

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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June 19, 2017  
Start: 10:12 a.m.  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: CARLOS MENCHACA  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Mathieu Eugene  
Daniel Dromm  
Peter A. Koo  
Rafael L. Espinal

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

Cesar Vargas, Undocumented Immigrant Attorney

Ivan Guzman, Immigrant & Business Owner

Janet Perez, Immigrant & Immigrant Advocate  
Mixteca Organization

Rodrigo Camarena, Board Chairman & Interim Executive  
Director, Mixteca Organization

Bitta Mostofi, Assistance Commissioner  
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Marlen Fernandez  
Jaime Institute of Mexican Studies, CUNY

Helen Drook, Senior Staff Attorney  
New York Legal Assistance Group, NYLAG

Marium Khawaja, Outreach Coordinator,  
NY Council on American-Islamic Relations, CAIR

Chin Cheung Wang, Advocate  
Womankind f/k/a NY Asian Women's Center

Jake La Ross, Chair of Immigration Task Force  
Manhattan Young Democrats

Lindsey Buler, BIA Accredited Representative  
Brooklyn Defender Services

Sandra Perez, Supervising Immigration Attorney  
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, NMIC

Josiana Gorman, Emerald Isle Immigration Center

2 [sound check, pause] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Buenos Dias. Good  
4 morning everyone. I'm Council Member Carlos  
5 Menchaca, Chair of the Immigration Committee here in  
6 the New York City Council. Today the committees—the  
7 Committee on Immigration will hold an oversight  
8 hearing entitled Supporting New York City's DREAMers  
9 and our DACA Youth. The committee will also hear  
10 Resolution No. 1484, a resolution calling upon—on the  
11 state and the federal government to extend  
12 protections for undocumented youth by passing the New  
13 York State DREAM Act of 2017 at the state level, as  
14 well as the bar removal of individuals who dream and  
15 grow our economy BRIDGE Act of 2017 at the federal  
16 level. As you know, this is a topic that is very  
17 near and dear to my heart and so many of you here  
18 today, and at home listening. I have been a champion  
19 for our undocumented youth and our young adults.  
20 DREAMers deserve the right to obtain the American  
21 Dream, and it is our job, our collective job as the  
22 city of New York to ensure that these hardworking  
23 youth and young adults are supported every day at  
24 every step. Before going any further, I'd like to  
25 recognize Council Members who are here today.

2 There's a few hearings. Council Members on the  
3 committee will be coming in and out, but we do have  
4 with us from Queens Council Member Peter Koo. Thank  
5 you for being here. The term DREAMER is used to  
6 describe young undocumented immigrants who were  
7 brought to the United States as children, and know  
8 this country, this state, this city to be their home.  
9 DREAMers assimilate to America—American schools and  
10 internalize American beliefs. Often they do not know  
11 that they are undocumented until they try to get a  
12 driver's license or cannot get a summer job because  
13 they lack a Social Security Number. In the U.S. every  
14 child is entitle to a free K through—K through 12  
15 public education regardless of race, nationality,  
16 native language, gender or immigration status, and is  
17 free to enjoy an education without the fear of  
18 unlawful discrimination. Unfortunately, federal law  
19 requires that applicants for financial aid be legal  
20 residents. So, undocumented students including DACA  
21 grantees are not eligible. As a result, roughly  
22 65,000 undocumented youth graduate from the U.S.—from  
23 U.S. high schools with little hope of attending  
24 colleges simply because they cannot afford it, and  
25 are ineligible to receive assistance with financing.

2 More than 4,500 undocumented students graduate from  
3 New York State high schools each year. Yet, only 5  
4 to 10% pursue a college degree due to tremendous  
5 financial obstacles that they face. Without access  
6 to federal tuition assistance, scholarships, grants  
7 or loans, these bright students, these bright stars  
8 our DREAMers are left in limbo with few opportunities  
9 for advancement. As new jobs increasingly demand  
10 advanced skillsets, it has never been more critical  
11 to ensure that all students have the opportunity to  
12 continue their education and gain that practical  
13 experience. At the state level, Assembly Member  
14 Francis Gamoya reintroduced the New York State DREAM  
15 Act in January of this year. It is the fifth year  
16 this legislation has been introduced now. More than  
17 ever, it's time to make sure that this becomes law.  
18 The New York State DREAM Act would increase access to  
19 various forms of financial assistance for eligible  
20 immigrant students and as children or undocumented  
21 immigrants including the Tuition Assistance Program,  
22 Higher Education Opportunity Program, Collegiate  
23 Science and Technology Entry Program, and Educational  
24 Opportunity Program. Additionally, it would create a  
25 fund, which would raise private dollars for

2 scholarships to college bound children of an  
3 immigrant parent. The New York State DREAM Act would  
4 further eliminate barriers for immigrant families to  
5 save for higher education expenses by allowing them  
6 to open a New York State 529 Family Tuition Account  
7 under the New York State College Tuition Savings  
8 Program. At the federal level, the BRIDGE Act was  
9 reintroduced by Democratic Senator Dick Durbin and  
10 Republican Senator Lindsey Graham earlier this year.  
11 The BRIDGE Act would allow DREAMers to apply for  
12 temporary deportation relief called Provisional  
13 Protected Presence and work authorization for a  
14 period of three years with the possibility of  
15 renewal. Youth eligible for this relief would  
16 include DACA grantees as well as DREAMers who meet  
17 DACA eligibility even if they never applied for DACA  
18 status. This inability to develop young talent and  
19 benefit from their ideas, their passion, their  
20 commitment to our local city-cities including New  
21 York, their strong work ethic, their energy. This is  
22 a huge loss for us and communities and our economy.  
23 Investing in DREAMers to help them attend college and  
24 reach their full potential is not only the right  
25 thing to do, it would also result in strong and—and

2 return of investment. Studies show that in New York  
3 workers with a college education pay \$3,900 more in  
4 state and local taxes compared to workers with a high  
5 school diploma. By investing in DREAMers, New York  
6 can continue to be one of the largest economies in  
7 the world as well as remain a leader in immigrant  
8 rights while reaping the benefits of increased  
9 economic productivity and increased tax revenues.  
10 This is the right thing to do. In other words, an  
11 investment in the higher education and professional  
12 success of our undocumented youth is an investment in  
13 New York State as a whole with our path to legal  
14 immigration status, or a meaningful opportunity to  
15 continue their education and professional  
16 development, DREAMers are forced to remain living in  
17 the shadows. You're going to hear from our youth  
18 today who will talk to you about how this has changed  
19 their lives. The passage of the New York DREAM Act  
20 would allow students who are in New York as residents  
21 regardless of their status to have equal access to  
22 various forms of financial aid so that they pursue  
23 that higher education. The BRIDGE Act would provide  
24 temporary deportation relief and work authorization  
25 for DREAMers, and in doing so, would fill the gap

2 created by Congressional inaction on comprehensive  
3 immigration reform, and I know we're all responding  
4 in so many ways especially the city of New York to  
5 what's happening in the federal government. And so,  
6 we're really happy you're here today to continue that  
7 resistance, but until that happens, we need to bring  
8 relief now. So, and if-if enacted, the benefits of  
9 these pieces of legislation would greatly improve the  
10 quality of life for undocumented youth and young  
11 adults residing in New York State, as well as the  
12 impact to their families. It is clear that an  
13 investment in New York's DREAMers is an investment in  
14 New York's future, and I'll say that again. An  
15 investment in the DREAMers is an investment in the  
16 future of our state and our city, and it is time to  
17 end the state and federal government's inaction when  
18 it comes to legislation that supports our immigrant  
19 youth, and we're so happy to be here talking about  
20 this issue. This is the first time that we've  
21 actually had this conversation in the Chambers, and  
22 so we're really happy to be focusing on this future,  
23 our youth. [Speaking Spanish] With that, we're going  
24 to start the public testimony, and first we're going  
25 to bring out a panel of four members of our



2 community, and so we can have with us today Cesar  
3 Vargas, Ivan Guzman, Rodriga-Rodrigo Camarena and  
4 Janet Perez. [coughing] You can-if you can sit right  
5 here. We'll begin with the first panel for  
6 testimony, and I want to thank all of you for being  
7 here, your courage, your inspiration is-is what we're  
8 here not only to talk about to better understand, and  
9 to really set the tone not just for the city and the  
10 state, but also the federal government, and we'll  
11 start Cesar. Thank you.

12 CESAR VARGAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
13 On February 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2016, I had the-one of the most  
14 amazing moments in my life. I was in a gilded  
15 courtroom and I was being sworn in as an attorney.  
16 My mom was to my right, my family was to the right,  
17 and-and the presiding judge who was giving the  
18 swearing ceremony testified to his own personal  
19 immigrant story. On that day, I became the first  
20 undocumented to be-openly be admitted in the great  
21 state of New York, and where that achievement was  
22 made possible not just by myself, but because of a  
23 great support system that really came along, my  
24 family, but also the nourishing educational  
25 environment that New York City provides, but New York

2 State provides. And the way I see this is if the  
3 states are laboratories of democracy, cities are the  
4 creative spark for democracy because it is through  
5 cities that we can have amazing initiatives like-like  
6 the IDNYC program that the Administration and the  
7 City Council were able to champion. DACA was  
8 significant at the fair level, but it is through the  
9 City Council that we were able to push for  
10 scholarships to ensure that DREAMers can obtain  
11 quality and reliable guidance counselors when it  
12 comes to information of how to go to college. We are  
13 seeing forums where the city has allowed many young  
14 people to pursue their dreams in-in education, in  
15 medicine. New York City was able to lead on opening  
16 almost 100-almost 157 professions that includes not  
17 just attorneys but nursing, medicine, you name it,  
18 and I do believe that-I hope that I am not the last,  
19 and I hope there are plenty more that will be able to  
20 be the first in many and especially in their  
21 families. As someone who's practicing law, we have  
22 seen the creativeness as well as the revenue that  
23 comes from many DREAMers who are working. I can tell  
24 you I saw my tax bill, and it wasn't-it wasn't fun,  
25 but I am glad that I am contributing to the country I

2 call home to ensure that we all are contributing to  
3 clean parks. To ensure that we are contributing to  
4 roads that—that there's no potholes, but for me it is  
5 the city that I call home. It's the city that I am  
6 contributing, and as an attorney to ensure that we  
7 are preserving the rights for each person regardless  
8 of immigration status because if there is anything  
9 that my mom has told me is that the American Dream is  
10 not about a fancy car or a fancy office. It is about  
11 doing your part to ensure that the doors of  
12 opportunity are open for everyone regardless of  
13 immigration status, regardless of religion, sexual  
14 orientation or gender and on. So, for me, this is  
15 exactly why the conversation of opening the door for  
16 DREAMers in New York City, but ensuring that we as  
17 cities can take the lead on ensuring that the federal  
18 government can have a role model here in New York  
19 City to follow. Congressional gridlock is stalling  
20 democracy, stalling progress, but I know in New York  
21 City we can open the doors for DREAMers who are  
22 afraid, for DREAMers who want to be able to pursue  
23 and education, but think it's not possible. I am a  
24 testament of New York City creating an environment  
25 that made this possible, and I think we were able to—

2 we were—we are going to be able to do this again for  
3 many, many young people, American kids regardless of  
4 where they were born, and so thank you, Mr. Chairman  
5 for giving me the opportunity to testify, and we hope  
6 that through your leadership, and the leadership of  
7 the Administration we can continue to lead New York  
8 and around the country. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, and we  
10 are also proud of your work today, and your  
11 testimony. Thank you.

