look at the capital expense, and I hear back
25 and forth, you know, from earlier questions how the

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2 library system wants to self-manage, and I'm
3 supportive of this, but then at the same time I heard
4 Brooklyn Library say 49 out of 51 buildings were
5 closed and service stopped because of I guess the
6 building not having heat or it just—it's certainly
7 not—not like earlier Council Member Van Bramer said
8 your Capital Budget is not for a vanity project, but
9 how could it be that if we're giving much in capital
10 that a library could close down because it doesn't
11 have the basis?

12 LINDA JOHNSON: I'll—I'll start since you
13 used the example of Brooklyn. With the—the 85% of
14 the budget that's coming from the city to support the
15 library is on the expense side.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: No. Yeah, I
17 realize that but that's—

18 LINDA JOHNSON: The capital side--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Yes.

20 LINDA JOHNSON: We have over a million
21 square feet of real estate and we have been getting
22 approximately \$15 to \$17 million to take care of
23 that. It is a ratio that cannot sustain the
24 infrastructure of the buildings that we are required
25 to care for and--

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]
3 Understood and agreed. It is not enough money. You
4 need more in your capital. I, you know,
5 wholeheartedly support expanding your capital budget.
6 Now how much of the \$15 to \$17 million or/and each
7 library system can answer this—how much of your
8 capital budget is for new construction, new projects
9 versus supporting the needs of the existing
10 libraries?

11 LINDA JOHNSON: The first time at least
12 in my tenure that we've received money for new
13 projects was last year's budget where we received in
14 the Ten-Year Capital Plan. It was an enormous step
15 forward in the sense that it gave us money for
16 specific projects that we could actually plan for,
17 but the money that we've been getting prior to that,
18 the 7-\$15 to \$17 million has really been
19 predominantly for state of repair work.

20 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] And the
21 Department of--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]
23 And then, yeah, if Queens could answer this because I
24 reached out to Queens Library over two weeks ago to
25 try to get this information, and we only got it to my

1 office yesterday, and I had staff working until 9
2 o'clock at night trying to figure out your Capital
3 Budget.

4
5 DENNIS WALCOTT: So let me respond to two
6 things. One you asked for data going back six years
7 or so give or take.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Yes.

9 DENNIS WALCOTT: And so in about a week
10 and a half we turned that around to you and gave you
11 the information, but to answer the first part of your
12 question, it's—a different way to answer it is that
13 obviously more money is expended when you're building
14 a new building. So we project a new building costs
15 roughly \$32 million. So the super majority of our
16 projects, though are for HVAC and maintenance and so,
17 a lot of the items that I listed in my testimony for
18 masonry work. You had a situation in your district
19 where a boiler stopped working in the--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]

21 Right

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: --Damascus Library--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]

24 Right.

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: --and that's going to
3 cost money and that was an emergency repair at the
4 time.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right and then
6 it's--that boiler was 45 years old--

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Right and--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --and--and my
9 point in being frustrated with that library closing
10 down for two weeks, and my constituents were unable
11 to get library services at that location was because
12 of poor planning because when you're given--and that's
13 not your fault. You're new, but when your system was
14 given millions and millions of dollars over certainly
15 my time as a Council Member and prior to me, and that
16 projects are getting more vanity dollars than the
17 maintenance and the systems within libraries to keep
18 them running frustrates me.

19 DENNIS WALCOTT: So, can I--if can--I can
20 respond. I'm not sure that's vanity dollars, and the
21 reality is as you know, we've done this with each or
22 our individual Council Members. We lay out the
23 actual needs and the money that's been raised to meet
24 those needs and also projected as well and as you
25 know--

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]

3 But there--there's certainly vanity projects in
4 Queens Library. It's not your doing, but that has
5 happened just so--I'm--I'm using the word that was
6 used earlier--

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] I
8 understand. My point--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So I'm trying to
10 just--

11 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Oh, no, I'm
12 with you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --get to the
14 heart of how much is spent on new construction versus
15 existing needs.

16 DENNIS WALCOTT: I-I don't know if it's
17 a-I hear you and I'll leave the vanity world alone,
18 but I think in comparison the new versus the
19 existing, new costs more. I mean the average library
20 size now is a lot larger than the Lindsay boxes,
21 which were roughly 7,500 square feet. Now, we're
22 going to do a new library in the borough of Queens.
23 It's roughly going to be around 18,000 square feet.
24 You know, 18,000 will translate into significantly a
25 lot more money. But with something like a boiler or

1 something or something like a roof, we try to do the
2 actual projection based on the life of that boiler or
3 the roof or the HVAC, and when we sit down and meet
4 with each of you individually, we give you a very
5 detailed chart laying out the expense of what that
6 will cost and trying to raise the money to match it
7 up and that's why we come to you and talk about the
8 capital needs, and then if we have that capital
9 money, then we could respond to that a lot faster so
10 we're not dealing with a 45-year-old boiler, we're
11 dealing with a roof that's reached its warranty after
12 ten years, and that's what we've been working on very
13 hard in the borough of Queens and I imagine
14 throughout the systems in addressing those needs.
15 And in fairness, and I hear you, we had a very
16 collaborative meeting with each other in addressing
17 the needs of your particular district and the request
18 that was given to us and our staff both in
19 preparation for this hearing as well as respond to
20 that request. Got you very detailed information on
21 the allocation of the capital money.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing] It
24 really was not organized then. What I put together
25 and what my office did will help you in-in keeping

1
2 track of how much has been spent at various different
3 locations because--

4 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Yes, and we
5 look forward to that relationship.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Yes, yes.

7 DENNIS WALCOTT: I mean one of the things
8 we've had with all of you is a very collaborative
9 relationship in responding to any requests. So we
10 always look forward to that help and the guidance in
11 making sure that we're responding to your particular
12 need so that way it fits both what you're asking for,
13 but also the reality of what we're addressing as far
14 as the type of monies that we're utilizing to benefit
15 our customers especially in the borough of Queens.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member
17 Crowley, I--I know how passionate you are about this.
18 So we've allowed this to go on longer. Obviously I
19 know that the Council Member has met with the library
20 recently. We support your request for additional
21 information, and I've spoken to Dennis about that--

22 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Uh-huh.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and I'm sure
24 that there will be follow-up meetings--

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Look
3 forward to it.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and
5 discussions about that request from the Council
6 Member. I want to move onto Council Member Lander
7 and I see that Commissioner Finkelparl is waiting
8 the wings, but we have a little bit longer to go
9 because we have some other library workers who are
10 going to testify after this group. So I just want to
11 give you a heads up on that, although I'm happy
12 you're here learning about libraries. Obviously also
13 a passion for Commissioner Finkelparl. Council
14 Member Lander.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you, Mr.
16 Chair. Good to see you here as always and as always,
17 good to see our library staff and patrons and
18 supporters out here. Thank you for coming and for
19 all the work you do. I'll just relay a couple of
20 things from my recent time in the libraries. You
21 know on Election Night we had a--in the Windsor
22 Terrace branch, we had an Election Night kind of pre-
23 watch party. Almost all Bangladeshi Muslim kids from
24 Windsor Terrace and Kensington we were doing a lot of
25 work together on trying to understand the election,

1 and I asked, you know, what—what is democracy? Like
2 how do you understand that? And like an 11-year-old
3 like middle-school kid raised his hand and said, we
4 take care of each other. So I was crying later that
5 night as I was thinking about that, but we've got a
6 lot of great work going on. We just launched in the
7 Kensington branch a new partnership with South Asian
8 Youth Action that is providing college and career
9 readiness work and a really innovative partnership
10 funded by the Weston Foundation. I can't wait until
11 we can cut the ribbon this spring on the new Park
12 Slope Children's Library Garden, and get started on
13 the Carol Gardens Teen Center. You know, the passion
14 my constituents have, the—the Friends groups. It's
15 really quite extraordinary, and we feel very lucky to
16 be partners with you. So here's my question. In
17 the—in the Preliminary Budget Mayor de Blasio added a
18 lot of capital funding to the budget, \$495 million
19 for schools, a couple of hundred million for repaved
20 roads, \$400 million for Vision Zero, \$122 million for
21 the Staten Island Ferry, all great projects. How
22 much did he add to the capital budgets of the public
23 library systems?
24

25 TONY MARX: [off mic] Zero.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I'm sorry. I
3 didn't hear you.

4 LINDA JOHNSON: [off mic] Zero

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And Queens?

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: Zero.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright, so it is
8 a great time as the Mayor rightly recognized to
9 invest. You know, we—we have some anxiety on the
10 expense side about what's going to be happening, but
11 it is the time to make long-term investments in the
12 system. So I thought it was very smart of him to add
13 capital dollars. Am I to take it from the fact that—
14 that zero was added to the Capital Budget that no
15 money is needed in your three systems in the Capital
16 Budget because otherwise it would seem like a good
17 time to add them.

18 LINDA JOHNSON: We agree. It would a
19 great time add them not only because—because it would
20 be great for all of our patrons, but also because the
21 need is so dire and the longer it goes unanswered the
22 more expensive it will get. Every year that we kick
23 this can down the road makes what we require just to
24 bring the systems into good repair that much more
25 expensive. It's really time to do this.

1
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: Deferred maintenance is
3 very corrosive to the system. Plain and simple.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And we've all
5 seen it in so many branches. I know you each in your
6 testimony articulate what your capital needs are. So
7 in the interest of time I won't go through it again,
8 but Mr. Chair, I just posit that in addition to the
9 critical work for seven-day service that the
10 discrepancy between what we are adding in capital
11 budgeting in capital budgeting and other places and
12 the zero that we've added to our library systems is
13 something I know you feel strongly about and I think
14 it's important for the Council to—to push strongly.
15 Just one—one more thing. I—I was actually very
16 pleased, President Walcott, to see your Queens
17 Capital Projects Tracker, which I've been looking at
18 online. We have something like that in my Office as
19 well for the projects we fund with discretionary
20 funding or participatory budget funding. We have a
21 tracker that we put up. That's partly because of my
22 dissatisfaction with the fact that the city of New
23 York does not have a Capital Projects Tracker for
24 projects under \$25 million and so people who want to
25 know about what projects we're doing, where they are,

1 how long they're taking, how much they cost, what's
2 their status is, can't get any of that information.

3 So I think it's a great step you've taken, and I just
4 am going to ask Brooklyn and NYPL as you are rightly
5 pushing to be able to take more responsibility for
6 projects so that we can get them done. Will you take
7 a look at what Queens has done because I--

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Yes, sir.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: --do think if
10 we're going to spread that responsibility, around we
11 have to take accountability for it. I'm sure this is
12 the first you've heard about it as well, but I--

13 LINDA JOHNSON: A great--that's a great
14 suggestion. Absolutely.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Super. Thank you
16 very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
18 much Council Member Lander for your advocacy and I
19 think you've been in the room when I've ask Mayor de
20 Blasio himself as he briefed us on the Preliminary
21 Budget over the years about this question, and I will
22 continue to forcefully advocate. Clearly, our
23 libraries need a lot more support when it comes to
24 capital, and I fully support the seven days of
25

1
2 service requests as well. So I want to thank our
3 three presidents and CEOs for their appearance here
4 today and--

5 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you so much.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --for the work
7 that they do. More importantly, I want to thank all
8 of the library staff members who are here. We are
9 going to hear from several librarians I believe. So
10 if you're in the audience and you love libraries, we
11 want to hear from some of your colleagues, and we're
12 going to do that, and we're going to go to a three-
13 minute clock. So we're going to ask everyone to be
14 as succinct as possible because Commissioner
15 Finkelpearl is waiting in the wings, and so we're
16 going to hear from--in this order and I think we're
17 going to do five chairs at a time, and go as quickly
18 as possible. Adrianna [background comments, pause]
19 Blincourt-Hayword, Adrianna I think she spoke earlier
20 and she was wonderful. There's Adrianna, Nina
21 Marris, I think. Nina Marris from Parkchester. I
22 think it's Adrianna Mitchell from Brighton Beach,
23 Janelle Welch from Brooklyn Public Library, and
24 Janelle Peterson from the Brooklyn Public Library and
25 then after this panel, we have two remaining

1
2 speakers, Najat Matari (sp?) from the Queens Library
3 and Marissa Richardson from Urban Librarians Unite.
4 Those will be the final two speakers after this panel
5 unless—are all those speakers here? All those folks
6 whose names I called here? [background comments] If
7 not, then we'll go to the other two, right. Oh, I
8 think one more is coming up. No? So Adrianna is
9 here, right? We've got Adrianna. Nina? Nina is
10 here. Is it Adrianna Mitchell? Right. Janelle
11 Welch. Is Janell Welch here? There's Janelle and
12 Janelle Peterson, Janelle Peterson, Janelle Peterson,
13 Janelle Peterson. No? And what's that? [background
14 comments] Yes, alright, then Najat, why don't you
15 take a seat over there at the—at the panel over on
16 the far end, Najat. There you go, right next to
17 Adrianna. There you go right in front of the
18 computer. [background comments] Great. Oh, okay.
19 We'll keep it for later. Absolutely. Great. So
20 we'll hear from Janelle Peterson later, which is
21 absolutely perfect and is Marissa Richardson still
22 here? She is. Okay, alright. So why don't we
23 begin. Najat, do you want to begin us off and then
24 we'll go right down the line. [background comments]

25 NAJAT MATARI: My name is--

1

2

FEMALE SPEAKER: [off mic] [interposing]

3

Touch the mic.

4

NAJAT MATARI: You can hear me now?

5

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, she can.

6

NAJAT MATARI: Hello, everyone. My name

7

is Najat Matari (sp?) known as Nancy in the Queens

8

Library. I am the Customer Service Specialist in

9

Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural

10

Center. I just want to just say a few things about me

11

and my experience at the Queen Library. 2010 is when

12

I came to America not speaking English, just very

13

few, very limited. I came into the Queens Library

14

with welcomed arms and amazing staff. The materials

15

and items they had, the literacy classes they had I

16

took the ESL classes, and worked my way up to being

17

the first graduate in the Queens Library and

18

graduating and achieving my High School Equivalency

19

diploma. Thank you. I feel proud. I feel empowered

20

especially for coming from a Yemeni culture where

21

female Muslims cannot succeed to have education. You

22

know, it broke my heart, but I feel really, really,

23

really proud that I can communicate with you all in

24

English. The second thing that I want to bring up is

25

that Queens Library did not waste no time guiding me

1
2 step-by-step as I volunteered in a few branches.
3 They have taught me. They had amazing staff. They
4 had staff that also spoke my language. After
5 volunteering in the Queens Library, I got hired as a
6 part-time position and as a teacher assistant to give
7 back what the library had gave to me. It was
8 amazing. Today I'm on my third promotion. Like I
9 said, I am at the Langston Hughes Community Library
10 and Cultural Center. It puts tears in my eyes that I
11 get to meet diversity people. Yes, one of the
12 countries is Yemen, as you guys know what's going on
13 today, and it's not only about me, it's about my
14 family who my sister-in-law received her citizenship.
15 My father who can actually text me, which he just did
16 a few minutes ago telling me where I am. So it's
17 about the amazing things and experiences that I
18 experienced in the Queens Library, and that are
19 people like me coming into the train. I just met
20 one-one of my family members, a close family member.
21 She came from Yemen and she told me, "How did you
22 learn how to speak English?" It was a simple answer:
23 "Queens Library." So with that being said, I just
24 want to thank you all—all the supporters who have
25 supported for people like me able to succeed and to

1 be—and to be free, and most importantly to be safe.

2 So I just want to say thank you.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
5 much. Folks were so moved that they started to clap-
6 -[laughter] before that was crushed. Thank you.

7 [laughs] Thank you so much, and were you able to
8 text your father back and say, I'm at City Hall?

9 NAJAT MATARI: I told him this is my
10 first time in Manhattan. So, when I—I told everybody
11 because I've never been to City Hall, I've never been
12 to City Hall because I was so excited.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's awesome.

14 NAJAT MATARI: I want to thank them.
15 I'm—I'm happy.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow, well make
17 sure you get a selfie like right there.

18 NAJAT MATARI: I'm trying to. Can I? Can
19 I?

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Seriously yes
21 you can, you should.

22 NAJAT MATARI: Can I have a selfie with
23 you, too?

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, we should
25 totally do that right now.

1
2 NAJAT MATARI: [cheers] [crowd laughter,
3 comments, pause]

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You totally got
5 to tag me on that one.

6 NAJAT MATARI: Yes. [crowd laughter]

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright,
8 Adrianna.

9 ADRIANNA: Well, that's a tough act to
10 follow. My story is pretty similar to Najat, Nancy.

11 NAJAT MATARI: Najat.

12 ADRIANNA: Najat. I'm also an immigrant
13 whose first interaction with America really was
14 through the library. The first time I walked through
15 the local library door was almost 12 years ago. I
16 had just moved into this country, didn't really know
17 anybody, was feeling alone and isolated. So I went
18 there with a volunteer application. The staff was
19 very welcoming, very nice. In fact, the person that
20 I spoke to was like going on vacation, but she was
21 like come back in a week and we'll talk, and I did,
22 and they received me with open arms. They allowed me
23 to not only to shelf books but also to help with
24 library programs with children, and that allowed me
25 to see like this is something I would like to do. I

1
2 was lucky to be hired after volunteering there for
3 two years or so. But once I was hired for an
4 information assistant, I realized, you know, this is
5 a career I want to do. This is a profession I want
6 to follow. So I was inspired and I went to library
7 school and get my master, and it was a lot of fun to
8 realize that then I went full circle back to the
9 first library that I had worked in with my volunteer
10 application and became library manager there. It was
11 very exciting to—thank you—to be able to lead a team
12 of people. So the incredible staff to serve the
13 community to see what we can do together. I also
14 took ESL classes. To me they opened my eyes to the
15 world to see that actually New York is amazing. New
16 York is people from all over the world, and we can
17 all be together and learn from each other. I'm now
18 the average manager for the New York Public Library.
19 I was promoted a couple of years ago, and I'm proud
20 and I feel responsible to—to serve all of immigrants
21 to all our three boroughs that we serve. Especially
22 in times like now where people feel vulnerable afraid
23 and alone, and they don't know where to turn to. We
24 are there. We're everywhere. We're in every
25 neighborhood, and they can come to us guide them to

1 the right resources, the right information for them.
2
3 And I think for me that what the library means is
4 this safe, welcoming space where every will come, but
5 not only that. You'll know no mater who you are you
6 will be treated wit respect and people will—they're
7 there to serve you and people will be kind to you
8 and, you know, you will find people that not like
9 you, which is a good thing because you can engage in
10 dialogue, and we can all be together. So,
11 particularly for immigrants, seven-day service is
12 very important because most of us, not only
13 immigrants, everybody works really hard. So if we
14 are able to re-open everyday of the week, we can keep
15 helping the [bell] city and all New Yorkers from what
16 we do.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and
18 perfectly timed, Adrianna. Thank you. Next.

19 NINA: Hello and thank you for the
20 opportunity to speak about libraries. My name is
21 Nina and I work at the Parks Parkchester branch of
22 the New York Public Library, which is in the East
23 Bronx. One of the reasons I love working for the
24 library is that it offers space for individuals to
25 share ideas and building connections. So last month

1 was Black History Month and we had an event, and
2 African-American reading event where seniors came in
3 and shared works by writers that had inspired them
4 and given them strength through difficult times. It
5 was intergenerational. Their kids were there. It
6 was very emotional, and I think, you know, that's the
7 kind of thing I want to nurture in the libraries.
8 After that event we had a local musician come in and
9 talk about the history of the freedom song for the
10 time of slavery continuing to the Civil Rights Era
11 and its role today. One participant was so moved by
12 the music that he had to interrupt the program to
13 share a poem that it inspired in him, and that kind
14 of passion being shared from older generations to
15 their children that were there is exactly what I want
16 to see. The title of the event was *How Can We Sing*
17 *in a Strange Land*, which seemed quite relevant to me.
18 It made me think a lot about our new immigrant
19 population and what it would mean to live in a place
20 that feels strange to you. Because Parkchester is
21 one of the few libraries that is open seven days a
22 week, I was able to start an English language
23 learning group, in which we used the library's access
24 to the Mango languages on line through out databases.
25

1
2 So new immigrants come in. I teach them basic
3 technical literacy skills, how to access the library
4 resources and they have two hours to practice their
5 English through this online resource and ask me any
6 questions they have. This is important because it's
7 provides technical literacy as well as language
8 skills, but even more important to me is that is
9 provides a space where new immigrants feel
10 comfortable asking questions. After that class,
11 they're more likely to stop and chat with me. One
12 family that I work quite close with comes into the
13 library almost ever single day. I will help the
14 young daughter work on her math homework, talk about
15 bullies at school, and anything that's happened to
16 her, and I'll help her parents through things like
17 signing in for email. One day I was helping them
18 sign in and they, you know, I said okay put your
19 password in. I'm going to look away, you know, don't
20 show me and they said no, no, no. You know, you help
21 us with everything. We trust you. We trust the
22 library. So explained, you know, you still can't
23 show me your password, but to me, you know, that's
24 something that we do everyday, help people get into
25 their email so they can apply for jobs. The things

1
2 with technical literacy skills builds trust with
3 communities as well as helping them advance their
4 careers. So I think that's really important, and
5 that's why I believe Sunday programs like my Mango
6 languages, English learner class are really
7 essential. The branches that are open seven days a
8 week have more opportunities for programs like this,
9 and with more funding, our libraries make a real
10 difference, and I would like to make sure that, you
11 know, New York isn't a strange land to anyone, but a
12 home. Thank you. [bell]

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow, did you
14 guys practice this? [laughter] Everyone is coming
15 right at two minutes and 59 seconds. Awesome. Next.

16 JANELLE WELCH: I'm not sure that that
17 was loud enough. [background comments] Okay, from
18 the top. Okay. [laughs] Good afternoon, my name is
19 Janelle Welch. I am an NLS at Brooklyn Public
20 Library, which is the ever—they love it.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You're doing
22 great.

23 JANELLE WELCH: Oh, am I? [laughter]
24 Okay, I didn't think so.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Trust me. If I
3 can do this, you can do this. You got it, you got
4 it.

5 JANELLE WELCH: I'm may stray away from
6 this for a moment. Okay, from the top. Here we go.
7 Again, my is Janelle Welch. I'm the Neighborhood
8 Library Supervisor for the Brooklyn Public Library
9 Crown Heights Branch. I've worked for the library
10 for over 16 years. I started out as part-time organ-
11 part-time shelf organizer for other branches or
12 organizations. There may be a page, and I worked my
13 way up to become a manager with a lot of
14 encouragement from staff including patrons and
15 mentors who would say go and get your MLS degree. I
16 consider myself not just a library worker, but a
17 library user. I live 16 blocks from my location. So
18 I do not walk there in the morning. It's a little
19 bit too much, but I will kindly walk home because I'm
20 familiar with the community, and the needs of-what
21 they ask for as I see them in the post office and
22 supermarket. So, you know, we have a great community
23 relationship. So I really know what the branch
24 needs. Also, for the past two years Crown Heights
25 has been bestowed the opportunity to have WiFi

1
2 connection, well not WiFi, portable hotspots in which
3 you're able to have the device at home. So my branch
4 is extremely busy, as most all the branches of
5 Brooklyn Public Library, and the other—the other two
6 library systems. So, you know, we are really hoping
7 that the budget doesn't get funded, but to be
8 expanded. A little bit more about Crown Heights. We
9 have 20 laptops, and 10 desktops and we're extremely
10 busy. We're one of the 12 branches of Brooklyn that
11 does carry the TeleStory, the Visitation program via
12 the web. So my branch is constantly busy. Just as
13 with the other branches, we do have lately a dilemma
14 of the infrastructure of the building, which are
15 either the HVAC cooling centers as well as the
16 boilers and heaters. So the boilers and—hold on.
17 Wait a minute. Yes, the boiler and heating units.
18 So, it can be a time in which the building can be
19 freezing or the building can be frying or it's
20 closing early because of the weather conditions. So
21 that is one of the major issues with the libraries,
22 and also a lot of buildings have roof replacement or
23 roof repairs. At Crown Heights yes there are times
24 of—of a good heavy rainstorm. We may have to—you
25 could play connect the dots with the ceiling and the

1 bay storm of water damage there, but you're always
2 welcome to come, but maybe not after a rain. So
3 maybe you should come during rain storms. I can, you
4 know, give you a guide or a tour through the building
5 just so you could see the conditions that are there.
6 But I am grateful for what the City Council has been
7 doing, and I know you're a great supporter of
8 libraries. Thank you so much, and I just want to
9 also thank, you know, the different Council Members
10 and Assembly Members who do our libraries be it if
11 it's a meeting room or they just allocate money
12 towards our building [bell]. So just want to say
13 keep on investing libraries and thank you.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so
16 much. You did great. That amazing. Is that the
17 first time you've testified at City Hall?

18 JANELLE WELCH: Yes, it is.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You crushed it.
20 Thank you. [laughter] Thank you. Next.

21 ADRIANNA MITCHELL: Alright, okay. Good
22 afternoon to all members of the Cultural Affairs and
23 the Library Committees. Good afternoon, Chair Van
24 Bramer. I've had the privilege of hearing you speak
25 and you're a great speaker, and thank you for

1
2 allowing me today to testify on behalf of the
3 Brooklyn Public Library. My name is Adrianna
4 Mitchell. I am the Neighborhood Library Supervisor,
5 fairly new to the Brighton Beach Library Branch.
6 I've worked for the library for the past 11 years as
7 Library Associate at the Pacific Branch, as a
8 librarian trainee at the Carol Gardens Branch, as a
9 Librarian at the Windsor Terrace Branch, as a Library
10 Information Supervisor at the Sunset Park Branch and
11 now as a Neighborhood Library Supervisor at Brighton
12 Beach specializing in children's services at all
13 locations aforementioned. So I'm actually personally
14 and professionally invested in the Brooklyn Public
15 Library since I-I started bringing my-my daughter,
16 which is now 14 years old to Story Time at the
17 Central Library. I've experienced hands-on all the
18 wonderful services that BPL has to offer from
19 volunteering as an English language facilitator at
20 the Central Library in the multi-cultural center, and
21 also I've witnessed all the cultural educational and
22 recreational services that BPL has offered throughout
23 my career. I have so much respect and love for
24 Brooklyn Public Library. It has offered me the
25 opportunity to impact people's lives in a positive

1 way, to be of service to my community and to be
2 exposed to diversity. I'm personally very diverse.
3 I'm a walking UN. That's how I describe myself.
4 [laughter] Public libraries an essential part of
5 every neighborhood. They are gathering places, safe
6 havens, sometimes the only means for children to
7 receive homework help, for people to fulfill, to get
8 the high demand for English language learning. The
9 only place to receive a warm or-or a cool place for
10 those who do not have anywhere else to go, and also
11 it's a place to minimize the digital divide which
12 provides the use of computers, computer classes and
13 WiFi and all of this for free. Unfortunately, the
14 reality for us is that buildings are run down and not
15 upgraded to 21st Century library needs. Not all
16 libraries are fully staffed and we can't increase our
17 programming due to lack of funds. I do want to
18 mention, though, that over the past two years we did
19 see an improvement of funding. We are able to invest
20 in books again, and to hire a lot of staff, and I
21 thank you for that, but it does not stop there, and
22 we are graciously asking to continue investing in
23 libraries [bell] and reinstate full funding. Thank
24 you.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so
3 much. Wow. So, let me just say this. Looking at
4 this panel, and looking into this panel, I'm sure
5 everyone will agree particularly on a day when we
6 honor the contributions of--of women, and--and the
7 power of--of women, this is such a beautiful,
8 remarkable, powerful panel, incredibly diverse,
9 incredibly strong, and--and really the best of
10 everything that libraries represents and that our
11 city represents. So I just want to say--say thank you
12 to all five of you for representing the libraries and
13 the work the libraries do in our city and our--and our
14 country. So, a big round of applause for all five,
15 in the way that we do that is here and, you know, and
16 I just want to say thank you. I mean hearing from
17 the three library presidents is very important
18 obviously in regards of give and take, and--and I want
19 to thank, you know, the--the Government Affairs teams
20 at the there systems for helping us to arrange them
21 because I find these panels incredibly uplifting and--
22 and really empowering in the work that I do, but also
23 I think for all of you, too, to be here fighting for
24 your--your--your libraries, your systems and the people
25 that you work for, and interface with every single

1 day. This is an incredibly important exercise. So I
2 just want to say keep coming, keep testifying, and-
3 and it's so great that there are so many people who
4 are here for the first time testifying for the first
5 time. This is your City Hall. This is your city,
6 and-and-and this is your fight? And you are
7 personally invested in this fight in a way that maybe
8 you weren't ten minutes ago before you took that
9 seat. So-so thank you and-and I'm very grateful for
10 the opportunity and I realized also-it's Najat? That
11 we did that photo and I didn't take a selfie of the
12 two of us. [laughter] So we totally have to do that
13 now, and then-and then I'm going to send that out.
14 We're going to take a--a five-minute break, and then
15 we're going to continue with the-the Cultural Affairs
16 portion of our hearing, and thank you, Commissioner
17 Finkelpearl. You are a Mense in every way. [pause]
18
19 FEMALE SPEAKER: [sound check, pause] Mic
20 check. Everyone at this time please we're going to be
21 back in session. Find your seats at this time.
22 Please at this time find your seats. Ladies and
23 gentlemen, at this time I kindly ask you to find your
24 seats. We're going to be back in session. Thank you
25 so much. [background comments, pause]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon,
3 everyone and welcome to the second portion of our
4 Fiscal Year 2018 hearing on behalf of the Committee
5 on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
6 Intergroup Relations. Thrilled to be joined by
7 Council Member Andy King, and I know we have some of
8 the women on the committee who will be joining us
9 after the proceedings on the steps conclude, but they
10 are engaged obviously in a very important exercise
11 recognizing and honoring women in the city and in
12 this country today. All of us who are in red today
13 in solidarity including myself. So I want to thank
14 Commissioner Finkelpearl who has graciously allowed
15 us to allow some incredible library workers to
16 testify in advance of when they might normally, but
17 it certainly seemed like the right thing to do, and I
18 have great and unending respect for Commissioner
19 Finkelpearl, which only goes up when moments like
20 that happen and not only is Commissioner Finkelpearl
21 understanding and appreciative of the moment, but
22 actually sits and—and listens to the testimony, and I
23 think gets as much out of hearing those women talk
24 about their lives, and their journeys and their
25 professions as I do. So I want to say that at the

1
2 outset, Commissioner Finkelpearl, and I also know
3 Commissioner Finkelpearl long enough to know that he
4 would—he would get it, and—and appreciate it. I know
5 how I feel about those moments as well. So I meant
6 that, Commissioner Finkelpearl. So we begin this
7 portion of the testimony to discuss the Expense and
8 Capital Budget of the Department of Cultural Affairs
9 and the state of the arts and culture in the city of
10 New York strong, and in many ways stronger than it's
11 been in quite some time. I'm proud of the work that
12 Council has done working with the Administration to
13 see increases in the operating budgets of cultural
14 organizations in the city of New York, a dramatic
15 increase in the City Council's cultural initiatives,
16 which are benefitting more and more groups including
17 some of our smaller cultural organizations serving
18 very, very diverse populations including our
19 immigrant communities, and we continue a robust
20 capital program where we are seeing incredible
21 expansions and renovations and new structures being
22 built in all five boroughs. But as I mentioned to
23 Dean Fuleihan the other day, obviously with the work
24 that was done last year and the increase that we saw
25 to the Department of Cultural Affairs' budget from

1
2 the executive side having that not baselined
3 represents a potential cut if we were not to see that
4 restored and, of course, I know that many will
5 testify to day to the need and the belief that we
6 should be increasing cultural funding not just to the
7 tune of the \$10 million that we saw last year, but
8 even more. So, that is where we are today, and Dean
9 was correct in saying that it's not technically a cut
10 yet, but, you know, I—I certainly want to hear from
11 the Commissioner about the work that he's doing
12 within the agency, and within the Administration to—
13 to make the case that that funding is necessary, and—
14 and then we'll talk a little bit about what the
15 Council can do as well in that regard. But I think
16 in this very, very strange time that we live in, and—
17 and this very, very particular place that we live in
18 just as our friends in the libraries, culture and the
19 arts is in a very unique position to—to bring people
20 together, and to create a common language that—that
21 allows people to better understand who we are and
22 what we're about, and—and process everything that's
23 happening. So we are as a—a community just as
24 important as any other, and—and I want to recognize
25 that at the outset. So, we're going to hear from

1 Commissioner Finkelpearl, and then we're going to
2 hear from some of our friends in the audience from
3 the cultural community, and with that I think we're
4 going to ask Commissioner Finkelpearl to attest to
5 the honesty of his statements.
6

7 LEGAL COUNSEL: Pleas raise your right
8 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
9 truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony
10 before this committee, and to respond honestly to
11 Council Member questions?