12 IVAN GUZMAN: Good morning, everyone and  
13 good morning, Mr. Chair. My name is Ivan Guzman, and  
14 I was born in Mexico City and brought to the U.S.  
15 when I was 15. I was able to pursue a bachelor's  
16 degree in political science and economics, and I  
17 strongly believe that immigration is a—is a part of  
18 the country that cannot be forgotten, but also  
19 something that we must overcome all of us together  
20 here and all across the country. I believe that  
21 DREAMers are an engine in the progress and an engine  
22 in economic progress that cannot be stopped, and  
23 shouldn't be stopped by gridlock in Washington, D.C.  
24 and also here in New York. I believe that DREAMers  
25 are making progress, and I also believe that DREAMers

2 by pursuing higher education are contributing to this  
3 city, and also to the economic growth of the U.S. I  
4 believe that Mr. Menchaca's leadership is helping us  
5 a great deal in achieving this kind of progress, but  
6 I also believe that we can always do more when it  
7 comes to giving more opportunities to young people to  
8 pursue higher education and to contributed to the  
9 country that as current—as Cesar Vargas says before,  
10 we call it home, and the opportunities are limitless.  
11 I believe that we can always achieve more if we get  
12 higher education, and if we get the opportunity to  
13 get scholarships, get grants, get student loans that  
14 are not open to DACAs or DREAMers since we don't have  
15 a "legal status", quote/unquote. I think that by  
16 allowing DREAMers to pursue higher education and get  
17 all those kind of benefits, the engine of economic  
18 progress in the U.S. and all across the 50 states can  
19 always continue by creating more jobs, creating more  
20 revenue. Taxes are going to be paid, driver's  
21 license are going to be obtained, cars are going to  
22 be bought—buy or bought, and also people can buy  
23 houses and invest in businesses. As myself, I  
24 actually opened a business about a year ago. I  
25 opened a restaurant in the Upper East Side, and we

2 are hiring people. We are creating jobs, and also  
3 tax revenue for the city Thank you for this  
4 opportunity, and I hope that I can come back and  
5 testify here again. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ESPINAL: And we will be  
7 back. [laughs] Thank you, Ivan.

8 JANET PEREZ: [off mic] Hi, I'm-- [on  
9 mic] Hi. Hi, my name is Janet Perez. I'm here with  
10 Mixteca Organization staff team, and also came to  
11 talk about my experience organizing. So, I am  
12 undocumented. I was brought here when I was a baby  
13 basically. I grew here. All my entire life is  
14 living in New York City, and I am—I'm speaking on  
15 behalf I guess, on my college experience. So, it  
16 breaks my heart that seven years ago our federal  
17 legislator fellow—failed us with the failure of the  
18 Federal DREAM Act. I remember watching closely with  
19 my family in the living room as the count went by.  
20 By that time seven years ago I had already built a  
21 relationship with other fellow undocumented youth who  
22 fearlessly and in a brave manner claimed that they  
23 were undocumented, unafraid and unapologetic.  
24 Despite the anti-immigrant rhetoric and despite our  
25 apparent fears, we fearlessly pushed for our rights

2 to be recognized in a country that didn't want to.

3 So, I am forever grateful for spaces like the New

4 York State Youth Leadership Council where we—where

5 they centered the voices of undocumented youth, and

6 whose leadership saw no limit in the agency of

7 undocumented youth and their organizing. So, with

8 the federal—federal—with the failure of the Federal

9 DREAM Act, a year later we created a bill, which I

10 said a part—this is also a part of that where the New

11 York DREAM Act was created in a way that met our

12 needs. And at that time they called us crazy. They

13 called us—you guys are never going to get this

14 passed. You guys are asking for too much, but even

15 though years later we are still organizing, we are

16 still asking for this New York DREAM Act, we have

17 made a lot of groundwork and progressive work

18 throughout the state. So, with that said, as a past

19 college student, I know the struggle of paying for

20 tuition, and on top of that, since DACA was enacted,

21 we not only have to worry about tuition expenses,

22 obviously transportation expenses, but on top of

23 that, every year and a half we have to worry about

24 our DACA renewal fees, which right now is \$500, and

25 on top of added with all of that cost, it is making

2 it harder for undocumented students with no form of  
3 tuition assistance to get through college or to even  
4 start. So, with that said, we need the fed—the New  
5 York DREAM Act to pass. It is not a political game  
6 for us. It is our lives that you guys, that we are  
7 dealing with, and if the federal—well, if the New  
8 York DREAM Act passes, it is going to help a lot of  
9 undocumented students who have no idea where to start  
10 or how to pay for college tuition. So, with that  
11 said, we do need our assess—we do need to pass the  
12 New York DREAM Act and stop playing games with our  
13 lives. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON ESPINAL: Thank you, Janet.

15 RODRIGO CAMARENA: Good morning, Chair  
16 Menchaca and Committee Member Koo. My name is  
17 Rodrigo Camarena and I have the honor of serving as  
18 Board Chairman and Interim Executive Director of the  
19 Mixteca Organization. I'm here with my colleague  
20 Janet Perez who leads in Mixteca's immigrant advocacy  
21 efforts. Mixteca for 17 years has been a place of  
22 refuge and empowerment for thousands of newly arrived  
23 New Yorkers. In 2006, Mixteca helped over 5,000  
24 individuals access critical life saving information  
25 and resource from delivering Spanish language



2 preventative health education to domestic violence  
3 prevention, services connected undocumented youth to  
4 legal services and educational opportunities.

5 Mixteca works to bring vital information it releases  
6 to community members afraid or untrusting of

7 traditional social service providers. For over six  
8 years the New York DREAM Act has been a priority for

9 New York's undocumented families and in particular

10 undocumented youth, and it's impacted by the lack of  
11 access to the State Commission Assistance Program. I

12 am proud to be accompanied in this chamber by members  
13 of the New York State Youth Leadership Council, Janet

14 being a former member, who really worked to introduce  
15 this bill into 2011. It's on carrying out civil

16 disobedience as to walking to Albany for New York

17 City. Undocumented-undocumented immigrants have put

18 their bodies on the line time and time again for the

19 betterment of our communities. I've had the

20 privilege of seeing this work upfront and know that

21 we wouldn't be here discussing this topic had it not

22 been for undocumented youth advocating for it. While

23 I'm grateful for the opportunity to provide my

24 testimony with you today, it saddens me that, you

25 know, after six years of this-after its original

2 introduction the New York DREAM Act is still now law  
3 in our state. The Fiscal Policy Institute estimates  
4 that there are around 3,627 undocumented students  
5 that graduate from high schools in New York each  
6 year. While New York State is one of many states  
7 that offer in-state tuition to undocumented youth  
8 that graduate from our high schools, there is still  
9 an estimated 146,000 undoc youth and who are  
10 currently ineligible to receive financial aid under  
11 federal and state law. This is almost 150,000 people  
12 whose lives have been put on pause or deterred  
13 altogether. Due to a state law that recognizes their  
14 right to higher education by offering them in-state  
15 tuition, but stops short of providing them with all  
16 the public entitlements to make their dreams come  
17 true. At Mixteca we work with and employ  
18 undocumented youth and know the frustration and  
19 challenges they face in trying to make their higher  
20 education a reality. These students are just  
21 unfortunately from low-income households where they  
22 are the pride of their parents and siblings, and like  
23 all of us in the room, seeks higher education to  
24 better themselves. As you are aware, in 2015,  
25 Governor Cuomo came out in favor of the New York

2 DREAM Act actively campaigning as an immigrant  
3 advocate. The FY18 Budget does not reflect his  
4 supposed support for the New York DREAM Act while his  
5 Excelsior Scholarship or Free Tuition Program for the  
6 middle-class has very noticeably left undocumented  
7 students out. In passing this resolution, I hope  
8 that it will remind New Yorkers that our State  
9 Legislature and in particular our Governor and State  
10 Senate have offered weak protections to documented-  
11 undocumented youth, and have a poor track record of  
12 keeping it from existing New Yorkers. When it comes  
13 to federal policy, we have little hope for  
14 comprehensive reforms to our-to our current  
15 immigration laws. The federal government is hiding  
16 the scapegoating of immigrants and targeting both  
17 documented and undocumented immigrants with  
18 deportation including beneficiaries of President  
19 Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals  
20 Program. Undocumented individuals and mixed-status  
21 families are living in a state of untold fear that  
22 makes them increasingly vulnerable to exploitation,  
23 and prevents them from accessing critical services or  
24 seeking public support. At Mixteca we've heard  
25 stories of parents too afraid to take their children

2 to school or to regular check-ups, families on the  
3 verge of homelessness who fear accessing public  
4 shelters and often prefer to live on the streets, and  
5 even expectant mothers who are foregoing visits to  
6 their doctors for fear of reprisal. When it comes to  
7 the fears of undocumented youth and higher education,  
8 the required renewal continues—of DACA continues to  
9 place undocumented student's lives in limbo. While  
10 those that have been granted DACA, it's much easier  
11 to use paper cards. They—they have access to  
12 employment. DACA only offers temporary protections  
13 and could be rescinded at the President's whim. As  
14 you know, not all youth qualify for DACA and the  
15 application is often prohibit—prohibitively expensive  
16 for students. The recent announcement that the  
17 federal government of the DACA Program continuation  
18 is welcome development, but one that offers little  
19 confidence in meeting the long-term status of  
20 undocumented youth in this country. Give the  
21 fragility of DACA and the absence of a bi-partisan  
22 bill that would allow undocumented youth to obtain  
23 temporary legal status, and eventually apply for  
24 permanent status, we are sadly left with the BRIDGE  
25 Act as the only viable medium to an assurance for

2 undocumented youth in this country. As we know, the  
3 BRIDGE Act would not provide a pathway to U.S.  
4 citizenship. It would allow people to—who are  
5 eligible for or already have DACA to receive  
6 authorization and provisional protection for almost—  
7 for almost three years. While the BRIDGE Act's  
8 provisions are very similar to the DACA program, if  
9 the DACA—if the Bridge Act is enacted into law, it's  
10 provisions would remain in effect until Congress  
11 either changed them or repealed the law and it  
12 wouldn't be up to executive order. This would  
13 provide more protection for applicants for  
14 Provisional Protected Presence than applicants for or  
15 recipients of DACA currently have. I'd like to thank  
16 New York City Council Committee on Immigration for  
17 hosting this hearing and listening to our testimony.  
18 Immigrant New Yorkers are facing indescribable  
19 challenges and threats from the federal government.  
20 I urge our city and state to work together to provide  
21 creative protections for our city's undocumented  
22 residents, and my colleague and I are happy to answer  
23 the questions you might have.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you Rodrigo  
25 and—and really the entire panel for—for speaking