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do.

13 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you. Okay and
14 first let me say that while my heart is with the
15 cultural organizations and the cultural life, my
16 mother was a librarian and both of her parents were
17 librarians, and I think Jimmy knows that I also love
18 libraries. I was happy to sit through that testimony
19 of the actual librarians on the ground. So thank
20 you. Good morning Chair Van Bramer and members of
21 the committee. I'm here today to present testimony
22 regarding the Mayor's Preliminary Fiscal 2018 Budget
23 for the Department of Cultural Affairs. I am joined
24 here today by a member of DCA staff members. First,
25 I will review the numbers. We are proud to remain

1
2 the largest local funder for arts and culture in the
3 United States. DCLA's total expense budget for
4 Fiscal Year 2018 is forecast at \$142.9 million
5 including \$107.8 million for the Cultural Institution
6 Group; \$28.56 million for the Department of—for the
7 Cultural Development Fund; and \$6.1 million for
8 agency operations. This does not include any funding
9 that is typically added at adoption including member
10 items and initiative from the City Council. I'd like
11 to point out that our [coughs]—in our current Fiscal
12 Year Budget the agency's operation accounts for just
13 3.4% of our total expense budget. The rest goes
14 straight to the cultural community. Turning to our
15 Design-Build we are currently—we currently have
16 \$807.3 million allocated for 398 active projects at
17 202 cultural organizations over the next four years.
18 That's Fiscal 17 through 20. This includes \$152
19 million that was added at adoption of the FY2017
20 Budget. This robust funding, which is allocated by
21 the Administration and City Council and Borough
22 President offices supports project that are critical
23 to growing and sustaining cultural groups in all five
24 boroughs, and I would add here that this just doesn't
25 happen in the other city. Some highlights of our

1
2 current Capital Portfolio include infrastructure
3 upgrades at the Dance Theater of Harlem,
4 reconstruction of the Bronx River Arts Center, fire
5 safety improvements for the Bedford-Stuyvesant
6 Restoration Corporation, conversion of an existing
7 property for the Louis Armstrong Houses new
8 administrative-administration study (sic) and a full
9 restoration of Snug Harbor's Music Hall. To provide
10 a quick update on the current fiscal year budget,
11 funds from all this year's CDF funding in all five of
12 the City Council's initiative is flooding to groups
13 across the city to sustain their public programming.
14 As you know, there were challenges in getting fund
15 for the Council initiatives allocated on time this
16 year, and as I said during testimony on this topic
17 last month, the agency is committed to working with
18 the Council to avoid any delays of this funding for
19 next year. We have had several productive
20 discussions regarding possible solutions with you
21 Chair Van Bramer along with Council Finance. I'm
22 confident that-that we can arrive at a solution
23 before the beginning of Fiscal Year 2018. I'd also
24 like to provide an overview of the agency programs
25 and initiatives. [coughs] The FY 18 Cultural

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

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2 Development Fund applications for the next round of
3 funding were due on February 13th for cultural
4 programming taking place between July 1st 2017 and
5 June 30th, 2018. We have nearly 800 applications
6 that will go to panel and 364 groups on the multi-
7 year renewal process. The panel review process,
8 which involves close collaboration with the City
9 Council will commence later this month. For the FY18
10 Capital applications, the deadline to apply for
11 capital funding from the Mayor and City Council is
12 coming up. So far the volume and amount of funding
13 request appears to be on par with previous years. As
14 part of our current budget we are [coughs] for the
15 first time providing energy support for organizations
16 that operate city-owned facilities under my agency's
17 jurisdiction but not members of the Cultural
18 Institution Group. From BRIC to Harlem stage to
19 Prodenis (sic) Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. These
20 are a diverse organization serving New York as across
21 the city. The participating—the participating
22 organizations have all been notified of their awards
23 and are in the process of the returning the
24 paperwork. They will receive their initial payments
25 shortly. On the cultural plan, I want to thank you

1
2 again for the opportunity of last month to present
3 testimony at the full Council hearing on this—at a
4 full Council hearing on this topic. Cultural Affairs
5 staff stayed through the full hearing, and reported
6 back to those who testified after me. We are still
7 working towards publishing the draft recommendations
8 at the end of April. We've participated in 195
9 events to date. We've sent two surveys, one to the
10 general public and one for artists and Cultural
11 Affairs. Chair Van Bramer, we appreciate your
12 support in co-hosting the discussion last month at
13 the Museum of Moving Image last week. With NYCHA
14 residents an amazing evening. Council Member
15 Levinhurst (sic) did a workshop this past Saturday at
16 the Park Church Co-Op in Green Point. DCLA was
17 present for the entire event, and Council Member Koo
18 joined us at a Flushing town hall—a Flushing town
19 hall for bilingual Mandarin English Create NYC
20 workshop earlier this week. We're entering into the
21 last stretch of public engagement for the plan so if
22 any are interested in hosting an event, let us know
23 now. We have made major progress on DCLA's Workforce
24 Diversity Initiative since publishing the report on
25 our grantees in January 2016. We've activated more

1
2 than \$4 million to his effort at connecting the
3 city's cultural institutions to new pools of talent.
4 We invested \$500,000 to help launch the CUNY Cultural
5 Corps this year placing more than 70 graduates of
6 CUNY's Service Corps and paid positions at cultural
7 institutions across the city. Thanks to a matching
8 grant of \$500, 000 from the Rockefeller Foundation
9 bringing the total to \$1 million, this program is set
10 to expand to dozens of additional cultural
11 institutions later this year. Through the City's
12 Theater Subdistrict Council, we are able to direct
13 more than \$2 million towards programs at 11 groups
14 and consortiums of theaters. These programs will
15 connected unrepresented populations with careers in
16 theater. These are good paying jobs often unionized.
17 The study of employees at our cultural groups found
18 that the theater community faced particularly tough
19 challenges when it came to employing people from a
20 variety of backgrounds. We have also consciously and
21 consistently foregrounded disability. In our
22 definition of diversity, we have taken meaningful
23 steps to better address this at our agency. These
24 include designating a Disability Service Facilitator
25 and hiring a Disability Consultant for the Cultural

1
2 Plan process. These positions have helped make our
3 public events and our RFP process more inclusive, and
4 we are creating a new position at the agency that
5 will explicitly address disability arts and
6 disability inclusion. In other recent news, my
7 agency joined the Department of Veteran Services last
8 week to announce our latest Public Artists and
9 Residents, or PAAR and that is Brian Doerries who is
10 the Artistic Director of Theater for War Productions.
11 Theater for War Productions produces programs
12 addressing the enduring impact of war and other
13 community issues such as gun violence, mental health,
14 addiction prison reform, sexual assault and domestic
15 violence. Co produced by the Brooklyn Public Library,
16 the residency will combine theater and public forums
17 that engage both veterans and civilians. These
18 communities' specific performances will foster health
19 and healing through open discussion and exchange.
20 The free performances will take place in more than 60
21 venues across New York City including public
22 libraries with each of the projects tailored to the
23 needs of different communities. The residency is
24 being funded by the Southwest New York Festival(sic)
25 Foundation. With public support for art and culture,

1 an open question on the federal level, our
2 collaboration with the Council and others dedicated-
3 other dedicated partners is more important than ever.
4 We thank you for this support, and look forward to
5 continuing our work together to make sure that every
6 New Yorker has access to the transformative benefits
7 of arts and culture. I'm happy to answer any
8 questions you any have at this time.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
11 much, Commissioner, and I want to talk a little bit
12 about the failure to baseline the increase and what
13 you see as the need, and I realize that you as the
14 Commissioner are in an interesting position, but you
15 also probably know that one of your other colleagues,
16 the DYCD Commissioner came here a couple of days ago
17 and received some tough questioning about the degree
18 to which he advocates for his own agency. So I-I
19 want to ask you to expound a little bit about what
20 that looks like for the Department of Cultural
21 Affairs, and before I do that, acknowledge we've been
22 joined by Council Member Elizabeth Crowley from the
23 Commissioners I mentioned earlier, and I'm sure some
24 of the other women on the committee will be joining
25 us once they conclude from the steps of-of City Hall.

1 So talk to me about those--those discussions what that
2 looks like, and if--if you believe, as I do, that not
3 only should we have that \$10 million restored and--and
4 baselined, but--but actually increased?

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I think for
7 of all that, of course, that \$10 million was added at
8 adoption last year that we are at the beginning of
9 this process. We expect to be working together as we
10 year after year, and I will say that--that we did an
11 analysis recently adjusted for inflation as to what
12 the three last administrations had produced in terms
13 of the cultural budget. And this is a product of
14 everybody's work the Council's work, the
15 administration's work and the amount of money
16 adjusted for inflation from Giuliani to Bloomberg to
17 de Blasio has stepped up each--in each administration.
18 I'd be happy to share those numbers with you. So, I--
19 I want to say that that to me proves that, you know,
20 that this administration does believe in--in--in arts
21 and culture that the Mayor--that the first budget of
22 this administration if we think back, and I know this
23 is ancient history, but a couple of years ago that
24 substantially reducing that idea of what the budget
25 dance was, and again, this was a--a budget

1
2 recommendation by the outgoing Bloomberg
3 Administration but adopted by the de Blasio
4 Administration to baseline an enormous amount of
5 money which had been the subject of the budget dance.
6 So that last year was the first time in—in recent
7 memory that there had been additional money outside
8 of the great work that the Council has been doing
9 that additional money for just that baseline support
10 of general operating support or yearly (sic) funding.
11 So every—everybody all of our grantees who got
12 funding got more funding got more funding last year
13 than they got the year before. So I'm—I'm just
14 saying that I think that that demonstrates our
15 commitment to arts and culture and that the work that
16 we've done together over these last three years has
17 been tremendous, and has been really the highest
18 budgets that this agency has ever seen. So, that's
19 my answer to that.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So having said,
21 that, and I'd venture to see those numbers, the
22 insulated adjusted numbers that you—that you spoke
23 of, do you think it was a—a good thing, a wise
24 investment that we added the operating support for
25 culture last year?

1
2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I think
3 that yes, of course, I do believe that, and I think
4 that the agency—I mean that the agency disbursed it
5 in a way that was fair and that the organizations
6 that used the money, I think used it well.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Then, do you
8 think that we should continue that funding at a bare
9 minimum?

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, what, you
11 know, again I'm here to—to present the budget that
12 exists and I look forward to working with you as we
13 did last year, and as the groups in this room
14 effectively worked on that together. We're
15 continuing the process. This is where we stand.
16 That's all I can say.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I'm—I'm sure
18 you can understand that there's a little bit of
19 frustration. I mean I certainly understand that you
20 are here to present the—the Mayor's Preliminary
21 Budget for the agency that—that you are privileged to
22 be the Commissioner. But it also certainly seems to
23 me that you—you should be able to say negotiations
24 notwithstanding and—and the outcome to be determined
25 that the city of New York and the organizations that

1 received of the bump in funding that that's a good
2 thing for the city of New York and that that should
3 continue.
4

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So again, I
6 mean I—I do think that that we have together again
7 with the Council and together with the community
8 successfully increased the budget of this agency in
9 the ways it hasn't—haven't been before baselining the
10 money at the beginning, putting the additional \$10
11 million last year. I think the administration
12 understands the value of arts and culture, and I
13 think that the, you know, final results will be the
14 story at then end of the day, but that the, you know,
15 that coming into the budget with this robust budget
16 is a baseline that is not seen in any other city in
17 America that, you know, per capita San Francisco pays
18 a-spends a little bit more based on a hotel tax, but
19 it is a remarkable budget, and we look forward to
20 working with you going forward. So, I mean that's
21 similarly—similarly saying I do think that the
22 organizations used it well. I think there's a lot of
23 need in the cultural field, and I believe that, you
24 know, there is also a lot of need elsewhere in the
25 city budget, and we have to see how it all plays out

1
2 at the end of the day, but it was a, you know, a good
3 result last year. The amount of money falling into
4 the—the initiatives was fantastic and the additional
5 \$10 million was highly welcomed in the cultural
6 organizations. I've talked to scores of them this
7 year, and—and again I—I think I used the money well.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So you think
9 that it would be hurtful if the \$10 million were not
10 to be restored and—and kept?

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I think it was
12 helpful that it was added. It was added as, you
13 know, not a baseline addition. I think that, you
14 know, some organizations have—have been very
15 conscious of that. I talked to certain organizations
16 that say, you know, we—and CIG. For example, I went
17 to a board meeting and they said we put that money
18 into a particular initiative. Actually, it was a
19 debt reduction initiative because they weren't sure
20 they were going to get it next year. So I think that
21 the [coughs] money was extremely well used, that the
22 cultural organizations in New York can use it and
23 could use it again and we look forward to the—the
24 process, and—and it's sort of interesting because
25 people have referred to this again as a budget dance,

1 but it's a budget dance based on an increase not
2 based on a cut, right? The budget dance in previous
3 years if you go back five or six years was, you know,
4 we're worried coming into this that the cuts that
5 weren't baselined is an increase that wasn't
6 baselined. Again, I know people are going to fight
7 for it. I know people are going to testify on behalf
8 of it, and I look forward to the process.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I mean It--
11 it certainly was--it was an increase, but given the
12 fact that there hasn't been an increase for very long
13 and given the fact that all of these folks are doing
14 incredible work, and costs have risen. You know, one
15 could--one could argue that it's --it's it was long
16 overdue and--and really we're really just sort of
17 catching up in some ways for our culturals, and you
18 mentioned the City Council's cultural initiatives,
19 which were obviously extremely proud that it's
20 approaching \$30 million now, just the value of the
21 City Council's cultural initiatives, an extraordinary
22 jump over the last three years working with the
23 Speaker. As the chair I'm really proud of--of that
24 work, but just as we did with--with libraries there is
25 sort of the--the belief that the core operating

1 support for—for our culturals should—should really be
2 baselined and—and I know the request last year was
3 for 40 and—and—and it shall be again. Ultimately
4 when—when we get to the place where that funding is
5 in place and it's baselined, will we be where we need
6 to be?

8 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I mean I think
9 that that's one of the big questions. This year also
10 as cultural plan we had 196 meetings with over 10,000
11 people in person and, you know, we all know that the
12 budgets will be adopted by the time we actually issue
13 the plan, but I think that the answer to that
14 question will be clearer once the cultural plan is
15 complete as well. Like [coughing] so what our—and—
16 and with some studies and research that's going to be
17 released very soon, I think we're really—we've never
18 spent this much time as an agency listening to the
19 needs of our constituents, and actually one of the
20 things that's already come out of the Cultural Plan
21 is that we need to do more of that going into the
22 future. So I actually think that the comprehensive
23 question—the answer to your question will come with
24 the report on June 30th.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So you're not

saying that we won't have—I'm sorry. You're not

saying that—that the—the—what the cultural plan will

tell us in terms of need, which won't come until

after we've got the budget and, therefore, we won't

know what we need until--?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No, no I mean,

yeah, yeah, in a way I'm saying that. I mean look

the—there's a lot we already know, right? So you and

I and many—most of the people in this room have been

working on this stuff for years. So there's a lot of

stuff that's coming out of the Cultural Plan that's

stuff that we already understand. I'm saying that—

that for me to say that, you know, I mean your

question was with the \$40 million will that be

sufficient because that can be, you know, if the \$40

million happens, if it's baselined in some future

year, would that answer the cultural needs of the

city. I think that was your original question and

my—my answer to that was we're listening intently

about the cultural needs in every part of New York

City, and I'll have a better answer to that. I'm not

saying that I don't understand that there could be

good uses put to that money just like the \$10

1 million. We didn't say we're not going to any money
2 until after the Cultural Plan. We—the
3 Administration, you know, again it's all
4 collaboration with the Council. We put the \$10
5 million in there because that was felt to be a good
6 use of public money in that fiscal year.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So it's
9 conceivable that the Cultural Plan could come back,
10 and we actually need more than \$40 million?