2 truth to power today. I think what I'm going to take  
3 here and really use throughout this hearing is this  
4 concept of engine of progress, economic progress,  
5 civic participation. Really the—the future of this  
6 country is going to be determined about how we  
7 support our undocumented youth and so I'm really  
8 happy that—that you told the testimony being the  
9 first to practice law, opening up a business,  
10 supporting and organizing our youth, and really  
11 building infrastructure, solid infrastructure in  
12 communities like through Mixteca in Sunset Park to  
13 really build that network. That's what we're talking  
14 about, and so the city will have its opportunities to  
15 help and support, but we need the state and federal  
16 government to respond. And so, you have the  
17 commitment not just from me, but the entire City  
18 Council, and you'll hear next from the Mayor's Office  
19 of Immigrant Affairs who has been a massive champion  
20 of energy with us in coordination to make sure that  
21 we bring those services. The only thing that I'll  
22 say is as we continue the conversation to move beyond  
23 education we really want to hear from DREAMers  
24 especially this month as we—we pull the final report  
25 together about other things the city has in its

2 capacity to do to support our DREAMers: Healthcare  
3 and I think Rodrigo kind of gave a more holistic  
4 approach, but healthcare. Participatory budgeting  
5 has been an opportunity for everyone to design how  
6 the city is investing in things like parks and  
7 schools and our streets, potholes to repave streets.  
8 These are all ways that everyone can kind of feel  
9 connected, and really step out of the shadows, and so  
10 we're hoping to hear—if there's anything that kind of  
11 pops up now that's a city focused opportunity, that  
12 we have the power to do, we want to hear it. We have  
13 MOIA here to hear it as well. So, if there's  
14 anything that kind of pops up that's strong and—and  
15 clear, I want to hear it, but let's bring all those  
16 that you are connected to, the families, our mixed  
17 status families and we want to hear from you how the  
18 city can do its part to support our youth. It's an  
19 open question. So, if anybody has anything to say on  
20 that front, if not, we will continue this  
21 conversation.

22 JANET PEREZ: I do [coughs] I do have  
23 one--

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]  
25 Okay.

2           JANET PEREZ: --at least within my year-  
3 my time being with MASA, which is a non-profit  
4 organization based in the Bronx, and even when the  
5 Mixteca, which is now--the Chairman now in Brooklyn,  
6 I've seen a lot--a lot of need for tenant rights  
7 organizing, support with legal aid for that. A lot  
8 of the help out there usually requires a member or  
9 someone from the family to be a U.S. citizen in order  
10 to get the support, and many of our families may not  
11 have that accessible to them. So, that's something  
12 that we really, really need. We need support at  
13 championing for housing rights and tenant rights  
14 especially also in private housing as well.

15           CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you and  
16 thank you for bringing up the kind of legal support  
17 in services for our families both in Housing Court  
18 and other courts like Immigration Court to make sure  
19 that we have the resources, the right resources to  
20 allow families to defend themselves in--in eviction in  
21 housing eviction.

22           CESAR VARGAS: It's on. Councilman  
23 Menchaca and Councilman Koo, especially coming from  
24 Staten Island it's a very different borough than any  
25 other borough in New York City, and it was a great



2 point of touching on healthcare. Staten Island is  
3 one of the only boroughs who does not have a public  
4 hospital and, you know, we have—like our—the  
5 immigrant community on Staten Island is very—you  
6 know, it's—when it comes to healthcare, it's—it's  
7 people are very reluctant not only within this  
8 climate of fear with the Administration of people  
9 being afraid of going to the hospital or court  
10 houses, but the fact that there is only private  
11 hospitals and, you know, we have one—we had one  
12 instance in which one of the families that one of the  
13 brothers was in a coma after an incident, and one of  
14 the workers pretty much threatened that if they don't  
15 get their—if they—if they don't—if they can't provide  
16 insurance that they might report this to immigration.  
17 So, we saw that those chances that, you know, even  
18 DREAMers when they go to a regular check-up, you  
19 know, the emergency room sometimes is just the only  
20 way for—for people to obtain some type of healthcare  
21 and education is incredibly important, but when we  
22 cannot focus in school if people are not healthy or  
23 people are sick. So, definitely within the context  
24 of healthcare, and a public hospital specifically on  
25 Staten Island. It's a very different borough, and we

2 hope that that attention can come the administration  
3 specifically when it comes to healthcare for the  
4 immigrant community on Staten Island.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Well, thank you  
6 for that, and thank you to the panel, and I'll be  
7 calling the second panel now, and again, thank you so  
8 much. Let's keep the conversation going especially  
9 this month as we build the final report. If anything  
10 else comes out, give that over to us. Thank you so  
11 much for being here today.

12 RODRIGO CAMARENA: Thank you, Chairman.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Our next panel we  
14 have the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Ms.  
15 Bitta--Ms. Mostofi. Sorry. Thank you so much for  
16 being here today and is there anybody else? [pause]  
17 [coughing]

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Good  
19 morning. Good morning everyone.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Good morning.  
21 Thank you so much.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Thank  
23 you. Thank you, Chair Menchaca, Council Member Koo  
24 and members of the Committee on Immigration. My name  
25 is Bitta Mostofi. I'm the Assistance Commissioner of

2 the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. My  
3 testimony today will provide an overview of the work  
4 MOIA has done under the leadership of Mayor de Blasio  
5 to support immigrant New Yorkers and in particular  
6 DREAMers, those who have received or are eligible to  
7 receive immigration relief through the Deferred Action  
8 for Childhood Arrivals program. Before I begin, I  
9 should recognize the incredible partners who have  
10 helped to make this work possible. Our colleges  
11 across the Administration, community organizations  
12 and the Council, who have been critical partners in  
13 our work to support immigrant youth. Just last week  
14 we celebrated the fifth anniversary of President  
15 Obama's 2012 announcement that immigration relief  
16 would be available to immigrant youth across the  
17 country—country through DACA. DACA was designed to  
18 provide temporary protection from deportation.  
19 Access to a work authorization and Social Security  
20 Number for young immigrants who came to the United  
21 States as children and want to contribute to their  
22 communities. DACA requires that applicants are in  
23 school, have graduated from high school or served in  
24 the Armed Forces, and meet other eligibility rules.  
25 The local impact of this program has been tremendous.

2 In New York City alone we estimate that there are  
3 over 30,000 DACA recipients with an estimated 55,000  
4 more eligible. By receiving DACA immigrant youth  
5 have a greater opportunity to pursue educational and  
6 professional ambitions as well as to contributed to  
7 the economy of our city. DACA holder are teachers.  
8 They're lawyers, as we heard from so far and men and  
9 women in uniform. This temporary immigration relief  
10 has provided thousand with the opportunity to come  
11 out of the shadows, gain financial stability and  
12 contribute to our local and national economies  
13 through taxes and higher wages. Revoking DACA would  
14 mean a \$200 million loss in wages, and \$6 million  
15 loss in taxes in New York City alone. We will  
16 continue to call on the new administration in  
17 Washington D.C. to provide affirmative confirmation  
18 of DACA's continuation for the sake of our  
19 communities' economy and so many New York City  
20 residents who have benefitted from this truly life  
21 changing program. Today, I'll review the work of the  
22 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to support  
23 DREAMers and advocate for New York City's immigrant  
24 youth. MOIA has made connection to immigrant relief  
25 through DACA a priority through our programmatic

2 interagency and outreach and advocacy work. New York  
3 City is truly the ultimate city of immigrants, and  
4 that includes approximately the 85,000 DACA holders  
5 and DACA eligible youth I spoke of. The Mayor's  
6 Office recognizes that transformative impact even  
7 temporary protection from deportation and access to  
8 work authorization can have on a young person's life.  
9 We have this through a range of work to help New York  
10 City youth learn about and realize DACA's status. In  
11 June of 2014, MOIA proudly launched the first city  
12 advertising campaign in years geared towards  
13 immigrants, a DACA awareness campaign. I have one  
14 example of that right here for you to see. To ensure  
15 the greatest reach and impact, MOIA and our partners  
16 considered potential barriers facing DACA recipients  
17 lots of awareness of the program, access to  
18 information and legal support. In developing the  
19 campaign concept—content and in order to smartly  
20 target resources, MOIA analyzed data to identify  
21 current and DACA eligible populations, and held focus  
22 groups in collaboration with Make the Road New York  
23 and Asian-Americans for—for Equality. These  
24 conversations were incredibly valuable.  
25 Recommendations stemming from those focus groups

2 impacted the messaging, the design and the  
3 dissemination of the campaign. For example,  
4 language-language was informed by the feedback that  
5 we received resulting in our campaign using the term  
6 [Speaking Spanish] in Spanish in addition to DACA.  
7 This multi-pronged, multi-language campaign consisted  
8 of ads in subways and bus stops, community and ethnic  
9 newspapers, and radios as well as information cards  
10 across city agencies in schools and consulates and  
11 more. Ads in subways and in bus shelters delivered  
12 more than 340 million impressions over eight weeks,  
13 and ads in community and ethnic media including print  
14 and radio, reached hundreds of thousands of readers  
15 and listeners. What's more, during the life of the  
16 campaign, MOIA's DACA website at the time saw a 400%  
17 increase in visits. In 2016, building on this work  
18 in partnership with the New York State Health  
19 Foundation we launched a major public education  
20 campaign to connect DACA recipients and those  
21 eligible for DACA to Medicaid and other benefits. An  
22 example of that I also have to my left. This was the  
23 largest effort by any city across the country to  
24 highlight low-income DACA recipients' potential  
25 eligibility for benefits such as Medicaid and to

2 facilitate enrollment. Again, through information  
3 sessions conducted in collaboration with community  
4 based organizations we learned that many DACA  
5 recipients were unfamiliar with basic information  
6 about the Medicaid program and their potential  
7 eligibility for it. We learned that our target  
8 population would benefit from clear information about  
9 what health insurance was available. The campaign's  
10 visuals were designed to reflect the diversity of  
11 DACA eligible individuals from parents to workers to  
12 college students. The campaign also included three  
13 short video testimonials for social media the  
14 featured DREAMers expressing the ways DACA and  
15 Medicaid changed their lives. Additionally, MOIA has  
16 focused on outreach to DACA eligible New Yorkers and  
17 DACA recipients including through our DACA Plus Stop  
18 at Town Hall co-sponsored with the Hispanic  
19 Federation, Make the Road New York and Telemundo.  
20 This event was followed by a week long telethon  
21 geared towards answering color questions about DACA.  
22 Throughout the campaign, volunteers fielded over a  
23 thousand calls. MOIA regularly partners with our  
24 city agencies to expand our reach to immigrant youth  
25 and ensure we smartly leverage connection points with