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I am convinced
12 that that will happen, but the question is what can
13 we do? The question is what are the levels of
14 priorities and how can we meet, and if we—if we
15 answered every request that's being put forward to us
16 in the Cultural Plan, yes, it would be a tremendous
17 amount of new money. What are the—there's—there's
18 want, there's need and there's sort of levels of
19 needs and how many people are served?

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, so talk
21 to me a little bit about the—the advocacy, if you
22 will, that goes on. You know, is this—is this a
23 topic of discussion with—with the Deputy Mayor, with
24 the Mayor. Is—is—is the status of—of the \$10 million
25 an active discussion point. Talk just a little bit

1 about that. Obviously, you can't share, and I'm not
2 asking you to share, and I'm not asking you to share
3 all of the--the nature of the discussions, but I think
4 it's important for me and probably important for the
5 community to know that this is on everyone's radar
6 screen that you're making sure that it's everyone's
7 radar screen within the administration and--and that
8 there are folks who--who understand how important this
9 is.
10

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, yes, I
12 can absolutely assure you of that. I mean I meet
13 with the--my boss is the First Deputy Mayor. I meet
14 with on a very regular basis. We talk about the
15 budget at every meeting especially in--after January
16 1st. So absolutely this on the radar screen. I've
17 talked to a lot of other people in the
18 administration. One of the things we've been doing
19 with the Cultural Plan is also talk to many more
20 people, more in-depth than we ever have done. So
21 commissioners or other agencies are recognizing the
22 cultural--the need for cultural programming within
23 their agency. We had a conference with 14 people at
24 DOHMH, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene last
25 week all of whom have art as part of the portfolio of

1
2 responsibility. So, I think that the--spreading
3 knowledge and the information and also understanding
4 what is already happening in other agencies has never
5 happened more. It's Administration 1. I think it's
6 on the table.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Do you speak to
8 the Mayor directly about this? I mean how-how-how-
9 how engage is the Mayor in this directly? Obviously,
10 you participate with Mayor Shorris and you--

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
12 Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --speak
14 regularly but-but how-how engaged is the Mayor in
15 this particular piece?

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: He's engaged.
17 I mean I, you know, I don't want to talk about, you
18 know, individual discussions that-that absolutely the
19 Mayor and his team the First Lady is a-a big cultural
20 advocate, as you know, an important person to talk to
21 about culture. On a very regular basis I talk to her
22 as well. There are certain people within the Mayor's
23 team that are very up-to-date and I talk to all the
24 time about this. Yes.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So-so you feel
3 confident that there's the-the access and the-the
4 validation for what you're fighting for--

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
6 Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --in-in the
8 administration?

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And talk to me a
11 little bit about how the additional funding was
12 distributed and some of the formulas that you use--

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and-and were
15 we to get \$20, \$30, \$40 million would you do the same
16 thing, and-and what kind of results are you looking
17 for with the formulas in particular that you're
18 using?

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay so I mean
20 I can-I'll, you know, for the first part of the
21 question, which is how do we use the \$10 million the
22 additional \$10 million this year. So, as you know,
23 it's split between-between the CIG and the program
24 groups. Within the CIG half a million was carved out
25 for the CUNY Cultural Corps and the other \$5 million

1 was distributed to the institutions. The large
2 institutions got a smaller percentage increase a 6%
3 increase, and the smaller ones got a 12% increase.
4 Within the program groups, money was set aside for
5 the energy money getting to the non-CIGs that are
6 under our—you know, that we're—we're the landlord
7 essentially ,and that was about a million dollars, a
8 little bit less and they—that's all rolling out. And
9 the other was distributed again with a formula that
10 give more money to the smaller organizations than the
11 bigger in terms of percentage of increase. And so I—
12 I don't actually—that was a rather complicated
13 formula, but it was essentially the same idea,
14 smaller budget organizations got a larger percentage
15 increase. So that's how this \$10 million was used.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And if you were
18 to have at your disposal \$20, \$30, \$40 million, would
19 you continue to use the same formula?

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah,
21 probably. I think some version of that. Again, the
22 idea of giving a higher percentage increase to
23 smaller organizations was one that seemed to be fair,
24 and good—good for—for the city. I am committed to
25 pursuing the long-term value of the CUNY Cultural

1
2 Corps and the energy subsidy to the non-to the CIGs.
3 This is all still under discussion that wasn't
4 baselined, but the value of the CUNY Cultural Corps
5 has been just tremendous. The kids in that--in that
6 have been fantastic. I've gotten just reports even
7 today of--of the value of those--our young people to
8 the institutions. So these are--I'm a big CUNY
9 champion and a graduate. So these are all things
10 we'd like to do and--and we haven't put together
11 formulas yet, but I mean that was something we
12 carefully considered. It wasn't something where we
13 just say, you know. So that would be again under
14 consideration during the budget process.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Talk to me a
16 little bit about the Capital Budget, and--ore the
17 capital need and--and how we're addressing it.

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Obviously you--
20 you heard some of the testimony before where--where
21 libraries are talking about some of those
22 institutions are really falling apart or--

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --or weak and
25 things of that nature. Do you as the commissioner

1 know of—of cultural organizations, institutions that
2 are faced with similar issues? Is there in some ways
3 a—a similar type of need, and—and desperation on the
4 part of some cultural organizations to get some of
5 that capital funding for—for not just great and
6 wonderful expansions, which are necessary, but in
7 some cases the—the ability to keep air and water--

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
10 Yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --out?

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, and I—
13 yes. So, you know, there is a tremendous need. I
14 think that we have a robust budget for capital such
15 as grants, \$152 million last year. I think there's a
16 difference in the sense that the cultural
17 institutions are, you know, aside—there's the 33
18 city-owned institutions and the additional ones that
19 are on city property, but the, you know, the other
20 organizations we're looking at 200 organizations. I
21 think my testimony said just short of that. So then,
22 you know, 100 and [coughs] but 175 of them are on
23 private property and they're privately owned. So I
24 think that there's—it's a slightly different calculus
25 to the libraries, which are, you know, vast—209 is

1
2 it? 209 branch libraries all over the city that are
3 city-owned properties. We have a much smaller
4 number. The other big difference is that the library
5 system for the most part on an expense basis is paid
6 for with city money, right? The-that is not true for
7 the cultural sector. So the cultural sector if you
8 look across the average at CIGs even, which are the
9 most highly invested in by the city is I think 22% of
10 the-the operating budget if your average CIG is city
11 funded. So it's a very-it's a different formula.
12 These are off-these are private non-profits that are
13 all different in their needs, and the capabilities in
14 terms of capital investment. So, it's a little bit
15 different, but believe me when we look at these
16 capital [coughs]-as you know, reviewing the capital
17 needs of the cultural community that needs are
18 tremendous. They're quite similar in some way, but I
19 just think that that structure of ownership is
20 different in that. Great. So, the maintenance of
21 let's say a particular museum or-or a zoo-or-or a
22 science institution, it's a different situation
23 because they're private non-profit, largely privately
24 funded.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And are we doing
3 enough and are we creating like a mechanism so that
4 the smaller culturals can--can draw down capital--

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
6 Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --funding?

8 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So that was--
9 that was actually, if I may give credit to--

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
11 Yep.

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --to my
13 predecessor. In this job, one of the big things that
14 happened under the Bloomberg Administration was the
15 democratization of the capital budget at the cultural
16 institutions in New York City. If you go back a
17 generation, all the money went to the CIG, and they
18 began to crack a little bit under Giuliani and under
19 Bloomberg. It's, you know, as people in this room
20 may quite well know, we have a tremendous amount of
21 cultural and--and by the way, That's everything from a
22 new building for Weeksville Cultural Center to a new
23 sound system to, you know ,there's equipment
24 purchases, which are also highly valuable to smaller
25 cultural organizations. So, we do feel that--that

1
2 it's-it's working, and that it's getting the money
3 out to the organizations. It's getting the-the
4 projects out to the organizations.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I have a few
6 more questions, but I know Council Member Crowley
7 would-would have a few questions as well so I'm going
8 to let her go, and then I'll come back.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Good afternoon,
10 Commissioner.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Good
12 afternoon.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So when you-did
14 the CIG's Report to you and so do they-do they break
15 down their budget? Like when you said earlier that
16 there was only an operating budget of like 22%--

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
18 Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --and that's the
20 most we cover for when--

21 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
22 No, no, that's the average.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: And that's the
24 average, but you know this because you see their
25 operating budgets. Do they-do they send them to you?

1
2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right, yes.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So you have more
4 information about them than we have about libraries?

5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: That could be
6 true. So by the way also I—just to be clear, we sit
7 on the board of all of the Cultural Institution
8 Group. So I'm officially—I'm a board member. I'm a
9 board member of--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]
11 The City sits on the Library Board. No, there are a
12 lot of similarities. That's why I bring this up
13 because--

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
15 Okay.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --all the
17 libraries are city-owned properties, right, and—and I
18 believe all your CIGs are--

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --and that's why
21 they report to your agency.

22 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, correct.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So why is it
24 that your CIGs are opened on Saturday and Sundays and
25 libraries are not?

1
2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: You know, I-I
3 can't comment on the library side of life. I-I would
4 say that [coughs] the vast majority of our CIGs are
5 open on Saturday and Sunday. I think that is when
6 most of the attendance happens at a lot of cultural
7 institutions.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: There is, too,
9 for Saturdays at libraries, too. So when it comes to
10 your Capital Budget, you only have about \$10 million
11 in the next--am I reading that right? \$10 million in
12 the next ten years?

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I know
14 what you're referring to, which is the Ten-Year
15 Capital Plan.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Yeah.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So the--we have
18 talked to--to OMB about this a lot. So we don't
19 anticipate having years where there's only \$10
20 million of capital money available. What we know is
21 that it's a real year-to-year situation. So [coughs]
22 the library system or let's say, you know, another
23 agency in the city government might have a capital
24 plan, right? We don't have a capital plan in the
25 same way because we look at it year to year. We

1 don't--the Metropolitan Museum of Art or Weeksville
2 Cultural Center or another--the Brooklyn Children's
3 Museum might have a capital plan. These are private
4 non-profits that have facility plans and, you know,
5 so we look at it on a year-to-year basis. We've got
6 a very robust capital budget under this
7 Administration as they did under the last
8 administration as well. So we do not anticipate that
9 being in, but we can't put in but we can't put in a
10 number because we don't have a capital plan for the
11 facilities because even if they're city-owned,
12 they're not managed by us. Do you see what I'm
13 saying? The--

14
15 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]
16 But can't you ask your institutions to give you at
17 least a five-year capital plan?

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I mean,
19 look, we're working with 200 different institutions
20 right now. Some have plans and some have--some don't
21 to--we--we feel like the system--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]
23 Yeah, I'm really--sorry--sorry. I'm really focusing on
24 the ones that are city-owned land.

25

1
2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay, the-the
3 CIG. So I mean what we feel is that we have—we have
4 a very open process. We meet with lots of
5 organizations around this time of year. We
6 understand year-to-year what the needs are. I
7 actually think the system is working well. We might
8 get testimony to the contrary, but I do think it is
9 working well [coughs] that we are able to assess and
10 then with—in collaboration with the City Council and
11 the borough presidents put in money for the—for the
12 most important projects, the most pressing projects
13 across the city, and it's a robust budget.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [pause] I don't—
15 I don't have any other questions. Thank you for--

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
17 Okay, thank you very much.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
19 much, Council Member Crowley. Commissioner, talk to
20 us about the—the cultural initiatives and how you
21 feel they are performing and—and are we—are we
22 collectively doing a better of reaching more people
23 and creating more equity and—and—and distributing
24 these funds in a—in a more fair and just way?
25

2 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I'm a big
3 fan of a lot of these initiatives, all the
4 initiatives. I think they're great. I think the
5 fact that they're spread across the Council districts
6 the way that they are is—is a great avenue to
7 reaching all corners of the city. We had a [coughs]—
8 we've had a researcher working on—on doing some—she's
9 a graduate student at the City University. [coughs]
10 And I think that—that the—what happens is both the
11 CDF funding and with the Cultural Initiatives is that
12 it actually fills in a lot of holes that are not. For
13 example, the Department of Education let's say the
14 distribution of arts education across the city, which
15 by the way, interestingly enough, it isn't correlated
16 with low-income communities getting less service.
17 Actually, that's quite a good finding. I'm very
18 happy to hear that, but there still are holes in the
19 map of where the Department of Education is able to
20 reach all the schools. So both the City Council and
21 initiative and CDF funding are really filling in a
22 lot of those holes. So I do think that it's widely
23 distributed. Every corner of the city has it, and I
24 think that actually fills in a lot of—of holes.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And the \$92
3 million for arts and--and education, you've been I
4 know involved in--in how that money has in some ways
5 been disbursed.

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Obviously, it's--
8 it's a chance for Forenia (sp?)

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
10 Yep.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --leading the
12 charge with that, but talking about how you think
13 that's been helpful, and obviously the need for that
14 to be continued?

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes. So I
16 mean the--the arts education budget overall I think is
17 \$368 million for the--so it's more than the entire
18 Cultural Affairs budget including capital. But, you
19 know, that somebody said to me yesterday, did you
20 know that one out of 300 people in America is a
21 public school student in New York city. That was an
22 interesting statistic. There's a lot of people. They
23 have a lot of needs. I have no criticism of the
24 amount of money that's being spent, the \$24 million
25 that was added by this administration has been well

1 and effectively used. The other thing and again I'm--
2 I'm not here to testify on behalf of DOE, but they
3 have 290 more certified arts teachers in the public
4 school system than they did three years ago. That's
5 fantastic. That's the basis, it's the foundation.
6 So I'm very happy with the way it's being spent on
7 very--
8

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

10 And some of our cultural organizations have received
11 funding and have been involved in that. No? I mean--

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, so there
13 were cultural organizations involved in training the
14 teachers, et cetera. Absolutely, but [coughs] I-I'm
15 very much in contact with Paul King who runs the arts
16 enterprise for the public school system. We're on
17 his committee. We see him all the time. Great
18 communication.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member
20 King.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you,
22 Commissioner. Forgive--forgive my voice. I just have
23 one quick question. In the scope of the funding that
24 you have for cultural programs I don't know--I'd like
25 to get a listing of your cultural programs in all of

1
2 our districts so I can tap in to know what cultural
3 programs that exist in my district with all the
4 council members as well. But how do you assess the
5 timing where you're going to open up any new sites,
6 or whatever funding that you have? How do you
7 determine where you go that you have cultural like
8 I've-I've here see here between the Dance Theater of
9 Harlem--

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

11 Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: --the Bronx Arts
13 Center-River Arts System that you're doing the
14 reconstruction. How do you all determine if you're-
15 where you're going to open up new centers or sites
16 like that?

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So these are
18 based on those organizations make capital requests to
19 the agency, and often-and so those are, you know,
20 independent non-profit organizations. We're not
21 going to them and saying we've got a space. The
22 answer is the pilot comes to us and says we have
23 space that has a capital need. It's going to serve
24 the city in such and such a way, and we assess it on
25 the basis of a set of criteria, which has to do a

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2 public service. Accessibility for people who are
3 handicapped, or people with disabilities. The—and
4 also there's sort of that green, you know, energy
5 savings sort of initiatives are—are with it as well.
6 Each of the organizations around this time of year
7 makes an application to us. We end up with a lot
8 more applications than we, you know, can and sort of
9 base on analysis done, and there's a collaboration
10 with the City Council [coughs] who has a lot of, you
11 know, capital money as well for the cultural
12 institutions. The final determination is made by
13 each and put together with the borough president to—
14 to fund the projects. So it's—it's applications to
15 us that I think is essentially the answer.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, so they
17 really, okay I got it. So application for those
18 programs or sites that exist--

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
20 Uh-huh.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: --but you're not
22 into as if creating new sites?