2 New Yorkers to highlight available services and  
3 resources. To begin, our work with the Department of  
4 Education has been extensive. DOE's Pathways to  
5 Graduation Program has trained college and career  
6 staff on scholarship opportunities for DACA youth,  
7 and through the program has awarded 35 stipends for  
8 completed internship. The DREAMers with support from  
9 MOIA has also conducted ongoing classroom level  
10 outreach to inform students about legal service  
11 events and make in-house appointments including over  
12 137 free legal screenings for District 79 students  
13 wherein 67% of the students qualified for immigration  
14 relief. Application assistance for DACA and DACA  
15 renewal were also provided to students in District  
16 79. Through ActionNYC in partnership with Fordham  
17 Law, MOIA has also provided Know Your Rights  
18 workshops in schools for over a thousand students  
19 citywide. The program has worked with high need  
20 schools including community schools that serve as  
21 hubs for education and social services, international  
22 schools that have a foreign born population over 90%,  
23 and District 79 schools serving immigrant students  
24 age 17 to 21. Beyond our work to connect eligible  
25 New Yorkers to benefits through DACA, MOIA's outreach



2 efforts in support of the IDNYC program have included  
3 a particular focus on the young adult population  
4 including immigrant youth and their families. One  
5 month after the launch of the IDNYC program, the city  
6 opened a location at La Guardia Community College.  
7 The site was so successful that we stayed until  
8 December of 2016. During our time at La Guardia  
9 Community College our teams enrolled over 30,000 New  
10 Yorkers for their official ID. Additionally, through  
11 our ongoing partnership with the City University of  
12 New York, MOIA promoted student IDNYC enrollment by  
13 hosting a series of pop-up enrollment sites at  
14 college campuses including Brooklyn College, Hunter  
15 College, Borough of Manhattan Community College,  
16 Queens Borough Community College and Kingsborough  
17 College. Through these pop-ups, our teams enrolled  
18 nearly 3,000 students and staff. As part of this  
19 engagement, IDNYC brought together over 32 CUNY  
20 student government leaders from several campuses for  
21 an event at the MCC to join in promoting IDNYC to  
22 their fellow students. Partnerships have been key to  
23 IDNYC engagement. As I mentioned, working closely  
24 with the Department of Youth and Community  
25 Development, DYCD, and the Administration for

2 Children's Services, ACS, we have targeted outreach  
3 to youth through DYCD's Summer Youth Employment  
4 Program, the largest youth work--workforce initiative  
5 of its kind in the country, and through other  
6 community based school and youth programs.  
7 Specifically, IDNYC partnered with DYCD to deliver  
8 information to SYEP youth through multiple channels  
9 such as digital material at the program's orientation  
10 and at job placement sites. Through IDNYC we have  
11 also worked with DOE to engage with public school  
12 students and parents. DOE has been a consistent  
13 partner regularly issuing advice and information of  
14 information IDNYC to all staff and principals. Since  
15 the launch of the program, IDNYC has partnered with  
16 Pathways to Graduation to facilitate streamlined bulk  
17 enrollments for youth, and in September of 2016,  
18 IDNYC and DOE collaborated on a launch of an onsite  
19 series in local high schools. This series of pop-ups  
20 were cited at Fort Hamilton, Fiorella, La Guardia  
21 High School of Music and the Arts and Performing  
22 Arts, George Washington Educational Campus, Friends  
23 of Lewis High School, Fort Hamilton, Edward Murrow,  
24 Stuyvesant and more. Additionally, IDNYC sent home  
25 with all 1.1 million DOE students and all Universal

2 Pre-K schools, IDNYC informational materials to  
3 parents. IN the course of this work we've engaged  
4 over 100 DOE parent coordinators as well. Finally,  
5 when children in foster care have DACA or are found  
6 to have other kinds of immigration legal needs, ACS  
7 partners with immigration legal service providers  
8 such as the Door, Legal Aid, Sanctuary for Families  
9 and others for consultations and representation. The  
10 wide ranging work of the Mayor's Office, City  
11 agencies and our partners to connect immigrant youth  
12 to services would not be complete without cornerstone  
13 legal services program, ActionNYC. In 2015,  
14 heralding President Obama's 2014 Executive Actions on  
15 Immigration, Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Melissa  
16 Mark-Viverito announced the creation of ActionNYC.  
17 Representing the nation's largest investment by a  
18 municipality to prepare for executive action.  
19 ActionNYC is the first model of its size to connect  
20 outreach, community navigation and legal support. In  
21 further support of executive action, MOIA has helped  
22 lead Cities for Action, a national coalition over 150  
23 mayors and county leaders, an aggressive advocacy  
24 penning letters to the Supreme Court of the United  
25 States urging them to review the appeal for *Texas v.*

2 U.S. The coalition filed amicus briefs in support of  
3 President's Obama's executive actions on immigration  
4 on multiple occasions. In January of 2015 to the  
5 Supreme Court along side 120 mayors. On January 23<sup>rd</sup>  
6 of 2015 to the District Court alongside 33 mayors and  
7 in April 2015 to the Fifth Circuit alongside 73  
8 mayors. The coalition urged President Obama to take  
9 additional steps to support DACA recipients at the  
10 end of his administration year. While we were  
11 ultimately disappointed in the Supreme Court's  
12 decision on executive action, ActionNYC moved forward  
13 to ensure that immigrant New Yorkers including those  
14 who are DACA eligible and other immigrant youth have  
15 access to free based immigration legal help. In  
16 particular, ActionNYC began a strategic partnership  
17 with DOE to provide legal services directly in  
18 schools. Partnering with schools has allowed  
19 ActionNYC to reach students and parents in a safe and  
20 familiar setting. Since launch in March of 2016,  
21 ActionNYC has offered 86 legal clinics at over 25  
22 unique schools serving over 100 individuals.  
23 ActionNYC has also made 87 referrals for city and  
24 social services including IDNYC, healthcare  
25 enrollment and English language classes.

1 Approximately 3 out of 10 individuals screened were  
2 found to have an immigration benefit available. In  
3 addition, a preliminary analysis in April showed that  
4 at least 80% of those screened at schools have stated  
5 that it was the first time they were accessing free  
6 immigration legal services. In the face of the  
7 uncertainty around the future of DACA, of the DACA  
8 program and growing enforcement initiatives by the  
9 Federal Immigration Authorities, Mayor de Blasio has  
10 made a firm call to Washington, D.C. to affirm the  
11 program will be preserved for the 30,000 New Yorkers  
12 with DACA and the approximately 750,000 nationwide.  
13 Additionally in response to shit in immigration  
14 policy and enforcement at the national level,  
15 ActionNYC has pivoted its outreach model and has  
16 increased the scale of regular Know Your Rights  
17 forums. Organizers have participated in nearly 400  
18 community workshops since the election. In addition,  
19 as mentioned, ActionNYC in Schools has partnered  
20 Fordham Law to deliver nearly 100 Know Your Rights  
21 workshops in 33 schools from January though March of  
22 this year reaching 2,488 attendees. MOIA recently  
23 announced an expansion of ActionNYC and NYC Health  
24 and Hospitals facilities with the opening of three  
25

2 new sites in H&H facilities in Queens, Lower  
3 Manhattan and the Bronx. These sites will provide  
4 immigration legal services and facilitate connections  
5 to health insurance and healthcare for H&H patients  
6 and community members including DACA eligible youth.  
7 Further, MOIA has been in close conversations with  
8 private partners to serve as the citywide Know Your  
9 Rights coordinator ensuring effective and strategic  
10 and rights information and legal service referrals to  
11 immigrant communities in collaboration with community  
12 based organizations, city agencies, and legal service  
13 providers. We will continue to work with partners  
14 and our National Coalition, Cities for Action, to  
15 fight for the continuation of DACA, which has allowed  
16 the approximately 750,000 residents nationwide to  
17 come out of the shadows. Our coalition urges the  
18 president to explicitly connect to continuing the  
19 program and building on its successes. We recognize  
20 that despite recent indications from the federal  
21 government that DACA will continue, but this is not  
22 enough. We will continue to monitor federal policy  
23 changes and ensure that the immigrant communities  
24 that we are here to serve, our colleagues and our  
25 partners have trusted and reliable information. We

2 continue our call to the administration to give  
3 DREAMers the peace of mind that they deserve and to  
4 commit to protecting these young people through DACA  
5 and by supporting legislation to provide them with  
6 permanent relief. We look forward to continuing this  
7 conversation with the Council in the coming weeks,  
8 and working with the Council and agency partners,  
9 advocates and others to do this important work. I  
10 thank you for the opportunity to testify about this.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you and the  
12 first thing I want to say, Assistant Commissioner, is  
13 thank you. MOIA has been a—a great partner to the  
14 New York City Council, and—and I think what I want to  
15 do is really focus on some areas that can help us  
16 understand how to continue serving the ever dynamic  
17 nature of the—not only the federal government but  
18 also the population itself. I also want to welcome  
19 all the young people that just walked in. You are  
20 here at a New York City Council hearing on the real  
21 impact that education has to our DREAMers, our  
22 undocumented youth, and I know that our—our youth in  
23 our—in our schools know friends and neighborhood who  
24 are undocumented and so you're here listening—  
25 listening to the City Council and the Administration

2 talk—and advocate and local—local organizers figure  
3 out how we can actually push this opportunity to get  
4 more education to our youth who are the future. And  
5 so, the first thing I want to say is or ask kind of  
6 very specifically about DREAMers and how you're  
7 really targeting. A lot of your—a lot of your  
8 testimony really spoke to the—the kind of grander  
9 vision of integration ActionNYC has had for families,  
10 mixed status families. And so, we also know that the  
11 DACA population has also changed the first kind of  
12 big push came—it came to us in some ways. I thing  
13 we've—we've been talking a lot about it, and then  
14 now—now it gets harder. There are—there are folks  
15 that will—will require a very different strategy.  
16 You have really outlined incredible work that you are  
17 doing, going to institutions, bringing pop-ups to  
18 schools of all different kinds, community into  
19 communities through cultural centers. So, tell me a  
20 little bit about how ActionNYC is going to focus on  
21 the harder to reach DREAMers population?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Uh-huh.