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Correct.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Alright,
25 thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
3 much, Council Member King and Council Member Crowley.
4 So obviously this is the Preliminary Budget and we
5 have a ways to go, but I'm sure that we'll be hearing
6 from many, many advocates in a few minutes--

7 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
8 Sure.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --about the
10 incredible need for appropriate levels of funding for
11 the arts, and that's given all of the victories that
12 we've--we've had and shared together over the last few
13 years, which are real and--and meaningful and
14 substantial and I'm--I'm enormously proud of that, and
15 that includes our recently increased Percent for Art
16 Law. So we are seeing a lot of forward movement, but
17 we--we desperately need to increase the Operating
18 Budget and the Capital Budget for culture and the
19 arts in the city of New York. So, I want to thank
20 you again, Commissioner, for your patience--

21 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: That's fine.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and your--your
23 decency, as it relates to some of the citizen
24 activists who--who were here a little earlier and look
25 forward to working with you to put as much pressure

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2 as we can on some of the folks that you work with,
3 and we all work with to make sure that great things
4 happen for all the people that you and I both
5 represent and fight for everyday. So thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Commissioner
8 Finkelparl, you are free to leave or listen to as
9 much testimony as you'd like. So I'm going to call
10 the next panel. We one incredibly stalwart library
11 advocate who was bumped and—and waited. So we are
12 going to hear from Marissa Richardson first, but also
13 I want to bring up the first cultural panel with
14 Marissa. She'll go first, and then she can either
15 listen to lots of great cultural testimony or she can
16 depart. But Marissa is going to be joined by Carl
17 Goodman representing the Cultural Institutions Group;
18 Katherine Green representing Arts East New York; Lisa
19 Levy from the Center for Arts Education and Jenny
20 Lolitas from Art New York. There are five chairs
21 there. Please assemble. We will have Marissa go
22 first because she was an incredibly good sport, and
23 then we'll go down the line right there. Then we
24 have a few more panels after that. We'll do five at
25 a time. Okay, three more panels after that. It is

1
2 not that much. We're going to go to three-minute
3 clock and ask all of you to be concise, and again
4 thank you for representing Urban Librarians Unite and
5 feel free to begin.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Turn on the mic first.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Please turn on
8 your mic. The little button in front of you.

9 MARISSA RICHARDSON: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go.

11 MARISSA RICHARDSON: Alright. Hello,
12 good afternoon. My name is Marissa Richardson. I am
13 a member of the leadership of Urban Librarians Unite.
14 I'd like to thank the Chair of the committees and the
15 Speaker for the opportunity to speak here today. I am
16 here to speak on the organization's behalf and it is
17 lovely to see you here today as we once again ask you
18 to increase funding for libraries in New York City.
19 I would like to reiterate the numbers. We are in
20 line with the libraries asking for \$34 million in
21 operating funds and \$120 million in capital funds.
22 Representatives of the libraries have laid out the
23 need very carefully in giving you details about the
24 hours we will gain and the access to the people of
25 New York City will have. This extends out to farther

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2 neighborhoods of New York City that perhaps aren't
3 pretty and have two lines in the front. There will
4 be calls for us to have more books or less books or
5 different books, but that's not really what I want to
6 talk about today. I have a little bit more freedom
7 in what I can than some of my colleagues, and I'm
8 going to get right to the heart of the matter. As
9 you must give libraries this funding because [pause]
10 we desperately need funding for the fabric of
11 democracy that we are facing currently in our
12 political climates. Propaganda is on the rise. Hate
13 crimes and bigotry are increasing. Fake news is
14 incredibly confusing and hiding the truth daily.
15 Educating—education is being bought and sold and
16 history seems to suddenly have become a fluid concept,
17 and you know where none of that is true is the
18 library. The library becomes a place where we can to
19 the root of information about what is currently going
20 on in the world and how we as citizens can organize
21 and take action. Very quickly, libraries have become
22 the people's university with increased attention to
23 adult learning and senior programming. Libraries
24 quickly become our great equalizer in times where all
25 you need to access that information is a little bit

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2 of plastic, which fits conveniently in your pocket,
3 and the funny part is is if you lose that plastic,
4 there is, in fact, an app for it in all three library
5 systems. Above all, we have to consider what
6 increased funding would look like to the quality of
7 life in New York City. With \$34 million of operating
8 fees, the door to libraries across New York City can
9 remain open with Sunday service, which his a huge
10 boon for working families and with \$120 million in
11 capital funding means that we can offer our patrons
12 safe and accessible and warm buildings to enter every
13 time they come to the library for decades, and I'm
14 going to make the wild assumption that we're all here
15 because we want to make our city a better place.
16 Yes? [background comments] Yes, you folks work
17 behind the scenes to make my job possible, and you
18 don't get to see what I see everyday in my work.
19 [coughing] The library, though, your work as well as
20 mine unshackles the minds of our citizens and shows
21 them new horizons in our lives and their communities,
22 and I would like to work together with you to help
23 the library help New York City as a whole. And thank
24 you s much for your time. [bell] Oh, wow, that was
25 perfect.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That—that was
3 perfect in every way, Marissa. Thank you so much
4 for—for being a good sport and for hanging out and -
5 and for joining this—this—this cultural panel. It's
6 like you're in interesting territory, but they're—
7 they're good people as you—as you probably know.

8 MARISSA RICHARDSON: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Libraries and
10 culture go together and make wonderful—wonderful
11 partners, and as you probably know, Urban Librarians
12 United is one of my favorite organizations.
13 Christian and Lauren are really, really good friends,
14 and have done great work. So thank you. As you
15 already heard, I—I support you 1,000%.

16 MARISSA RICHARDSON: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I am going to
18 ask Marissa because I—I am told that Andrea Louie is—
19 is going to be testifying in some ways with Carl
20 Goodman right to your left. So if you would Marissa
21 take a seat, but you're done. So you can head out,
22 and Andrea Louie is going—we're going to call Andrea
23 Louie up to sit in your seat.

24 MARISSA RICHARDSON: Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
3 much for being here. Feel free to listen to as much
4 cultural testimony as you would like. They're--
5 they're great folks, but Andrea is going to join and
6 then I will allow Carl to go first, and then you'll
7 all work out the five of you together how you're
8 going to do this. Thank you very much.

9 CARL GOODMAN: Right. Block paper
10 scissors. Before I--before I start I--I'd just say we
11 have a number of employees at the Museum of the
12 Moving Image. With library sciences backgrounds we
13 work very closely with libraries where funded through
14 many projects through the Mellon Foundation. It also
15 works for--on software that we're developing with
16 libraries and it's just a really a pleasure and honor
17 to be group together with them on this day, and must--
18 as it must be an honor for you to be able to
19 represent and fight for both. I'm Carl Goodman,
20 Executive Director of the Museum of the Moving Image,
21 and current Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group
22 or the CIG. I'm here today to provide testimony on
23 behalf of the CIG's Coalition of 33 cultural
24 institutions on city-owned land and located in all
25 five boroughs of the city. First, I want to

1
2 acknowledge, you, the Council's vital support for
3 culture and the arts in the city, support that yields
4 monumental return on investment for all of its
5 residents through the education of its children,
6 adults, seniors and social services for those with
7 the greatest need, support for small businesses, and
8 the enrichment of the city's tax base. We are
9 especially grate to the Council and the
10 administration for last year's one-time \$10 million
11 increase to the DCLA budget, which was split evenly
12 between the CIGs and the cultural organizations
13 receiving funding through the cultural development
14 fund, which we affectionately call the program
15 groups. And let's also not overlook the Council's
16 tremendous expansion with existing programmatic
17 initiatives that allow artists and cultural
18 organizations to better serve school students,
19 seniors and immigrants. We run four such programs
20 funded by Council Member Van Bramer, and it's just a-
21 a wonderful thing that's a very important part of our
22 mission. This the third year that we have worked
23 with the program groups to advocate for increased
24 resources for culture and the arts. Our joint
25 advocacy is not merely strategic. It's born out of a

1 deep natural longstanding and growing connection
2 between and among CIGs and program groups. As the
3 Council determines its budget priorities for 2018, I
4 am pleased to join with my colleagues the CIG and the
5 program groups in support of a \$40 million increase
6 to the DCLA budget to be-to be split evenly just like
7 last year between the CIGs and the program groups.
8 Included in this \$40 million, we asked that the city
9 consider baselining the \$10 million increase that we
10 received last year, as you discussed earlier. So
11 very quickly and I'm sorry I took a lot of notes and
12 I need to say certain things. How do we leverage the
13 funds? We offer 37,200 on-site programs to 4.1
14 million participants. The programs integrate with
15 many, many other city agencies and offices. We are
16 an agency of interagency collaboration within the
17 city, NYCHA, Immigrant Affairs, Crisis Management,
18 Department of Education. The Queens Museum New
19 Yorkers program work specifically with immigrants to
20 do skill building, literacy, art making classes
21 taught by teaching artists in native tongue. To
22 newly arrived adult immigrants, the museum offers
23 programs involving film screenings for young student
24 immigrants around the film *The Immigrant* by Charlie
25

1
2 Chaplin will be discussed, the first wave of
3 immigration and its relation to today. We work with
4 2-1/2 million school children many of whom or most of
5 whom are in public schools meaning that most school
6 children visit one or more cultural institutions per
7 year. We also provide opportunities for life long
8 learning to residents of all ages, a tremendous
9 program. For instance [bell] Carnegie Hall's Lullaby
10 Program. We create jobs. We have over 13-7,000 full
11 and part-time employees in all through the city
12 including union positions. The-over 10% of the CIG
13 employees actually reside in Council Member King's
14 district, interesting Steven Levin a close second, a
15 Council Member Van Bramer. The rents are too damn
16 high and-and I hope to be able to along with you to
17 increase your numbers. [laughs] And we support-we
18 support merging established New York City based
19 artists through employment opportunities and
20 programs. The program from the Hall of Science, the
21 Museum of Natural History among others, Advanced
22 Technical Literacy among youth, and our breeding
23 ground for future scientists and technology industry
24 workers. We service incubators for the development
25 of emerging and mid-career artists. For instance a

1
2 growing NYC tech start-up will allow the Museum of
3 the Moving Image to award \$40,000 to 18 artists who
4 will create animated work for the museum's elevator.
5 The elevator moves up and down because of the support
6 from the city of New York and, in fact, part of that
7 \$10 million, \$4.5, some of it went to repair that
8 elevator. Then we get third parties to fund the rest
9 of it, and the fact is that of every dollar we get
10 from the city here at the museum, we raise about
11 seven, and the same is true across the CIGs. We are
12 affordable with many institutions offering free days.
13 There is suggested rather than required admission.
14 Even before IDNYC memberships 35% of our visitors
15 attended for free. We have a strong and direct
16 impact on the city economy. We spend \$364 million on
17 local vendors on goods and services, that's a drop in
18 the bucket to what our visitors spend on small
19 businesses in the area. Now this is important. With
20 the potential abolishment of or severe cutbacks to a
21 number of federal agencies that provide funding for
22 many of our programs like the National Endowment for
23 the Humanities Funding for the Muslim Voices Program
24 at the Museum of the City of New York and many
25 others. Increased support from the City helps to

1
2 fill the gap, and sends a powerful message to the
3 rest of this nation that the arts and culture are not
4 merely an amenity. They are a necessity. Now, in
5 the three months ahead, each and every council member
6 will be hearing from us--you're going to be sick of
7 us--so you can better understand why the requested
8 increase of \$40 million split between the CIGs and
9 the Program groups will directly benefit their
10 constituents. For the museum, the full amount will
11 mean we can open on Tuesdays, and more important,
12 each and every Council Member will be hearing
13 directly from their constituents, and to learn about
14 the invaluable life changing and life affirming
15 cultural experiences, not to mention the jobs that we
16 provide. Thank you for the extra time.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Karl,
18 and let me just say I spent a lot of time with all of
19 you, and no one will ever get sick of seeing you.
20 [laughter] I'm pretty sure I can attest to that on
21 behalf of all of my colleagues, who I'm sure will
22 look forward to hearing from all of their
23 constituents on--on this issue. So thank, Carl, for
24 the work that you do, and is Andrea testifying next,
25 and then we'll go down line if that's okay?

1

2

ANDREA LOUIE: Great. Thank you.

3

4

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And we're going
to—we're going to adhere a little bit more to three-
minute rule. Because Carl is in my district, we gave
him a little bit extra time.

7

Ah, right. Duly noted.

8

9

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I'm just joking.
I'm just joking for everyone who is not in my
district. [laughter]

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ANDREA LOUIE: Yes, well, in honor of
International Women's Day, I'm very pleased and
honored to be the first woman to speak on the
Cultural Affairs panel. So thank you for that. Yes,
the Majority Leader Van Bramer and members of the
committee, please accept my deepest appreciation to
give testimony today—today regarding the Fiscal 18
Budget for the New York City Department of Cultural
Affairs. As you know, my name is Andrea Louie and
the Asian-American Arts Alliance is a proud grantee
of DCLA and for 35 years has supported individual
artists and small arts groups across the five
boroughs of New York. I'm also proud to share that
I'm one of the co-chairs of the newly formed Citywide
Arts Advocacy group New Yorkers for Culture and Arts,

1
2 which is a union of the New York City Arts Coalition
3 and One Percent for Culture. I know that you'll be
4 hearing testimony specifically from New Yorkers for
5 Culture and Arts later today. I join my non-profit
6 arts colleagues including Carl to ask for a funding
7 increase of \$40 million to be equally divided between
8 the Cultural Institutions Group and the Cultural
9 Development Fund. The increase would allow more New
10 Yorkers from each of the Council's districts to be
11 better served by arts and cultural activities thus
12 transforming lives and increasing the diversity of
13 all the stories that deserve to be told, heard and
14 honored in our community. Certainly, there is no
15 great time than now for us as a city to support
16 diversity, and a multiplicity of views to the power
17 of arts and culture. To that end, the Alliance
18 supports the Asian-American Cultural Workforce in New
19 York welcoming all who identify as having roots from
20 the Pacific Islands through the Middle-East including
21 North Africa. Forty-seven percent of our community
22 are New Americans. While Asian-Americans make up
23 more than 15% of the city's population and are the
24 fastest growing racial and ethnic group, they remain
25 underrepresented across nearly all disciplines.

1
2 Also, according to the DCLA Diversity Study last
3 year, Asian-Americans also only make up 7.3% of the
4 staff and 3.78% of the leadership at our arts and
5 cultural organizations. While all of us deeply
6 benefit from the impact or organizations that make up
7 the CIGs, it is also the small community based arts
8 organizations that work directly in neighborhoods
9 serving people where they live and work. And a great
10 many of these serve New York's most marginalized
11 including communities of color. More than a third of
12 all DCLA grantees have annual operating budgets less
13 than \$100,000 and disport-disproportionately reliant
14 on government funding making them particularly
15 vulnerable to whatever happens as the outcome of
16 these budget hearings. The Alliance was privileged
17 to hear many such voices just on Monday at our
18 community convening to inform the city's cultural
19 plan process at the newly renovated Elmhurst Library,
20 a program that was generously supported by Council
21 Member Peter Koo as part of the Cultural Immigrant
22 Initiative. All who attended were deeply engaged and
23 deeply invested in the city and the role that arts
24 and culture can play in the neighboring individuals,
25 families and neighborhoods to thrive. We are

1
2 grateful for your leadership and the \$10 million
3 increase to this year's budget, but more than ever
4 there is still so much to do. I urge the New York
5 City Council to increase expense funding for FY18 to
6 DCLA by \$40 million so that organizations like the
7 Alliance can continue to expand [bell] our work.
8 Thank so much.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Perfect in so
10 many ways, Andrea, and as always, not only did you
11 come in right at three minutes, but you mentioned the
12 new Elmhurst Library, which is really an incredible
13 job.