23 Thank you for that question. I think one of the  
24 things that we as I said have noticed and in this  
25 moment the need to get information sort of in—in the



2 immediate into people's hands. This is a time of  
3 increased fear, increased uncertainty given what's  
4 happening at the federal level and increased  
5 enforcement, and so while we have all-always started  
6 with outreach as a component of the ActionNYC model,  
7 we have sort of expanded what those organizers are  
8 able to do. In particular their ability to do Know  
9 Your Rights workshops to harder to reach communities  
10 as you mentioned, and-and think proactively about how  
11 to really get to people where they're at, provide  
12 them with immediate information that they might need  
13 on what their rights are and how they might respond  
14 in a challenging circumstance that immediately  
15 trusted referral to an immigration legal service  
16 provider. So, we are thrilled to currently have a  
17 number of organizations that we fund to do that work.  
18 We also work with them through MOIA's outreach work  
19 to think about where we need to be and how we need to  
20 be doing that work, and we-we welcome sort of  
21 conversations about where there might gaps, but we  
22 have not--hits, and we need to be kind of smarter and  
23 more strategic, but we often rely also on the  
24 expertise of the organizations that we fund. Outlets  
25 (sic) DIY is one of them. They work very closely

2 with our ActionNYC in Schools program. That's  
3 because they truly bring that expertise of having  
4 young DACA youth in their own leadership and  
5 membership and kind of can think about how we're-  
6 we're effectively targeting folks.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And-and maybe one-  
8 one kind of further follow-up actually that goes  
9 further into that strategy, are you working-so you're  
10 working with CUNY in a very real way. Are you  
11 working with any of the studies institutes or Puerto  
12 Rican, Dominican, Haitian, Mexican studies program to  
13 really kind of think about because they-they-they hit  
14 everybody. They don't just hit their kind of  
15 particular--

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --name of the  
18 studies program. They're-they're hitting so many  
19 different students.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: That's  
21 right. We have worked with the Dominican Studies  
22 Institute on this very question, a power point of  
23 reaching people in the right way. We have also most  
24 kind of directly worked. I'm going to mess up the  
25 name because I don't recall off the top of my head,

2 but the--the--the kind of DACA DREAMers program that  
3 CUNY has and runs. So, we've worked with them on  
4 doing specific events where we're actually bringing  
5 in these that are part of that programming or that  
6 are DACA students or DACA eligible students from the  
7 university and also we've done larger forums. One  
8 that we did actually with the Council kind of  
9 immediately after the IDNYC launch of the La Guardia.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I think you're  
11 going to hear some testimony today that will kind of  
12 open up new opportunities in BRIDES with some--some  
13 more studies--

14 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
15 [interposing] Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --programs that are  
17 engaging students directly that might offer that--

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
19 [interposing] Great.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --that path to  
21 ActionNYC. How many DACA applications has ActionNYC  
22 filed to date?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: It's a  
24 great question and I'm prepared for it. Give me a  
25 second.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] And--  
3 and also renewals. So both kind of the applications  
4 and renewals in total.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes, for  
6 sure. Give me one second. Let me make sure I don't  
7 get the numbers wrong. I have it for you.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: You got it.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Here we  
10 do. No. Can we--can we come back to that. Let me  
11 make sure I get the numbers for you accurately. I do  
12 have them. Oh, here we go. Never mind. I have a  
13 helpful assistant to direct me to the numbers. So,  
14 new DACA applicants last year 398 were identified  
15 eligible, and then renewals to the--

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Let me just get  
17 that right, 398--

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Uh-huh.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --were--were  
20 eligible through the multiple screenings.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: That  
22 were new DACA applicants, and then renewal is 267,  
23 and that is for the work that was done at our CBOs  
24 and then in schools nine new applicants and nine  
25 renewals.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And quality the-  
3 the last set, Data 99. This--this is from you--from  
4 what again?

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: So, the  
6 first numbers were what our CBO partners have done,  
7 and then the second numbers were what our school  
8 partners have done.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: School partners.  
10 That's--you're--you're--that's the CUNY, the CUNY  
11 partners, the school?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: No. So,  
13 the school partnership is with Catholic Charities.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, thank you  
15 for clarifying that.

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Sure.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And DACA or  
18 actually ActionNYC has an adult education initiative  
19 through DACA, and this is our partnership with the  
20 City Council. What's happening--what's the future of  
21 that in this next budget, and--and--and has it been  
22 terminated?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah,  
24 so, you know, at the outset with this program again,  
25 sort with the initiation thinking behind ActionNYC we

2 were responding to executive action. When that  
3 executive action did not go through, we had to look  
4 at sort of the structure of the programming and  
5 worked with partners to—to try to anticipate what  
6 would be the best use of the funding. We pivoted the  
7 DACA education funding based on information we were  
8 receiving from legal service providers, community  
9 partners on what would be the most useful in that  
10 moment to create broader resources for education  
11 funding include ESOL classes, citizenship preparation  
12 classes, et cetera. So, the referrals for DACA  
13 eligible individuals were still there. They're still  
14 able to make the referrals to the funders, but it was  
15 broader, more flexible programming on the education  
16 front. Going into this fiscal year, ActionNYC has  
17 consistently seen a tremendous demand for legal  
18 services. What we've witnessed in the immediate  
19 aftermath of the elections in January, February and  
20 March was a nearly 100% increase in calls to our  
21 hotline, and just representation of an incredible  
22 need. Based on that, we've made the decision to take  
23 the initial course of funding that was for one year  
24 geared toward the education component, and pivot it  
25 towards legal services. Really kind of going to the

2 heart of what has been the most identified need for  
3 that program. Referrals were actually quite low for  
4 DACA Ed, and we're thrilled kind of in partnership  
5 with the council and others that there is a now  
6 increased \$12 million renewed funding for Education,  
7 and so we believe that the referrals that were being  
8 made through ActionNYC are still going to be able to  
9 be made through that funding.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So, let me just  
11 get this right. So, the--the current fiscal as we  
12 move into the next fiscal year the--through analysis  
13 and decision making that you just presented in moving  
14 the Adult Education Initiative Funding toward legal  
15 services, and can you just remind us about what  
16 amount is?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes, I  
18 believe it's about \$1.2 million.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And that \$1.2  
20 million would go to--to serve the legal--the legal need  
21 for ActionNYC--

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
23 [interposing] Yes.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and is that  
3 going back to--into what pot? So, help us understand  
4 how--

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
6 [interposing] Sure, yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and--and actually  
8 a kind of accumulation of--of new funding streams for  
9 ActionNYC?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and that's going  
12 to come through what I'm assuming the CBO work--

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
14 [interposing] That's right.

15 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --that you're  
16 doing through your--

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
18 [interposing] That's right.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --your ActionNYC  
20 model.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: That's  
22 right, exactly. So, we've already seen and then a lot  
23 of people have done, too, as I mentioned, announced  
24 an expansion through hospitals through having a  
25 hospitals program. That will continue and what we



2 will be doing with this \$1.2 is as you correctly  
3 mentioned, it will go to the field for increased  
4 navigation and legal services, and so the way in  
5 which we do that will—will likely be through a city—  
6 the city's normal kind of procurement RFP process,  
7 but the intention is to increase the number of  
8 organizations that are receiving funding to do the  
9 work onsite through navigation and legal services.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: When can we get a  
11 report from—from MOIA on the kind of larger and now  
12 what we're hearing kind of the expanding nature of  
13 budget and kind of the moves for the budget that will  
14 kind of outline in full how ActionNYC will in this  
15 next fiscal year operate, and looking at kind of  
16 positive case outcomes from the legal side, the  
17 number of GBs obtained, workforce development, all  
18 the—all the different pieces, healthcare, all the  
19 different pieces that you're—you're connecting.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: We're  
21 happy to continue kind of setting up a conversation  
22 about that.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, and with the  
24 full—with the report? Okay. Great. Next is the  
25 Thrive NYC Program.

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Uh-huh.

3 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thrive NYC has  
4 been a kind of big—has had a big splash in the city  
5 of New York and really with a—every New Yorker should  
6 have access to mental health services.

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Uh-huh.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: How—how has  
9 Action—ActionNYC, MOIA used Thrive NYC to connect  
10 directly to our DACA DREAMers population?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah,  
12 it's so--so important. In this moment we're—there is  
13 as I said—have said before, but can't say enough  
14 really increased anxiety and concern given the  
15 uncertainty of these programs and increased  
16 enforcement. Thrive is important. For those who are  
17 unaware, [laughs] Thrive is free mental health  
18 services the city offers in the language of choice of  
19 individuals, and we have partnered with Thrive to  
20 make sure that people are receiving this information.  
21 One way we've done that is in partnership with the  
22 Council as well, we—we developed a one-pager that  
23 MOIA and all of the engagement that we do as well as  
24 our sister agencies use that includes all the  
25 resources that are available to New Yorkers

2 regardless of status, including access to emergency  
3 shelter, including thrive, including IDNYC including  
4 the Human Rights Commission and the ability to report  
5 where you've been discriminated because of your  
6 status. In the context of housing I wanted to make  
7 sure to say that based on what the previous panelists  
8 had had mentioned, and so in that we include the  
9 resources around Thrive, and that's a part of every  
10 single one of the presentations that has happened,  
11 and that I mentioned the 400 plus. Additionally,  
12 we've partnered with Thrive to do engagement. I can  
13 speak to some of it. We've done Know Your Rights  
14 forums together. We've distributed approximately  
15 10,000 pieces of literature to private—primarily  
16 immigrant communities. We participated in Days of  
17 Action together. One in February and another in  
18 March in immigrant communities and in partnership  
19 with community based organizations, and we've worked  
20 directly with communities to come to meetings and  
21 give presentations and things like that. So, we've  
22 done some amount of work through Thrive. We are  
23 absolutely interested in doing more, and as is the  
24 Thrive Team. So, we welcome kind of collaborations  
25 and thoughts on how to do that.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I think part of  
3 what we are trying to think about with—with Thrive  
4 NYC is—is how—how Thrive NYC is—is impacting our  
5 immigrant population--

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Uh-huh.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and how to—how  
8 to measure that--

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
10 [interposing] Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --in some way, and  
12 clearly we're in a situation right now where—where we  
13 want to protect everyone, but we also want to  
14 understand and measure our success.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So how—how are you  
17 grappling with that? Not just with Thrive NYC, but  
18 big—bigger thinking on multiple agency impacts our  
19 adult literacy case, adult literacy work, legal  
20 cases, et cetera? So, I'm going to—but specifically  
21 on Thrive NYC how—how are we measuring our success  
22 and impact to—to show that we're actually--

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --impacting a—a  
25 community?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: It  
3 would—it would probably be premature of me to speak  
4 fully for Thrive on that question. I'm sure I can  
5 connect you with people who have more information on  
6 the impact question, but we've been in conversations  
7 with Thrive as they're sort of looking at kind of  
8 callers that are coming in. One thing that they've  
9 done effectively is—is create a multi-language ad  
10 campaign to really ensure and encourage people who  
11 don't speak English that this is the service that's  
12 available to them. I'm certain that that's one of  
13 the ways that they're looking at this, but we, you  
14 know, I'm—I'm sure there's more that we can talk  
15 about in that regard.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I'm curious about  
17 whether or not people can actually call anonymously,  
18 and can--? They can?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, great, and--

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:

22 [interposing] And I—I would reiterate that that's  
23 true for the Human Rights Commission as well, which  
24 is extremely important for people to know.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Good. Thank you,  
3 and that's something I think we can all get word out  
4 about--about that--that kind of safety--a safety net but  
5 --

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --allows us to  
8 kind of continue to build relationships with our--with  
9 our community if they can do that.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: And  
11 something that's--sorry.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Sure.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: [laughs]  
14 I keep adding.

15 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Please do.