14 ANDREA LOUIE: It was incredibly
15 beautiful and we were honored to have our community
16 there.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's a stunning
18 facility, that I got to work on before I even got
19 elected, and you can combined the Cultural Immigrant
20 Initiative in your testimony, which I can never hear
21 enough stories about how folks use the Cultural
22 Immigrant Initiative, and when folks come and testify
23 and mention that they received it, and how they used
24 it, it is among the highlights of my day every single
25

1
2 time someone says something about the Cultural
3 Immigrant Initiative. So thank you very much. Next.

4 SAMUEL MANNING: Great. Good afternoon.
5 My name is Samuel Manning. I'm here on behalf of
6 Katherine Green. Katherine Green—

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
8 Please send her our love.

9 SAMUEL MANNING: Will do.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: She is one of
11 our favorites.

12 SAMUEL MANNING: Well, great.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: She's amazing.

14 SAMUEL MANNING: That's great to hear,
15 and I'll—I'll do that.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes,

17 SAMUEL MANNING: Certainly. Chairman Van
18 Bramer and members of the committee, my—for the past
19 eight years, we have worked tirelessly to build
20 strong cultural infrastructure in East New York
21 Brooklyn, a community providing access and
22 affordability to high quality programming for the
23 residents for the residents we serve. We have found
24 that this is only possible by addressing social and
25 economic challenges that our constituents face in

1
2 everyday lives. Therefore, we utilize the arts as a
3 nucleus that affect the various issues that hinder
4 the growth of our beloved neighborhood. We focus on
5 three kick-key areas: Economic development, health
6 disparities, environmental sustainability as well as
7 community life and safety. Using arts and cultures
8 as a mechanism for radical change. I'm h ere today
9 to join my colleagues with the Cultural Committee to
10 ask for funding to increase of-provide \$40 million to
11 the Department of Cultural Affairs to equally divide
12 between the CIGs, the Cultural Development Fund for
13 grant making. These funds will provide DLCA with
14 fiscal capacity to increase funding for a current
15 funded institutions and organization including
16 underfunded groups at the five boroughs, arts
17 councils, which administer re-grant programs, which
18 serve individual artists and local cultural
19 organizations in a wide and more diverse array of
20 socially underserved communities and grantees. These
21 funds will also allow us at Arts East New York to
22 expand our program model. Thus, providing access and
23 opportunity to more community members. Our current
24 program allows us to reach a variety of residents in
25 several ways. Our summer outdoor performance event

1 series provides access to free cultural performance
2 such as the Chinese ribbon dancing, the Japanese
3 drumming, South African choir ensembles and dozens
4 more. Artistic performances that families would
5 otherwise have to travel far and pay high fees in
6 order to expose—expose their children to. These
7 events are staged at our own East New York Farmer's
8 Market where after the show residents have the
9 opportunity to shop with local gardeners. This only
10 helps the families to assist in also healthy living
11 and practices, and also circulate the dollars in our
12 community. Our Renew Lots Vendors Market and Artist
13 Incubator Partnership with New York City Department
14 of City Planning and Small Business Services provides
15 opportunities to local entrepreneurs and artists
16 alike with affordable storefronts, retail and studio
17 space made from recycled shipping containers. It
18 also serves as a cultural hub for neighbors to engage
19 as well as tremendous economic impact by hiring local
20 youth to the lead tours, attracting tourism dollars
21 to the community economy—to the economic community
22 economy. And last, education. As we are currently
23 hold After School in Arts East New York Youth
24 program, Youth University for young adults at East
25

1
2 New York Family Academy, Saturday music and arts
3 classes and summer camp programs for youth. With the
4 proposed funding increase these programs can double
5 to impact to making East [bell] New York, Brooklyn, a
6 place once identified with poverty, crime, and
7 deprivation and resources an oasis of opportunity for
8 existing community residents that have held it
9 together over the years. Those very same residents
10 who created gardens from abandoned city lots and mom
11 and pop shops that hire local residents and
12 organizations that take guns out of the hands of
13 youth, and replace them with opportunity in spite of
14 being ignored by city budget allocations. These are
15 the beneficiaries you must consider when negotiating
16 this \$40 million investment of resources that we're
17 asking you to consider today. Once again, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
19 much and I really appreciate—appreciate you bringing
20 home the message of how incredibly important this
21 funding is, and that we're not just talking about
22 extravagances or [coughing] or—or luxuries, but
23 actually talking about life and death and making the
24 difference in—in keeping people well. So thank you
25 very much for that. Lisa Levy is our next, Jenny.

1
2 LISA LEVY: Thank you. My name is Lisa
3 Levy and I am the Director of Advocacy and Engagement
4 for the Center for Arts Education. Thank you to
5 Chair Van Bramer, the staff and the rest of the
6 committee for inviting us to testify. I recently
7 joined CAE. So this is my first opportunity to
8 testify before this committee. I'm excited to be
9 here today with some familiar and friendly faces.
10 Because of my work as an advocate, I am fully aware
11 that many of you care a lot about cultural arts as
12 well as education. So I will try to be brief as I
13 tell you a bit about what brought me here today. I
14 wondered despite the fact that many of us have been
15 here in City Hall numerous times have we really
16 looked around at the landmarked building with its
17 quotes from wise people like Abraham Lincoln, murals,
18 statues, carvings and cornices. Many of us consider
19 ourselves fortunate because we live in New York City
20 surrounded by arts and culture. We have world class
21 museums, theater, Broadway, architecture, music and
22 dance venues, which attract visitors from around the
23 world. Yet many of New York City's public school
24 students do not have access to these institutions
25 because of financial reasons. We do have policies

1
2 for which we can thank this committee and this
3 Council, which have helped bring positive change.
4 Thanks to funding from the Council and this
5 Administration in the first year and a half of IDNYC
6 alone, according to a report released recently by the
7 Mayor, more than 400,000 memberships with cultural
8 institutions were initiated. We also thank the
9 Council for New York City's first cultural plan,
10 which is currently in the works. This an exciting
11 opportunity to incorporate ideas about arts, heritage
12 and culture from members of the community, from every
13 part of the city to encourage participation, counter
14 inequity and strengthen civic engagement. Last, we
15 acknowledge the investment of \$92 million in our
16 public schools over four years beginning in 2014,
17 which allowed more than 250 arts teachers to be hired
18 in just the last two academic years. This money will
19 expire next year, and so for the mentum of academic
20 achievements to continue, this funding must be
21 renewed, and I appreciate the fact that it was
22 mentioned earlier. So thank you. All of these
23 initiatives are valuable and reach so many New
24 Yorkers, many of whom could not otherwise be able to
25 access arts and culture. But here's the thing,

1 without continued funding, they won't continue.
2 Today, along with many other organizations, we
3 respectfully request that DCLA's budget be increased
4 by \$40 million. Arts, architecture, music, dance,
5 theater and digital media. I'm sure I don't have to
6 convince you that these things are important, and
7 with sufficient funding we will able-be able to
8 ensure that the doors of creativity and the arts
9 remain open for New York City's kids. Thank you for
10 your time.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
13 much, and you set the record. You came in under
14 time.

15 LISA LEVY: Well, it's-it's Women's Day.
16 So, you know.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Fair enough.

18 LISA LEVY: That is so standard.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, Jenny
20 to close out this panel.

21 JENNY LOLITAS: It will save time. First
22 of all, I'm going to deviate from my prepared
23 testimony, if you don't mind, and what I'd like to do
24 is give the top nine reasons why I think we need to
25 baseline the \$10 million, and why we need the \$40

1 million in addition. First of all I want to give my
2 tremendous respect and thanks to the City of New York
3 to Commissioner Finkelppearl, and especially to you
4 and the City Council. On January 18th we opened the
5 Art New York Theaters, which were filled up
6 completely by the city of New York and that was a
7 landmark for my 25 years at Art New York and First
8 Field, and for that I thank you, but there are a
9 number of reasons why we need to baseline this money,
10 and I'm not in a political position so I can say
11 things. So number one: Rising costs to pay rent,
12 salaries, union salaries, wood for sets, costumes, et
13 cetera every day. I mean every year costs go up, and
14 the increase that we get from Cultural Affairs is not
15 keeping up with the cost of living. It's certainly
16 not happening at state level, and we all know the AMA
17 (sic) is about to be dismantled. For those of us who
18 are not representing—who do not work for the CIGs we
19 don't have retirement programs. Some of us can have
20 our own retirement funds, but I have to tell you that
21 most people who lead arts organizations most founders
22 are working 'til they're dead. We lost Miriam Colon
23 at the age of 81 on Friday. She was the Executive—
24 she was the Artistic Founding Director of the Puerto
25

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2 Rican Traveling Theater. She was still working.
3 Many people in their 70s are still working. I will
4 be working to my 70s. That's why I got my new hit.
5 Staff salaries. Here's another problem. We can't
6 keep up with the wealthier organizations. So we lose
7 people. We don't have enough money. Our cost of
8 living salaries of 3% are really not doing it, and
9 I'm not even giving myself a cost of living raise
10 sometimes. So we have to understand that we need to
11 baseline this money because costs are going up and
12 rent is just one of them. Federal situations. I've
13 experienced so much anxiety because of I recently had
14 my hip replaced so I was home a lot to read the
15 newspaper, and there's nothing worse than reading
16 about Donald Trump when you're trying to get better.
17 I'm really, really worried. He has dismantled every
18 social program that means something, and I'm not even
19 talking about the OATH.(sic) I'm talking about the
20 fact that the White House website is not multi-
21 lingual. I'm talking about the fact that LGBT youth
22 are not being considered and their rights are not
23 being considered. I'm—I'm concerned about the
24 planet. I'm concerned about the fact that we have
25 attorney general who lied under oath. I could go on,

1
2 but when those funds disappear from NYCHA for social
3 services, for immigration, we're going to have to
4 fight for our own dollars, and we can talk about how
5 important we are as a collaborator with those
6 services, and as arts and education [bell] but I'm
7 concerned, and this is something we have to think
8 about. And I think it's—I'm not the only one there.
9 If you can give me a few more minutes. The Cultural
10 Survey on Diversity, 12 organizations got funding,
11 but I want you to know that there are many other
12 organizations that did the right thing without city
13 funding. They're investing in diverse to find their
14 staff. My organization did that as well, and I'm
15 proud to say we're working on a initiative to Doors
16 to buy Boards. (sic) The democratization of capital
17 funding began with the Giuliani Administration. I
18 know because the two sample groups were my own in the
19 Roundabout Theater Company. The problem is when you
20 give small organizations capital money, you need to
21 give them money to maintain the buildings. It's not
22 enough to build it. You have to have money when the
23 boiler breaks. You have to have money to pay the
24 higher air conditioning costs. That's number 9.
25 Number 10 is for you, Jimmy. The Cultural

1
2 Immigration Initiative worked for one of my members
3 called the National Asian-American Theater Company
4 that had their 25th Anniversary production called
5 Sagittarius Ponderosa about a transgender youth who
6 returned home when his father was dying. That
7 funding made that show possible. So thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow. Thank you
9 for—for everything, but I certainly am—am moved by—by
10 the story you just told about that Cultural Immigrant
11 Initiative grant. So let me just say to all five of
12 you it's incredibly important that we get this
13 funding. Obviously, at a minimum of baselining the
14 \$10 million so that folks don't get a cut, which
15 would be insane and then baselining whatever we get
16 so people know what they're getting every year, and
17 they don't have wonder should I hire a new person or
18 do a new program. But I can't plan for that going
19 forward. So I won't go too far. That's not good
20 planning and that's not efficient. That doesn't work
21 for us. Your value is clear. The mission is—is
22 real, and you have my continued and undying support.
23 So I want to thank all five of you for being here and
24 for the work that you do, and the power cases you
25 made for the \$40 million, and for all of your

1
2 colleagues who are not here today. So thank you very
3 much to this incredible panel. We have—

4 SAMUEL MANNING: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We have two more
6 panels that are going to speak I think to—to—to more
7 general issues, and then we have a couple of panels I
8 think of folks who—who particularly want to talk
9 about one particular project and we're going to hear
10 from all those folks together. So I'm going to hold
11 the Community United folks to the end so all of you
12 can be together. I think there is seven of you who
13 are registered to testify, but we'll continue on for—
14 for now with Kat Parker. Is Kat Parker here from the
15 League of Dependent—Independent Peers. Come up, Kat,
16 you're—you're up on the big seat. Is Isabel also
17 testifying from the League of Independent? Rosabell
18 Quizanos, Fran Garber. Is Fran Garber still with us?
19 Yep. You're up Fran from the Regina Opera company
20 and Amy Fiore. Is Amy Fiore still here from TADA,
21 who we love, TADA, and then Heather Woodfield? Is
22 Heather still here? Right. So we'll hear from this
23 panel, and there are two others, Marta Morena Vega
24 and David Johnson who will testify together after
25 this panel, and then we will to the one or two panels

1
2 on Community United. [pause] So, League of
3 Independent Theaters will only have one person
4 testifying. So why don't we ask Marta Moreno Vega to
5 join this panel, and then David, you may have your
6 own panel to yourself. That's just—that's it's
7 before we hear from the Community United folks. So
8 Marta will join this panel. Thank you. The League
9 of Independent Theaters for having one person
10 testify. It helps us get more folks in more quickly,
11 but why don't you go forward and start the testimony
12 in this panel.

13 KAT PARKERS Alright, thank you so much.
14 I did want to take a quick moment to say how
15 impressed I am that everybody is wearing read in
16 support today, and for the process that happened
17 outside earlier. So thank you for that. Thank you
18 certainly to you, Mr., the Chairman Jimmy Van Bramer.
19 We first meet and to the entire committee for the
20 opportunity to testify today. My name is Kat Parker.
21 I'm with the League of Independent Theater. The
22 league is a 501(c)(6) political avocy—advocacy
23 organization. We are the only one that is—and we are
24 testifying today on behalf of the city's 50,000
25 independent theater artists, 86% of whom vote. I am

1
2 here today to join with the other members of the
3 cultural community to ask for a funding increase of
4 \$40 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs to
5 be equally divided between the Cultural Institutions
6 Group, and the Cultural Development fund for grant
7 making. The cultural funding in New York, as you
8 know, suffered a series of cuts during and after the
9 2008 Financial Crisis at a time when other sources of
10 funding public and private were also being cut back
11 and withdrawn. The budget has never returned to that
12 2008 level in real terms or as a percent of the City
13 budget although the City Council has fought for the
14 increases over the last few years, which we
15 appreciate tremendously. Now we're facing a new
16 crisis. The federal government is targeting the rich
17 culture of our city in retaliation for attempting to
18 keep an open inclusive community. The National
19 Endowment for the arts is fighting for its survival
20 but cuts may hit the arts in other ways. The New
21 York City Housing Authority has already seen at least
22 \$35 million in cuts, and many other programs may see
23 similar cuts that impact the arts. For example, cost
24 of cultural exchange funding or increased visa
25 requirements. We still don't know how bad the pain

1 will be for our community particular for the smallest
2 and most diverse independent arts organizations
3 through the five boroughs. The independent artists
4 that basically volunteered their time to bring the
5 arts out into the boroughs and to people on an
6 affordable level. On the plus side, the contrast
7 between our portions nationally—nationally and
8 locally couldn't be starker. New York we know that
9 strong cultural institutions allow more stories to be
10 told, more ideas to be heard and more people to be
11 included. This summer the city will be adopting a
12 cultural plan asked for this council. It speaks to
13 the hope of an even more robust, diverse and exciting
14 cultural exchange. We call for the City Council to
15 continue its commitment to all of the beautiful,
16 vibrant exchanges of theater, dance, comedy, music,
17 art and more that makes the city even more tolerant
18 and inclusive to continue to be a cultural beacon for
19 the world. And that's why I'm here today with our
20 colleagues in the cultural community to ask for a
21 funding increase of \$40 million to help sustain these
22 and a thousand other programs in this city. Thank
23 you so much for this opportunity.
24
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
3 much. Marta.

4 MARTA MORENO VEGA: [off mic] Look at
5 this room. Look at the artwork in this room [pause]
6 [on mic] This \$40 million, \$20 million, right, if
7 equitably distributed—now notice the words that are
8 being used—goes to 33 organizations. \$20 million
9 would go to better an 1,200 organizations. So that
10 in and of itself is inequitable. The second piece is
11 that the 1,200 organizations do not get
12 administrative monies, do not get operational monies.
13 They just program dollars. So when people speak
14 about equity, right, they are sort of putting a
15 blanket over the reality that it is inequitable, that
16 the division is not equal. The 33 organizations get
17 \$20 million that can go for operations, can go for
18 staff, could go for programming, and small
19 institutions that reflect the diversity of the city,
20 that are grounded in the communities, they deal with
21 the most vulnerable, they deal with the immigrant
22 communities, they deal with fluid gender communities
23 that are safe spaces, sanctuary spaces, right have to
24 divide \$20 million and in the case of the \$10
25 million, right, 27%, six organizations even of the

1
2 CIGs got more money than the rest of the--than the
3 rest of CIGs. Most of us had to divide \$5 million.
4 The Caribbean Cultural Center that deals with more
5 than 20,000 people, young people in public schools,
6 in El Barrio, which is one of the most vulnerable
7 areas, right, didn't receive any increase. So many
8 of our institutions received no increase from the \$5
9 million, and even those that did could only use it
10 for programs. There is an inequity built in like the
11 portraits in this room, there is an inequitable
12 process. And, of course, we all want increases, but
13 we want equitable increases, and I call on you,
14 Jimmy, because I know that you're about equity, but
15 we have to look at how this is divided. From our
16 position given the historical inequity that our
17 institutions have experienced \$40 million should go
18 for the stabilizing of institutions within
19 communities that are serving directly our
20 communities. They don't have wealthy board of
21 directors to rescue them. Our institutions reflect
22 diversity, reflect people from communities that are
23 grounded in the cultures that they are gifting the
24 city with. And we need to work out the distribution
25 of funds more equitably, more racially equitable,

1
2 more culturally equitable. The division of art money
3 cannot be 33 organizations get the majority of New
4 York City funding, and then 1,200 mostly of color,
5 mostly grounded within our communities have to divide
6 money that doesn't allow them to exist. What we're
7 developing in New York City is a cultural art system
8 of poverty for institutions that reflect the majority
9 population of the city, which are people of color,
10 and native people that generally don't even get
11 mentioned. So I call on this committee. I call on
12 you, Jimmy, because you use the terminology of
13 equity, but the system of distribution has to change.
14 Yes, \$40 million increase to go to community based
15 organizations to sustain our community in this period
16 of hysteria, right? Because the most vulnerable
17 communities will be our communities?

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yep. Thank you,
19 Marta. Next.

20 FRAN GARBER COHEN: Hi. Thank you. I'm
21 Fran Garber Cohen President and Board of Directors
22 Chairman and I do everything for Regina Opera Company
23 located in Sunset Park in Brooklyn. I'll be brief.
24 Just anted to say that we are among the thousands of
25 small groups that are funded by the Department of

1
2 Cultural Affairs with City Council Members Gentile
3 and Menchaca. For 47 years Regina Opera has offered
4 year-round fully staged operas and ticketed and free
5 concerts in Southwest Brooklyn. Regina Opera
6 performances are places where thousands of Brooklyn
7 residents, many of them retirees, come to meet their
8 friends, stimulating their minds and getting them out
9 of their home. Attending our performances distracts
10 them from their troubles. We've also been told that
11 our performances have—are of high quality. Regina
12 Opera provides affordable entertainment for audiences
13 who may not otherwise attend live opera performances.
14 Some are on fixed incomes and cannot afford the
15 tickets. Some cannot travel to Manhattan. Others
16 are intimidated by the major opera houses or have not
17 been exposed to operas—operas previously. Regina
18 Opera offers matinee performances, reducing travel
19 after dark. The response of the audience is
20 overwhelming. Four thousand people will attend
21 performances during Fiscal Year 2018 taking advantage
22 of the low cost and free tickets. Our tickets for
23 operas are between \$20 and \$25, \$12 for concerts,
24 even less for students. Many ticketed—many tickets
25 are donated to senior centers through course—during

1
2 the course of the season. Regina Opera is unique in
3 Brooklyn. Music schools and other groups presents
4 occasional operas or concerts in Brooklyn, but Regina
5 Opera is the only group presenting professional level
6 fully staged operas and operatic concerts year round,
7 and the company has been doing so for 47 years.

8 Regina Opera also helps the entire community. The
9 performances add to the culture of the vitality,
10 which serves as magnet for prospective residents and
11 businesses. We directly affect the economy of the
12 locality by employing local residents and purchasing
13 local goods. Our performers and audience members
14 frequently shop and eat in the area. Regina Opera
15 depends on the support of audience members and on the
16 New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. We ask
17 that the expense money for culture be increased by
18 \$40 million for culture divided equally [bell]
19 between the cultural institutions and the CDF groups
20 like us. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

22 Next.

23 AMY FIORE: Good afternoon. My name is
24 Amy Fiore. I'm the Director of Development for TADA
25 Youth Theater, and I agree with my colleagues about

1 the necessity for a \$40 million increase, but I'm
2 here today to talk about something slightly
3 different. I want to implore you to consider
4 increasing or elimination—eliminating the budget cap
5 that limits the Cultural Immigrant Initiative grants
6 to organizations whose budget is \$1 million or less.
7 The value of this initiative is immeasurable and
8 especially in a city like ours, and in this political
9 climate, the necessity for a program like this is
10 even greater today than it was created. The ability
11 to apply for this funding, however, is limited only
12 to our organizations who operating—operating budgets
13 are \$1 million or less. Despite the Department of
14 Cultural Affairs asserting since the inception of the
15 initiative, the issues created by such a threshold
16 since it rolls out excellent services to immigrant
17 communities by some of the city's finest art service
18 providers. I don't doubt the challenges that the
19 smallest cultural organizations in our city face. I
20 know their struggles—struggles to be enormous and
21 their resources few and far between. But sadly,
22 slightly large cultural organizations also suffer
23 from proportional budget cuts in funding as well as
24 decreases in the individual contributions. Long time
25

1 funders a regularly spending down their endowments or
2 moving on to serve newer, smaller cultural
3 organizations because they assume "midsize arts
4 organizations" or comfortably funded by their
5 counterparts. The benchmark \$1 million budget cut is
6 a seemingly reasonable one, but anyone who has tried
7 to rent an apartment or buy a gallon of milk in
8 Manhattan after previously shopping in Long Island
9 City knows that \$1 million does not equal \$1 million.
10 The location difference among cultural organizations
11 is a significant—a significant variance that should
12 be considered when determining the budget for this
13 initiative. For my organization based in Midtown
14 Manhattan 15% of our annual budget is spend on rent
15 for a space we need to provide our programs and serve
16 our mission. Without that quarter of a million
17 dollars in rent an amount that is apparently
18 inexpensive for our neighborhood, our financial
19 statement would look drastically different. It is
20 well known and reflected in census data that innocent
21 immigrant groups cluster in certain areas. In
22 speaking with representatives from several council
23 and their offices, I understand the intention of this
24 initiative was in part to serve those densely
25

1
2 populated immigrant communities by funding tiny
3 immigrant run cultural organizations who are best
4 equipped to provide organic cultural programming that
5 celebrates the specific heritage—heritage of the
6 constituency. I do not for a moment suggest that a
7 minimum budget be set for this funding or wish that
8 any well deserving group loses out to a larger
9 organization. I wonder, however, about the other
10 communities in New York City that are characterized
11 by the melting pot we imagine our city to be. My
12 organization sought to propose arts education
13 programs in widely diverse schools that enabled
14 children to explore and share their cultural heritage
15 with classmates, and their community by researching
16 their own immigration to be less, and collectively
17 creating the theater piece that celebrates their
18 diversity. Of course, there would be great value in
19 small [bell] ethnic cultural groups providing
20 programing that exposes students to a culture beyond
21 their own. But when the funding is niche the
22 experience has the potential to be limiting, and in
23 this time of political turmoil experienced arts
24 educators will be invaluable in facilitating a
25 creative and unifying program and schools that serve

1
2 children from a number of different cultural
3 backgrounds. The experience of those educators comes
4 at a cost, and as well, and one that puts my
5 organization over the million dollar budget cut. As
6 you said--

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
8 Hey.

9 AMY FIORE: I'm time up?

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Coming to a
11 close there?

12 AMY FIORE: Yes, I am. I thank you.
13 [laughter] I was just going to quote you back to
14 yourself.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I read it, and
16 it's a brilliant quote. [laughter]

17 AMY FIORE: I thought you'd think so.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, interesting.
19 I have to say that's one of the more--more intriguing
20 testimonies that I've heard today, challenging my own
21 initiative, which is gutsy and--and I--I--I hear what
22 you're--you're saying and--and I'll certainly think
23 about it but, you know, e felt very strongly from the
24 inception that--that this was aimed at addressing some
25 issues of heavy, yes, equity, but it also relates to--

1
2 to size and—and it was one of the ways where I sort
3 of thought how can we—how can we really create a
4 funding stream that's really targeted to small or
5 very small cultural organizations, you know that
6 serve immigrant communities that are really about
7 capacity building, and I'm sure you do amazing work.
8 I know. I—I've seen TADA, and that's why I said I
9 love you guys when I called you up. So, you know, and
10 we've also increased other initiatives, which you can
11 compete for, and can draw down. So, I appreciate it.
12 I'll continue to think about it, but just so you
13 know, the—the rationale and—and the belief, you know,
14 continues and remains, but I—I—I respect you for
15 coming here and—and—and making the pitch, and—and,
16 you know, I—I—I respect the work that you do.
17 Heather to finish out this panel.

18 AMY FIORE: Thank you.

19 HEATHER WOODFIELD: Thank you. I want to
20 thank the Council for this opportunity to testify on
21 behalf of New Yorkers for Culture and Arts, a new
22 organization, which is the culmination of a merger
23 between the New York City Arts Coalition and One
24 Percent for Culture. New Yorkers for Culture and Arts
25 will advocate for strengthening policy, increasing

1
2 and securing sustainable public funding while
3 advancing equity, diversity and inclusion to help
4 venture a vibrant future for culture and arts
5 throughout New York City. We commend the City
6 Council and the Administration and the Department of
7 Cultural Affairs for supporting culture and art both
8 through expense and capital funding and for last
9 year's \$10 million increase in operating support
10 complemented by increases to the City Council
11 initiatives. Now, more than ever, with threats of
12 federal cuts to arts, humanities and science it's
13 vitally important that the city continue to grow its
14 support for culture and arts. Therefore, we are
15 joining with members of the cultural community to ask
16 for a funding increase of \$40 million to the
17 Department of Cultural Affairs, to be divided equally
18 between the CIGs, Cultural Institutions Group and the
19 CDF, the Cultural Development Fund for grant making.
20 Even with the \$40 million increase, the DCLA budget
21 would still be less than .3% of the overall city
22 budget, a very small contribution in light of the
23 social and economic benefits, which culture and the
24 arts brings to New Yorkers. An additional \$40
25 million would provide DCLA with the fiscal capacity

1
2 to increase funding for currently funded institutions
3 and organizations, including underfunded groups, the
4 Five Borough's Arts Counselors, which administers re-
5 grants program which serve individual artists like
6 myself, and local cultural organizations, and a wider
7 and more diverse way of new grantees. With an
8 additional \$40 million in funding, cultural
9 organizations could expand life long learning
10 opportunities for all New Yorkers, access to culture
11 and the arts for city residents, programs aligned
12 with City priorities and in collaboration with city
13 agencies, and workforce development opportunities
14 including artist support. We urge you to increase
15 funding for DCLA by \$40 million to be divided equally
16 between the CIG and the CDF, and we thank you for you
17 time today, and for your steadfast support of the
18 non-profit cultural community. We look forward to
19 continued collaborations between city government,
20 cultural organizations and artists in order to better
21 serve all New Yorkers.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
23 much, Heather, and you came in under by the most. So-

24 -

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2 HEATHER WOODFIELD: [interposing] I
3 planned for two.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

5 HEATHER WOODFIELD: I planned for two
6 minutes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
8 much for—for your testimony. I want to thank all of
9 you for this very spirited and challenging panel, and
10 we will continue on down this road together all of
11 us. Thank you very much, and David is going to come
12 up and speak for a couple of minutes by himself
13 before we hear from all of the folks from Community
14 United. So, thank you very much, David for waiting
15 and for the Community United—Community United folks
16 for waiting as well. [background noise, pause]

17 DAVID JOHNSON: I had my own panel.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

19 DAVID JOHNSON: My name is David Johnson.
20 I'm the Executive Director of Exploring the
21 Metropolis. Like everyone today, I would like to
22 thank Council Member Van Bramer and the entire
23 Cultural Affairs Committee for the opportunity to
24 testify today. Since 1982, Exploring the Metropolis
25 has focused on solving the work space needs of New

1
2 York City's performing artists. Currently, we
3 administer the ETM Con-Edison Composer residencies.
4 The Choreographer and Composer Residency in
5 partnership with the Jamaica Center for Arts and
6 Learning and the Ridgewood, Bushwick Composer
7 Residency. Since 2009, ETM has supported nearly 70
8 composers, choreographers and performing artists
9 providing them with more than \$650,000 worth of no
10 cost rehearsal space and cash support. In addition,
11 ETM has provided more than \$110,000 worth of support
12 to NYC's non-profit cultural and community centers to
13 maximize the space usage, supported more than 60 free
14 public programs for New York City audiences, and
15 these have ranged from new music premiers to work in
16 progress dance showings. We've had composition
17 workshops for visually impaired students and New
18 Children's Opera. So why is work space important for
19 performing artists in New York City? Why is this
20 important for all of us? For our Jamaica where we
21 offer free rehearsal space for three months for
22 choreographers and composers, applications tripled in
23 the second year. We were anticipating an applicant
24 pool that was much more geared towards emerging
25 artists, but since the beginning of the program we've

1 had—well, we've had a Bessie award winner every year.
2 We had Pam Tamowitz. We've had Christopher Williams
3 this year. Last year we also had Doris Duke
4 performing artist who was one of those artists and
5 residents as well in addition to other emerging
6 artists. Artists at all career stages in NYC need
7 the support. This is not just emerging. Even for
8 artists who are working at an advanced or master
9 level, work space can now be prohibitively expensive.
10 So there's the impact on communities. Right now we
11 have Randy Wolf. He is a composer. He's a
12 Guggenheim fellow. He's a Harvard PhD and he's in
13 residence in a senior facility in Bushwick at he
14 Ridgewood, Bushwick Senior Citizen Council. He has
15 worked over the last 30 years with artists like John
16 Kale, Marie Sindeck (sp?), Heidi Latski, and he
17 needed a quiet space to work during the day because
18 to make ends meet his wife teaches piano. So he
19 couldn't compose at home any more and needed this
20 space. We're matching these amazing artists who need
21 the space with the communities that want the arts.
22 So I'm here today to join with other members of the
23 cultural community to ask for the \$40 million
24 increase to the Department of Cultural Affairs to be
25

1
2 split between the City Cultural Institutions Group
3 [bell] and the Cultural Development Fund, and we hope
4 last year's \$10 million can be baselined as well.
5 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you,
7 David, for being here. Thank you for the work that
8 you've done for a long time and thank you for always
9 reminding us about the issues that you—that you work
10 on so—so incredibly well. So thank you very much for
11 being here, David. Now we have several folks, and I
12 don't know if there is any particular order, but we
13 are going to keep folks to the three-minute rule, and
14 I guess we will have—hold on one second. [pause]
15 You know what, we're going to take a two-minute
16 break, right, and I'll be right back and then we'll
17 hear from this last two panels. [background
18 comments, pause] Alright, thank you very much. We
19 are back in session. We are going to hear from
20 several folks. Why don't we call up two—the stands,
21 Sidney Goldfisher. I Sidney Goldfisher still with
22 us? Okay, Mr. Goldfisher, have a seat. Judith
23 Kalamandre. Is Judith Kalamandre, Faith Steinberg,
24 Faith Steinberg number 3, Claudia De Salvo number 4
25 and William Roudenbush number 5, and that will be the

1
2 first panel, and then secondly we have Regina Carp,
3 and Regina Kalamandre or Camilla Kalamandre will be
4 on the second panel. So this is the first panel.