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
17 Something that's new to folks that we want to make  
18 sure is out there is that we finally have through  
19 this administration as early as last year the ability  
20 for folks to call 311 and report if they're not  
21 receiving services in their languages of choice. And  
22 so we really want to encourage people if you're  
23 trying to, you know, access the Commission or receive  
24 public benefits or H&H or Thrive and you're not  
25 getting the service that you rightly deserve in the

2 language of your preference, then we would like you  
3 to call 311 and report that so that we can follow up  
4 accordingly.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you and I  
6 think I can—we can—we can work together to send that  
7 out to submit that. So, next advocacy for some—the  
8 resolution that we have in front of us.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Uh-huh.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: How has this  
11 Administration really pushed the New York straight  
12 DREAM? What's the plan on the Mayor's side to push  
13 the DREAM Act really to—to push the—the BRIDGE Act  
14 and respond directly to both of those—those kind of  
15 on a state and federal level pursue the legislation?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: We  
17 absolutely support the DREAM Act. We have  
18 consistently and that has been an ongoing position  
19 that we've had with the state and with the Assembly.  
20 We know that it passed in the Assembly the session,  
21 but that it was stalled in the Senate, and so, you  
22 know, we continue to support and work towards the  
23 passage of the DREAM Act at the state level. At the  
24 federal level we urge Congress to pass the Federal  
25 DREAM Act to make a permanent protection for DACA

2 use. You know, we recognize that in the moment that  
3 we're in the BRIDGE Act is the one that is before  
4 Congress and we support the importance of having the  
5 discretion to leave the Executive branch, but have it  
6 be something that Congress has recognized that DACA  
7 youth are eligible for and should have relief, but we  
8 further and continue to encourage the passage of the  
9 DREAM Act for permanent relief.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Can you give us a  
11 better sense about how you're doing it so we get--we  
12 get the frame of--

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
14 [interposing] Yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --of the support  
16 for the reasons.

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: How--how is this  
19 Mayor using resources to pass--

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
21 [interposing] Yep.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --both of these  
23 pieces of legislation.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah, so  
25 as I mentioned previously through Cities for Action,



2 MOIA and the—and Mayor de Blasio were one of the key  
3 leaders in working with over 150 mayors nationally  
4 and county leaders, and part of that work is advocacy  
5 towards immigration reform, and some of the ways that  
6 we've previously done that through joint statements,  
7 pending letters, advocacy directly with the  
8 administration officials and amicus briefs continue  
9 to be some of the ways that that we explore that  
10 work, and so we—we have no interest in slowing that  
11 down, and continue to kind of put our efforts there  
12 and our focus and, DACA in particular is a—is a key  
13 priority for us on that.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And—and—and kind  
15 of a—a follow-up to that what other items is—is the  
16 Mayor and the Administration in whole supporting for  
17 our DREAMers or our undocumented youth? Any other  
18 advocacy that you're doing right now on a state and  
19 federal level that you can share with us that is  
20 beyond the resolution that's calling for the DREAM  
21 Act and BRIDGE Act? Are there any other pieces of  
22 legislation that you're pushing right now that you  
23 can let us know that—that you're working on.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah,  
25 not—not specifically that I can speak to that I'm

2 aware of. I think one think one thing that we, and  
3 this was reiterated by the previous panel that we're  
4 aware of, of course, is the ongoing sort of challenge  
5 of knowing what resources are available to folks for  
6 scholarships and for college tuition and things like  
7 that. That's one area that we're looking at and  
8 minimally being able to provide education on this  
9 front while advocacy is also happening.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And more  
11 specifically the last panel mentioned a few—a few  
12 other non-educational healthcare related hospital  
13 connected issues. I'm familiar with a case that was  
14 brought up in a previous panel about an undocumented  
15 youth worker who was in a coma, and was in a private  
16 institution, and that to go too further into the  
17 case, but I guess what I want to ask is how come—how  
18 is Action—what's the responsibility of ActionNYC to  
19 cases like that where—where an intervention of a city  
20 agency can come in and support the family through a  
21 situation like this where they're not getting the  
22 care at a—at a private institution. We heard a  
23 little bit about the—the kind of potential  
24 discrimination.

25 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: How can NY-  
3 ActionNYC come in and support that family and-and-and  
4 that person?

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: So, the  
6 first thing that I would say is, you know, New York  
7 City one thing that we have that's tremendous is  
8 Health and Hospitals, and Health and Hospitals does  
9 not ask immigration status. It does not matter what  
10 your status is to receive services. So, I highly  
11 encourage folks who have concerns about healthcare or  
12 health status to ensure that they know, rather that  
13 they can engage and receive services for Health and  
14 Hospitals. There are also tremendous federally  
15 qualified health centers that we have been working  
16 with on health services that have extremely  
17 reasonable sort of scales for individuals regardless  
18 of immigration status. And so, part of the work that  
19 we do on engagement across MOIA and our-and in  
20 partnership with Health and Hospitals is to reiterate  
21 that, right. To-to make sure that folks know that  
22 these services are available to them. In fact, we  
23 just completed a series of town halls in partnership  
24 with Health and Hospitals and also Health and  
25 Hospitals issued a letter reaffirming their

2 commitment to all New Yorkers regardless of status.

3 Status is neither asked for purposes of delivery of

4 service nor a qualifier. And so, we hope that people

5 are aware of that that they see that as a real option

6 for them where they don't have to have the fear, but

7 that clearly resulted in a tragic situation for

8 somebody, and that they're seeking those services. I

9 also wanted to respond briefly to the other question

10 around tenant harassment and to say that on the one

11 hand if you are harassed based on your status or

12 perceived status, we absolutely encourage you to call

13 the Human Rights Commission. That's an area of

14 protection under the local Human Rights Law, and we

15 will actively investigate it, and follow up with the

16 individual. The other thing is that this

17 Administration has a done a tremens—has made a

18 tremendous investment in the form of legal support

19 for individuals in Housing Court, and that support is

20 given to everyone regardless of status as well. So,

21 please if you have questions on that, come to—to me

22 and come our office and, too, with my colleagues at

23 DSS, and we're happy to make sure that you have that

24 information.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Is that something  
3 you're tracking as well as far as the city-city  
4 lawyers. They're going to help tenant eviction, and  
5 there's multiple issues with tenants, but is that  
6 something that you're—you're tracking as far as—as  
7 specific immigration status related requests?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: My—my  
9 colleagues Resident Rights Commission are, yes--

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: --in  
12 terms of their investigation in cases that come to  
13 them, and I would be amiss to say for certain that I  
14 know, but I can imagine that my colleagues [laughs]  
15 with DSSR as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Good.

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Good and we can—we  
19 can follow with the commission as well--

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --to make sure  
22 that we have a better sense about--

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yeah.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --about time--

25 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Right.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and whether or  
3 not more of this is happening. I can tell you from--  
4 from my experience the district this is happening  
5 more and more, and I think you're hearing--

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
7 [interposing] Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --from particular  
9 kind of districts that are experiencing massive  
10 change, dynamic changes around gentrification and  
11 other issues [cell phone ringing] but really using  
12 this as a way to push people out of their home--

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Right.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and so the  
15 Commission is going to be very, very important and  
16 really working in-in tandem with you--

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
18 [interposing] Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and for-with  
20 MOIA, ActionNYC and our City Council district offices  
21 to make sure that we--

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
23 [interposing] That's right.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --we really get  
3 the word that this--there is really fear of legal  
4 representation specifically.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: That's  
6 right.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I think that is it  
8 for us. Thank you for--for coming, and really thank  
9 you to--to--to your entire--entire agency, Assistant  
10 Commissioner Mostofi, but the work continues--

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and so we're  
13 hoping this summer we can really get to the bottom of  
14 some the lingering questions, get the word out and  
15 really just this next school year come out strong and  
16 make sure that people know about all the services  
17 that--that are out there.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Right.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And really get to  
20 those harder to reach DACA--DACA eligible--

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI:  
22 [interposing] Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --New Yorkers that  
24 have yet to hear the message.

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MOSTOFI: Yes,  
3 thank you. Thank you for the opportunity and for  
4 your work on this issue.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you so much.  
6 So, next we have the-- [pause] Great. Oh, and I  
7 just want to--you're going to leave just for the  
8 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs you're--you're  
9 leaving someone for the duration? Great. Thank you  
10 so much for being here. So, and I also want to say  
11 thank you to the young folks that were here. They  
12 were the Bronx Academy of Letters and Principal  
13 Brandon Cardet-Hernandez brought them, and so we want  
14 to say thank you for--for bringing in the young people  
15 to see the City Council in action, and our Committee  
16 on Immigration. So, next we're going to have Marlen  
17 Fernandez from Jaime Lucero Mexican Studies Institute  
18 at CUNY; Helen Drook from NYLAG; Jensen Wang from  
19 Womankind; and Marium Khawaja from the Council on  
20 American-Islamic Relations. This is the New York  
21 Chapter. We have you all come over here please, and  
22 sit at the desk. Thank you. [pause] And if we can  
23 start with Ms. Marlen Fernandez, please. Make  
24 [pause]--



2 MARLEN FERNANDEZ: Hello, good morning.

3 Thank you Council Member Carlos Menchaca for having  
4 us today, and for leading the Immigration Committee.

5 I'm here on behalf to the Jaime Institute of Mexican  
6 Studies at CUNY. The Jaime Institute of Mexican

7 Studies at CUNY is the first Mexican studies

8 institute on the east coast founded in 2012 preceding

9 a decade of work by the CUNY Mexican task force at

10 CUNY. Our objectives are to boost the enrollment of

11 Mexicans and Mexican-Americans at CUNY to retain them

12 and to ensure their graduation within CUNY. We're

13 also focused on research of Mexicans both here in the

14 United States and abroad, and are less—and the

15 fundamental part of the Institute is our commitment

16 to work with community based organizations that are

17 advocating for the rights of immigrants here in the

18 city and beyond, and today I'm here to talk about our

19 scholarship program. Our scholarship program is the

20 heart and soul of the institute. Many of our

21 students are undocumented and/or qualify for DACA.

22 I'm also—I'm a proud recipient of the scholarship

23 from 2012. I'm a proud graduated of the CUNY system

24 from Lehman College. Currently, I work for Jaime

25 Institute—Institute of Mexican Studies as the

2 Community Outreach Coordinator where we coordinate  
3 two hubs, one working out of Mid-Manhattan and the  
4 other one out of Sunset Park in Brooklyn where we  
5 provide our clients with information to connect them  
6 to the best education opportunity for them, and today  
7 I'm here representing the—our clients and also our  
8 scholarship with the bands who are, as I mentioned  
9 before completely undocumented some, and some who are  
10 recipients of DACA. I myself am a beneficiary of  
11 DACA, and I am here to testify upon how this has  
12 changed many of the city's scholarship opportunities.  
13 I'm also a founding member of the Lehman DREAM Team  
14 back when I was in college. It's the first student  
15 led club to advocate to advocate for the rights of  
16 undocumented youth in this nation, and I must remind  
17 the City Council members presents that in 2012 there  
18 was the Walk to Albany from New York City in which  
19 participants walked over 100 miles passing the New  
20 York DREAM Act. I was one of those participants. I  
21 still remember the blisters on my feet from those  
22 long miles of walking. We're gathered here five  
23 years later still discussing the importance of  
24 passing the New York DREAM Act. More than ever it's  
25 time to move forward with the proposed legislation,

2 and move away from the continuous discussion and no  
3 action. New York has indeed fallen behind in  
4 providing access to higher education for immigrant  
5 students. To all those who are here as  
6 representatives, I urge you to take the time to meet  
7 the youth who are here to make meaningful  
8 connections, to understand that this is a real issued  
9 that our city is facing. It time citizens understand  
10 the complexities of what it means to be an  
11 undocumented immigrant in the United States.