5 The second panel will be Regina Carp, and Camilla
6 Kalamandre. So we're going to a three-minute clock.

7 [background comments, pause]

8 MALE SPEAKER: Well, how will we get this
9 working? That's it?

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go. I
11 think you're on. Would you like to start sir?

12 SIDNEY GOLDFISCHER: Yes, please.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

14 SIDNEY GOLDFISCHER: I'd like to thank
15 the City Council and the committee for the courtesy
16 and the opportunity to speak. It's invaluable and
17 gratifying and again I greatly express my
18 appreciation. My name is Sidney Goldfisher. I've
19 lived in New York for 90 years, and watched the
20 gradual loss of trees and greenery and space. I went
21 to my elementary in Bensonhurst. There was a farm
22 across the street from the school. Lafayette High
23 School on Cropsy (sic) Avenue working from with a
24 horse. Things have changed. I'm talking in reference
25 to the American Museum of Natural History and which

1
2 has now apparently abandoned this grandiose plan to
3 create a center that will permit—and this is a quote.
4 It's hard to believe. They plan to educate the next
5 generation of teachers sciences—scientists and
6 workers to ensure scientifically literate nation, our
7 nation—and our nation's workforce preparedness.
8 Fantasy a Trumpian delusion that has now been
9 abandoned in the light of community opposition. This
10 evident in a Wall Street Journal article on the
11 Museum's plan and the heading is Bugs will Top
12 Billing. No longer STEM science, no longer
13 innovative science, no longer cutting of the edge
14 science. Cutting of the edge science has been
15 replaced by display for cases for millions of bugs
16 and enhanced catering facilities. Worthwhile
17 endeavors but not worth \$350 million. Not worth an
18 additional \$6 million of precious city funds. These
19 used chunks would be better spent on enhanced science
20 teaching in our neighborhood schools. I have a
21 detailed analysis of the scientific components of the
22 plan for—for you, but more egregious than the waste
23 of public funds is the proposed destruction of
24 precious park land and trees that will be lost
25 forever. So I would greatly appreciate if you

1
2 consider this. I'm sure that you will and that the
3 \$6 million extra that that they won is an insult to
4 the intelligence, judgment and fair play of the
5 people in New York City. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

7 CLAUDIA DI SALVO: I'm going to go next.

8 Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak
9 with you. My name is Claudia DiSalvo and I'm
10 President of Community United to Protect Theodore
11 Roosevelt Park. Never doubt that a thoughtful group
12 of committed citizens can change your world. Indeed,
13 it is the only thing that ever did. That's a quote
14 from Margaret Mead. We are all involved in a drama
15 with the American Museum of Natural History. Our
16 good museum is acting badly and irresponsibly towards
17 its neighbors. If the American Museum of Natural
18 History did not engage in a land grab with an
19 additional \$125 million public tax dollars money,
20 without public hearings, this would have been a done
21 deal, and let me add that when Jean Van Architect was
22 asked who is going to be doing project? Can you
23 achieve your goal without the taking of public
24 parklands? She said yes. What motivates me to work
25 everyday, our mission to save public parkland, comes

1
2 from one essential question. I am sitting here look
3 back and a long time Upper West resident who has
4 spent my life as an educator and I ask myself what
5 will be our legacy if the American Museum of Natural
6 History plan I fully implemented? I can assure you
7 of several outcomes. Future generations will view
8 the decision to create a legacy for yet another
9 billionaire, not doubt well intended person, which
10 interrupted a very fragile environment in a highly
11 urbanized location as tragic a historical fallacy.
12 What our future generations will question is the
13 efforts of a community to protect and a failure of
14 leadership to preserve and maintain a very important
15 and valuable public green space. They will judge
16 harshly the choice to destroy rather than enhance
17 both the scientific education and the health of local
18 parkland with the legendary trees, the lungs over the
19 earth. They will mock the replacement of science in
20 this atrium when they view taxidermist birds, bats or
21 butterflies hanging 100 feet from the atrium ceiling
22 that—and there will be no programmable science in the
23 atrium. This, by the way, is to be built 30,000
24 square feet, which—of which is a third of an acre of
25 our public parkland not to mention the trees the

1
2 museum is taking. And everyone from our public
3 officials and our commissioners have said one way or
4 another that this is okay. They think this is being
5 done in the name of science. We need to understand
6 and consider that if we are changing our future in a
7 very negative manner for the price of someone's
8 legacy, not to confirm we are living in an age of
9 climate deniers. Ladies and gentlemen, with
10 thoughtful planning, communication and collaboration
11 we can have it all, a state-of the-art 21st Century
12 museum complex that houses a world class STEAM
13 program, Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and
14 Math that will deliver all of the wonderments the
15 museum can magically exhibit and a quality of life
16 public park that is part of the historic district
17 master plan complete with our legendary trees and
18 canopy that has served our community for decades.
19 [bell] The future is happening now. Our journey is
20 now beginning with your help. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

22 Next.

23 WILLIAM ROUDENBUSH: Hello. My name is

24 William Roudenbush, and thank you for hearing us

25 today. We value our democratic processes so much and

1
2 so much more these day s that getting a chance for
3 the community to speak and have true democracy in
4 action is a rarity. So it's important and we value
5 it very much. So thank for that. I'd like to speak
6 a minute about our dollars and how they travel and
7 how the travel back and forth as far as these larger
8 culture-cultural institutions and how much depth they
9 have and how we further enable them with these
10 capital projects. Now, if we were only talking about
11 for instance some money for a building, that would be
12 one conversation, but we're talking about public
13 money for a building that's going to be on public
14 parkland. So now we're talking about two costs to
15 the public, and what is the benefit for the park
16 user? Well, they're only redesigning the concrete in
17 front of the park users—for park users so not very
18 much. This is an institution that has over \$300
19 million in debt. If you want to add their interest
20 rate, cap agreements with interest rates swaps you're
21 looking at more. When it's all paid and done, it
22 will be more than \$477 million. Of this you're
23 looking at the debt service payments, which as we all
24 know is the interest and the principal. So you're
25 looking in the neighborhood of between \$15 and \$17

1 million every year until this debt is paid off and
2 it's only going upwards. At a time where the net
3 director was let go last week because of financial
4 irresponsibility and overextension, what are doing by
5 enabling this institution to rack up more debt, to
6 become larger and to become more costly when we also
7 have to heat and cool and maintain these buildings?
8 This seems to me at a time where the Mayor seems to
9 claim that we're trying to prepare for the Trump
10 Administration shortfalls in critical programs as a
11 special move by Marta's testimony, that we are going
12 to allow ourselves to be in a situation where we're
13 going to have to fund this building in perpetuity
14 when se should be saving money. And by the way, this
15 is largely funded by a billionaire's funds. Now when
16 you're making a deal for these kind of people, and
17 you say we're going to give you public money and
18 public land along with public funds, do you think
19 that the next guy that comes along is going to ask
20 for anything less? Of course they're not. That
21 means more public land, more public money. They have
22 so many resources and they should use them, and as
23 far as the education that's going to happen in this
24 building, certainly it's going to be grand. I've had
25

1
2 the presentations. They do great work over there,
3 but when we're talking about public funds and science
4 education, I have a few public school teachers who
5 would like to talk to you about how they can stretch
6 a buck and what they can do with these same funds
7 when it comes to teaching science in our classrooms
8 and they teach it every single day not just on a
9 single field trip. We love the museum. They're very
10 big and they're very powerful and they are throwing
11 their weight around and we are just a community who
12 wants to see responsible government, responsible
13 development and just in your own document it's \$62.1
14 million over the next ten years to just this
15 projects, and that doesn't even talk about the
16 heating, cooling and maintenance. I think we can do
17 a little bit better, and by the way, what are we even
18 talking about when the size of the atrium is larger
19 than the size of the public parkland they intend to
20 take. Thank you very much for your time. We really
21 appreciate you, City Council.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thanks very
23 much. Next. [bell]

24 FAITH STEINBERG: [off mic] [on mic] 43
25 years, and I will not be mincing words because I'm

1
2 very angry. Mr. Richard Gilberg, Board of Directors
3 of the-of-of the American Museum of Natural History
4 the so-called philanthropist more like a tax dodger
5 has hired a very well paid stooge to manipulate our
6 City Council Members, the public and ostensibly
7 progressive elected officials in the city and state
8 plus at least one social service NGO that I know of
9 working for the homeless and seniors thus having full
10 support from these latter institutions. He city and
11 state investment in this boondoggle, the-the Gilder
12 Center is at last one-at-at the cost of \$1 million--
13 \$100 million and growing as-to-to \$165 million of our
14 tax dollars without ever asking the public. Now, I'm
15 concerned about housing in the city. So NYCHA, New
16 York State and New York City funded housing received
17 \$3.6 million or there about for the years 2016 to
18 2020 and it's essential to mention 60,000 and
19 counting homeless including families with children.
20 It's disgraceful. This claim is that the museum has
21 in storage artifacts. Sometimes I hear \$37,000 and
22 sometimes \$37 million. They haven't gotten their
23 stories straight, and these art-artifacts with
24 research will cure the world of all its illnesses,
25 and if you got-if you believe that, I have a really

1
2 good bridge to sell you. The Economist Center is
3 scheduled to be named for the Richard Gilder Center
4 who is a Reaganite a member of the Right Wing Think
5 Tank, Manhattan Institute that in this day and age of
6 climate change is, of course, denied. The center
7 will be an anarchy guzzling massive building with not
8 a solar panel in sight, and will have a school for
9 children and labs for scientists granting PhDs.
10 First, classroom education and degrees is not the
11 mission of a museum. The museum is so [bell] is one
12 huge leaning facility that has many beautiful
13 exhibits. I just want to read one more thing.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

15 JUDITH STEINBERG: This project because
16 it is in the historic district must apply-be approved
17 by the Parks Department, the Land-Landmarks
18 Preservation Commission, the EPA, the Community Board
19 and yet before these approvals were met with, it was
20 touted as a done deal. Sounds pretty fishy to me,
21 and there's a president-present president and the
22 vocabulary is kind of the same. The Art of the Deal
23 he wrote. Thank you.

24

25

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I wasn't sure
which president you were referring to, but that made
it clear. The next--the last on this panel. Yes.

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: [off mic]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, you need
your--

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: [off mic]

FEMALE SPEAKER: There it is.

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: It's red.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Okay, there you go.

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: Okay, my--my name is
still Judith Kalamandre. I am staggered by the
amounts of money that the Museum already owns that as
you correctly point out is going to be even more. Is
money going to the American Museum of Natural History
request then going to be paying off debt service for
that long. The other cultural, small cultural groups
we heard described their mission are so impressive.
They're so useful, they're so needed. They're here.
Over here is the fat cat looking down at those little
mice institutions. Picture in your mind the size of
the American Museum of Natural History. Can we
believe they can't find space in there already?
Maybe with a different architect. Maybe by walking

1 those halls, which don't need to be expanded. This—I
2 have attended already I would say four public
3 meetings on the purpose of the expansion. In talking
4 about the visitor experience, which seems to me a
5 larger—seems to mean a larger gift shop, more
6 bathrooms, maybe better signage. I mean what—where
7 does science come into this? The museum has a vast
8 bus. Maybe they call it a van where they put their
9 exhibitions into and drive them to other places. I
10 found this out when I admired the horse exhibition a
11 few years ago, which I felt was so fantastic, and I
12 was told no it wouldn't just be this event. It's
13 something that goes into that van, and we bring it to
14 other places. You know, do we have to build a wall
15 around the trees in the park outside because that's
16 what that funny looking Guggenheim like addition
17 looks like. Out of place and out of context. I live
18 on the block. I live right there, and I am in the
19 museum I would say three times a week. I appreciate
20 it. It's appreciated it New York. It doesn't need
21 more [bell] money taken from all these other places,
22 and burdening us, the taxpayers with further debt.
23 Thank you.

24
25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [coughs]

1

2

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: [off mic]

3

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

4

5

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: There is a plaque in
the museum's entries that Monsanto, the great

6

chemical company the poisoner of people and soil, and

7

I'm wondering what-what kind of quid pro quo will be

8

going on in the teaching effort.

9

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay. First I

10

think I'm going to allow Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal

11

to say a few words. Obviously, this is her-her area,

12

and with great service to our city, I would like to

13

ask Helen Rosenthal to say a few words.

14

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thanks so

15

much, Chair and thank you for all of your dedication

16

to our cultural institutions and to our libraries. A

17

great rally today, and I really just wanted to thank

18

my resident-the residents from District 6, which I'm

19

a Council Member for, for coming today. You guys

20

have been dedicated and coming to the meetings and

21

speaking up about your concerns. There's no question

22

that, you know, we've all been concerned about

23

several things, much of which I wrote in a letter as

24

well, and there will be additional meetings for the

25

public to have their input. Over the year, I hope

1
2 you're going to come to those meetings as well, and
3 continue to raise your concerns. You know, I've
4 enjoyed meeting with I think almost all of you. I'm
5 not sure I've met with Sidney, but on this issue,
6 although we've met on other things, and thank you for
7 taking the time-the time to come to the City Council
8 today.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, very
10 much and it was certainly good to hear that you all
11 appreciate the museum, and in some cases using it
12 several times a week, which is terrific, and-and all
13 of your-your comments have been heard. So thank you
14 all very much. I believe that we may have one or two
15 or more people who would still like to say a few
16 words, Regina Carp and Camilla Kalamandre. Is that
17 so?

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Just the one.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Just one person. (sic)

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So Regina is
22 going to finish it off?

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, Regina.
25

1

2

REGINA CARP: [off mic] You are very

3

nice.

4

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So are you.

5

[background comments]

6

REGINA CARP: Should I go t here.

7

[background comments]

8

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You could if you

9

would like to.

10

REGINA CARP: I'd like to.

11

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You will not get

12

extra time, though. I'm just saying. No double

13

dipping. [background comments]

14

REGINA CARP: I'm ready.

15

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: I'm going to see if

16

your mic is on.

17

REGINA CARP: Yeah, go ahead.

18

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: If you're ready?

19

REGINA CARP: I'm ready. That's it?

20

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yep, I think so.

21

[background comments]

22

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Regina, are you

23

ready?

24

REGINA CARP: Yes, I am.

25

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great.

1
2 REGINA CARP: On the Upper West Side sits
3 a very small park, the Teddy Roosevelt Park. On a
4 quiet--mine is more poetic [laughs] On a quiet
5 morning in spring time, it seems wonderfully at odds
6 with the surrounding city. It pits-pit green sod
7 against city sharp angles, green life against brick
8 and asphalt, winding paths against the unbending
9 streets of New York's remorseless grid into which it
10 has been squeezes as if in a vice. On such a
11 favorable morning, Theodore Roosevelt Park remebles--
12 resembles nothing so much as a small defenseless
13 principality surrounded by a predatory empire hostile
14 to its spirits, covetous of its green field, yet
15 miraculously surviving nonetheless. A sort of a
16 municipal Lichtenstein. In the least poetic Goa
17 City, it makes the unexpected triumph of poetry over
18 practicality, and a certain vague sentimental
19 sentiment over the hard calculations of interest and
20 profit. Its mission is so singular, so beautiful and
21 gallant and that is why so many New Yorkers,
22 tourists, and especially Upper West Siders have taken
23 it to the hearts. Let us hope that this little
24 principality can survive in the center of the Empire
25 City. I think that's a fitting ending for this

1
2 meeting actually, and I have to say that, you know, I
3 feel it's—it's almost when I heard about this project
4 of the incursion into the parks, it was like a coup
5 de gras. I just felt overwhelmed. It was the last
6 bit of calm in the Upper West Side neighborhood where
7 building after building is—every—all Landmark
8 Commission approves everything that's to be built.
9 So I'm just hoping that this will not happen. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
12 much. At least one person is applauding you for that
13 testimony. [coughs] Thank you all for being here, for
14 sharing your thoughts on this important institution
15 and this important project. You have all been heard
16 and we—we're thrilled to have you here always. So
17 with that, I will thank your staff who have been here
18 for five hours with me as well during this important
19 day of testimony on Culture and Libraries, and with
20 it [gavel] we conclude this hearing on the
21 Preliminary Budget for Cultures and Libraries. Thank
22 you very much.

23

24

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

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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 April 6, 2017