12 Undocumented students come from a diverse background.  
13 Many of them face a variety of barriers in addition  
14 to the immigration status such as being the first  
15 generation of students who attend college, low socio-  
16 economic status, poor access to adequate housing,  
17 lack of access to healthcare and the constant fear of  
18 deportation of themselves or loved ones. In the  
19 stories of these youth you will hear struggle, the  
20 anxiety and the fear that many of them had to  
21 overcome to reach their dream. Many who are still in  
22 pursuit of the American Dream regardless of the odds  
23 against them. Our scholarship program is living  
24 proof of the potential that undocumented students can  
25 reach when they are funded. More often than not,

2 these students through the adversity—adversity that  
3 have become—they have become the best at succeeding  
4 with very limited resources. Under these harsh  
5 circumstances they have been themselves forced to be  
6 creative, innovative, ambitious, analytical and when  
7 intense try to tackle many of the issues that we face  
8 today as a country, as a nation, as a city. Many of  
9 our scholarship recipients have gone onto to work for  
10 prestigious institutions and companies. They are all  
11 in one way or another leading change in our  
12 community. Every year we receive more applications  
13 than the previous. This year alone we received over  
14 200 applications. Due to funding, we're only able to  
15 grant 44. Most students who seek our scholarship are  
16 counting on it as the only means to pay for school,  
17 but what happens to those who are not fortunate  
18 enough to obtain a scholarship? These students are  
19 forced to decide between going to school and work.  
20 Scholarships are only able to help a small percentage  
21 of students. They are Band-Aid solutions to the  
22 problem. Having legislation in place would allow  
23 undocumented students to continue their educational  
24 paths just their U.S. one here. Furthermore, through  
25 my job as an outreach coordinator I have seen our

2 students struggle to manage work, school and family  
3 responsibilities even when having the scholarship. I  
4 have seen other students who are clients choosing  
5 between school and work. Often time the delaying the  
6 start of college taking breaks to save for the next  
7 semester. Often times never returning to finish  
8 their higher education. The most admirable students  
9 are those that continue to pursue a college degree  
10 and are currently in school who do not qualify for  
11 DACA. These are the students are even higher  
12 disadvantaged. They're even more vulnerable. We  
13 cannot continue to close the door to the better  
14 future. We cannot continue to be selective, and we  
15 cannot continue to push and advocate only for DACA  
16 students. We must advocate for all undocumented  
17 immigrants. We need stat and city legislation to  
18 close the grants. Students should not have to choose  
19 if they can afford to go to school. They cannot let  
20 this talent go to waste. Our city, our stage, our  
21 nation demands that we open the doors to higher  
22 education for all students. Education has always  
23 been seen as the great equalizer. Equal access  
24 givers everyone a chance to succeed. We hope that  
25 you will see the value in contributing to the funding

2 and protecting of undocumented students. At the  
3 Institute we see education as the key to socio-  
4 economic mobility. We see it as the leadership and  
5 the driving future of tomorrow. CUNY has often been  
6 referred to as the engine of upward mobility as the  
7 poor man's harbor. By supporting all students and  
8 all ages and of all abilities, the city is making an  
9 investment in the future of our great city, and in  
10 these United States of America. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Marlen.

12 Good morning, good afternoon. Thank you  
13 for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is  
14 Helen Dook, and I'm a Senior Staff Attorney at  
15 NYLAG, which stands for New York Legal Assistance  
16 Group. We're a non-profit law office that's  
17 dedicated to providing free legal services to low-  
18 income New Yorkers. NYLAG serves immigrant seniors,  
19 homebound families facing foreclosure, renters facing  
20 eviction. Low-income consumers those in need of  
21 government assistance, children in need of special  
22 education, domestic violence victims, persons with  
23 disabilities, patients with chronic illnesses, low  
24 wage workers, low-income members of LGBTQ, community  
25 Holocaust survivors, veterans as well as others in

2 need of free legal services. We support the  
3 resolution 1484, which calls on the State and federal  
4 government to extend protection for undocumented  
5 youth by passing then New York State DREAM Act of  
6 2017 as well as the BRIDGE Act of 2017 on the federal  
7 level, and we applaud the City Council for its  
8 continued work to protect the undocumented New  
9 Yorkers. We at NYLAG have been a long-time proponent  
10 of the DREAM Act and advocate it on behalf of—behalf  
11 of the DREAMers for many years. Since 2012, NYLAG  
12 helped over 2,000 young people to apply for DACA and  
13 renew their status. We have first hand knowledge of  
14 how beneficial this program has been for DACA  
15 recipients and their families. DACA status allows  
16 young people who were brought into the United States  
17 as children to move out of the shadows. With DACA's  
18 status undocumented people can get a Social Security  
19 Number and driver's license and get a job. Those  
20 will provide benefits. According to the number of  
21 studies, DACA recipients have significantly  
22 contributed to the economic growth of this country.  
23 As of today, hundreds of thousands of young  
24 undocumented New Yorkers are denied the opportunity  
25 to gain access to higher education. Without a

2 college degree, the students are far too old (sic)  
3 and forced into the shadows of poverty and desperate  
4 existence. The proposed resolution will give  
5 undocumented youth educational and economic  
6 opportunities that in turn will yield economic  
7 benefits for New York State. In the absence of  
8 comprehensive immigration reform and the uncertainty  
9 about the DACA's future—unfortunately it is still  
10 uncertain. NYLAG strong supports the City Council's  
11 call for Congress to pass the BRIDGE Act of 2017.  
12 This bill will enable almost one million undocumented  
13 youth to live and work in the United States without  
14 constant fear of deportation. We enthusiastically  
15 support Resolution 1484 and encourage the Council to  
16 pass it as soon as possible, and once again, I would  
17 like to thank the committee for holding this hearing  
18 today, and for the commitment to protecting New York  
19 City immigrants. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

21 MARIUM KHAWAJA: [Speaking Foreign  
22 Language] Good morning, everyone, and good days of  
23 peace. My name is Marium Khawaja, and I am the  
24 Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator for CAIR New York,  
25 that is the Council on American-Islamic Relations,



2 the New York Chapter, a leading Muslim civil rights  
3 organization. At CAIR New York we provide free legal  
4 services to the victims of hate crimes,  
5 discrimination and harassment and generally support  
6 people who are victims of—whose civil rights have  
7 been infringed upon. Today, we speak in speak in  
8 support of the resolution of Resolution 1484, which  
9 calls on Congress to enact the BRIDGE Act and on  
10 state lawmakers to pass the New York DREAM Act both  
11 at—both legislation which supports—which supports  
12 undocumented--undocumented people here in New York,  
13 and throughout the country. I will briefly address  
14 both of these and try to focus on the particular  
15 community we serve, which is Muslim community here in  
16 New York City. So, firstly we do believe the BRIDGE  
17 Act provides certain protections and despite its  
18 limitations, it is especially important now where the  
19 Trump Administration, as we've seen, has been  
20 arresting more undocumented--undocumented immigrants.  
21 The U.S. Immigration and Custom enforcement has  
22 doubled the amount of people that they've arrested  
23 this year compared to the same time period in 2016.  
24 Many of these people who were detained are like those  
25 that we heard today. They are law abiding Americans.

2 They're exceptional leaders in their community and  
3 under DACA they're predicted to grow our economy by  
4 \$230 billion over a ten-year period. It seems that  
5 our president has also heard this because this past  
6 Friday, I'm sure many of you know—I'm sorry. It  
7 appears that President Trump conceded to the  
8 importance of DACA, and has agreed to extend the  
9 program, but I want to be clear. This is about our  
10 president, and his word is not enough. New York's  
11 DREAMers need the BRIDGE Act and other acts to ensure  
12 that they're rightfully protected in going forward.  
13 Moving onto the DREAM Act, Council Member Menchaca  
14 and I have the same statistics, but I—I guess it  
15 bears repeating. Currently in New York City 400—  
16 4,500 undocumented immigrants who graduate from high  
17 school each year, of those 4,500 only 5 to 10% go  
18 onto college. Now this is problematic when we  
19 remember that by 2020, 65% of all U.S. jobs will  
20 require a minimum of a college education, and  
21 further, in New York college graduates on average—  
22 college graduates on average make \$57,000 more per  
23 year than high school graduates and this much higher  
24 than the national average, which is \$30,000. Now, the  
25 New York DREAM Act ensures that undocumented

2 immigrants do not remain excluded from these  
3 opportunities. For CAIR New York these laws are  
4 essential in supporting the community—the many  
5 undocumented Muslim New Yorkers who find their  
6 situation complicated by the extensive and targeted  
7 surveillance of the Muslim Community by law  
8 enforcement. As noted in *Ziglar v. Abbasi*, which is  
9 currently in the U.S. Supreme Court, over 700  
10 undocumented Muslim men were detained for months  
11 before they were deported back in I believe 2002 and  
12 2003, and with NCE, which is the National Security  
13 Entry and Exit Legislation System, a de facto Muslim  
14 registry at the time, we saw more than 60,000 men  
15 from Muslim majority nations detained and over 13,000  
16 deported. Now, someone whose father had to register  
17 with this—with NCE, I can attest to the fear these  
18 programs cause to particular communities. Further,  
19 despite the fact that Muslims make up 95% of the  
20 investigations for political and religious—political  
21 and religious investigations conducted by the NYPD.  
22 Surveillance is not just a Muslim problem, and it's  
23 something that will affect undocumented workers as  
24 well. The NYPD's deployment of highly intrusive  
25 technologies such as military grade x-ray vans, and

2 cell surveillance devices known as Stingrays creates  
3 big risks for unionization New Yorkers. The  
4 information collected by this technology could  
5 potentially be subpoenaed by federal—federal  
6 authorities include ICE, and used to track the  
7 undocumented immigrants for detention and  
8 deportation. If this is the case, New York cannot  
9 truly—cannot truly claim to call itself a sanctuary  
10 city, and for this reason, CAIR New York continues to  
11 support the Council's passage of the POST Act, which  
12 would ensure that this Council has the ability to  
13 oversee the NYPD's nuse—use of new and invasive  
14 surveillance technologies. I commend this committee  
15 for its leadership on these crucial issues and the  
16 broader fight for the safety of undocumented  
17 immigrants, and I look forward to working with this  
18 Council in advocating for the rights of immigrant New  
19 Yorkers. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. [pause]

21 CHIN CHEUNG WANG: Good morning,  
22 Chairperson and committee members, and everyone.  
23 Thank you for this opportunity to speak today. My  
24 name is Chin Cheung Winn and I'm an advocate for  
25 Womankind formerly known as New York Asian Women's

2 Center. We would like to first thank you for your  
3 continued support of ensuring the services for  
4 immigrants including survivors of the gender based  
5 violence, our priority. Womankind works with  
6 survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence and  
7 human trafficking to rise above trauma and build a  
8 path to healing. We bring critical resources and deep  
9 cultural competency to help Asian communities find  
10 refuge, recovery and renewal. We provide culturally  
11 matched direct services to survivors in the 18  
12 distinct Asian languages citywide. Womankind first  
13 met in early 2000 first time, and helpline costs  
14 annually.(sic) Our services include 24-hour multi-  
15 lingual helpline, crisis intervention, safety  
16 planning and emergency conditional housing, financial  
17 literacy and empowerment, education and employment  
18 assistance, children and youth services, ESOL  
19 tutoring and immigration legal services. Our  
20 resourceful advocates expertly navigate issues of  
21 language access, cultural norms and trauma within the  
22 city system to ensure survivors receive the help and  
23 support they want and deserve. Annually, we serve  
24 over a thousand survivors, most of whom are  
25 immigrants. Womankind has worked with survivors who

2 were applicants and beneficiaries of DACA since July  
3 2013. Many of the individuals whom we'll work with—  
4 with difficult survivorship of the domestic violence,  
5 sexual violence who are human trafficking. We were—have  
6 been able to assist the survivors with applying for  
7 U-Visa, T-Visa and VOLA (sic). The majority of the  
8 youth we work with do not make an intentional  
9 decision to live undocumented. They desire to come  
10 live and thrive in the only society they know. Yet,  
11 this youth continue to endure what feels like a  
12 punishment for a decision that was in most cases not  
13 theirs to make. Compounded with other barriers such  
14 as wariness of authorities, lack of knowledge about  
15 legal rights and other available support, and limited  
16 service resources in the community. Survivors feel  
17 trapped in their circumstances. We conduct DACA  
18 targeted outreach to immigrant communities, who are  
19 often further isolated from service resources by  
20 barriers such as language and fear of deportation are  
21 also assessed. The impact of fulfilling immigration  
22 relief needs goes deeper. A year after deportation  
23 relief became available to undocumented youth,  
24 analysis started noticing a trend that Asian  
25 immigrants are not proportionately applying for DACA.

2 Asians comprise estimates that 6% of the Asian DACA  
3 population, but of the total of 552,240 applicants  
4 would apply. The comprise is only 4%. Asian Youth  
5 face unique cultural barriers when it comes to  
6 applying for DACA. Asian cultures highly value  
7 family loyalty, which inspires reluctance in the  
8 Asian youth who fear authorities might locate their  
9 immigrant families. Recent immigrant enforcement  
10 tactics have caused survivors to be more fearful of  
11 seeking even our agency's services. Our advocates  
12 have also experienced difficulty in learning about  
13 survivors' immigration status. They do not want to  
14 share this information for fear of navigate  
15 repercussions. This in turn prevents us from  
16 connecting them with services, including our in-house  
17 immigration services that could help survivors to  
18 obtain status and work authorizations and free  
19 themselves from their abusers and exploiters.  
20 Finally, these tactics have also enabled certain  
21 individuals to prey on survivors and other  
22 undocumented immigrants by conning them into filing  
23 stakeholder (sic) wait applications for asylum or  
24 other relief or paying for motions to be open with a  
25 very low likelihood of success. We stand along with

2 you and many service providers here today to call on  
3 the state and federal government to extend  
4 protections for undocumented youth by passing the New  
5 York State DREAM Act of 2017 at a state level as well  
6 as the BRIDGE Act of 2017 at the federal level.

7 Thank you so much.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you all for  
9 your testimony. I have some follow-up questions for  
10 each and everyone of you, and thank you—thank you  
11 again in general for your powerful testimony and  
12 commitment to our community. Many of you are living—  
13 living examples of the kind of impact something like  
14 DACA and other services have had—have had on you and  
15 your—and your neighborhood and your city as well.  
16 So, we're just thankful that—that you're here to  
17 testify. Ms. Wang, I—I have a question for you  
18 specifically with Womankind and how we can reach  
19 specifically young immigrant survivors of—of—of  
20 crime, and there's multiple crimes that you—you've  
21 alluded to here. Is there a way that we can as the  
22 city of New York and—and you kind of gave us a real  
23 good sense about—about the—the issue that we're  
24 experiencing, but I'm—I'm kind of curious from about



2 how the city can do more specifically for that  
3 population.

4 CHIN CHEUNG WANG: For me as an advocate,  
5 I have clients who expressed fear because of the  
6 immigration status. I think for the city I think  
7 education is also very important. Like a lot of  
8 immigrants they are not aware of their rights and  
9 especially due to a language barrier and there's a  
10 lot of myths that's from the community that's  
11 especially with the current politically climate. So,  
12 that's one of the things that.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I'm going to do a  
14 follow-up with that, and also welcome from Brooklyn  
15 Council Member Mathieu Eugene who's on the committee  
16 as well, and Council Member Dromm who came in  
17 earlier. Now, there's a--there's a real disconnect,  
18 and this is something that I have continued to say  
19 over and over again and--and also implementing the  
20 work that we do as City Council and me as a council  
21 member representing a very large and emerging ever  
22 growing Asian population specifically Chinese families  
23 in District 38, and in Brooklyn. And how--how do we--  
24 how do we work together to kind of build those  
25 bridges, and--and really my--my specific ask of--of you

2 is to think about what are we not doing, or what can  
3 we do more of to really build that relationship with  
4 our—our specifically Asian youth working with them in  
5 their schools or in churches or in specifically for  
6 example in my district office where we have folks who  
7 come in. In my office we have multiple languages  
8 spoke that are reflective of the community. Tell me  
9 little bit about how—how we can do that better, and  
10 if those things are working right now to engage our—  
11 our Asian youth?

12 CHIN CHEUNG WANG: I—I don't—my clients  
13 are not like--a lot of them are not youth. I mostly  
14 work with mothers of the youth, but maybe I can bring  
15 this—some questions back to our youth advocates  
16 because we do have youth, our youth are part of a  
17 children's program that provides children with youth  
18 services. So they have—they are more manageable  
19 about like the youth and what's the best for—for the  
20 city to connect to the youth. Yeah, thank you so  
21 much for the question. I'm sorry that I don't have  
22 the answer right away.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: No, that's okay,  
24 and this is—this is a dialogue. So this is—this is  
25 part of how we can work together to really kind of

2 build that both accountability at the—at the  
3 administration side, but also really take in ideas  
4 from—from you who and the organizations and advocates  
5 to—to bring back the city and saying this is what we  
6 can do. But across the board, I want to say this  
7 over and over and over again because we have to say  
8 it or else we're not going to be able to address it  
9 our Asian communities are—are not yet being fully  
10 impacted positively by all the things that we're  
11 doing in the city, and that is of massive concern to  
12 me, and so and to the Administration. We want to  
13 make sure that if there's anything that is working  
14 really well for us to continue expand on it, and not  
15 just for youth, but for—for the women that you engage  
16 and where—where are things working well so we can  
17 further support. And so, we're open to the dialogue  
18 in—in the future. So, thank you.

19 CHIN CHEUNG WANG: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And Marlen, are—do  
21 you know if the program that the Governor announced  
22 that would make college free for a low-income student  
23 applies to DREAMers?

24 MARLEN FERNANDEZ: Right. So, it's very  
25 important to know that the Excelsior Scholarship

2 which is promoting free tuition for all CUNY and SUNY  
3 schools, undocumented students will not qualify for  
4 that.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And that's an  
6 important thing to talk about, right, and how-how has  
7 the Studies Institute thought about responding,  
8 advocating and then how can we help?

9 MARLEN FERNANDEZ: Right. So, one of the  
10 ways we're approaching the-the myth that everyone  
11 qualifies is we've developed a new workshop through  
12 our Education Opportunities Initiative to approach  
13 this and really inform the community that a lot of  
14 recipients especially the DACA ones who have the  
15 Social Security relief that they qualify for to  
16 demystify that and to get the correct information out  
17 there. So, we're working on that, and adding a  
18 segment to our college enrollment workshops to make  
19 that students know who are in the situation who are  
20 undocumented or have DACA that they don't qualify for  
21 this. I would say at the Institute we are always  
22 fundraising and trying to increase our funds that we  
23 can provide more scholarships. Every year the  
24 scholarship program has grown. Over the course of  
25 five years we now have over 100 scholarship

2 recipients. We started off with one in 2012 as a  
3 guinea pig, and every its grown since then from 12 to  
4 23 to 35 to 44. So, on average about 10 ten students  
5 growth per year. We hope through the support of City  
6 Council to expand our Scholarship Opportunities  
7 Program to a great range of students that we can  
8 reach, and hopefully make CUNY accessible to them.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And the City  
10 Council is really proud to support all the studies  
11 programs. For the first time this year, the City  
12 Council as a whole has given over \$200,000 this year  
13 to the Mexican Studies Institute, and so we're really  
14 happy to continue to work with you to build that  
15 partnership, and all the institutes really to make  
16 sure that we are really funding that kind of direct  
17 impact to our students. So, thank you for that, and  
18 we're going to continue to work with you on-on the  
19 kind of state issue with the Governor, but the New  
20 York State DREAM Act needs to be passed as long as  
21 the—as well as the BRIDGE Act. And Helen, at NYLAG  
22 specifically, how have you noticed any changes? This  
23 is the question I asked the Mayor's Office of  
24 Immigrant Affairs, the Assistant Commissioner about  
25 how things have changed now that we really kind of

2 engaged a particular kind of DACA population, now I'm  
3 really moving into spaces where it's going to—it's  
4 going to require a different strategy to take—to  
5 take—to take a different strategy to—to really bring  
6 new—the new DACA population. What are you seeing as—  
7 as—as a change, and—and specifically within the key  
8 to the city events that you support us on in our  
9 communities?

10 HELEN DROOK: Yes, thank you for the  
11 question. Actually as you know, through the Key to  
12 the City Clinics that we have been conducting now and  
13 working together with you for a number of years we  
14 still are able to identify potential DACA applicants  
15 from various immigrant communities. I think one of  
16 the great things about those clinics is that it  
17 allows us to identify people who maybe eligible for  
18 various kinds of immigration relief one of them being  
19 DACA. Sometimes we're able to identify youth that  
20 maybe be eligible for SIJ, Special Immigrant Juvenile  
21 Status. So this is actually a great tool for us.  
22 As—as I've testified at previous meetings here, what  
23 we've noticed lately is the fear, the increased fear  
24 in the community. And I have heard my colleagues  
25 here, you know, from the Asian community and other

2 colleagues testifying earlier that even before the  
3 new Administration came in there was certainly fear  
4 always in the undocumented immigrant community in New  
5 York, but over the course of the past few months,  
6 this fear is clearly increasing. So, if people were  
7 afraid to come forward because of their families and  
8 very their appearances (sic) were now DACA appearance  
9 and other siblings who may be undocumented, this fear  
10 has certainly increased. We provide all kind of  
11 training, Know Your Rights training to the community,  
12 which even though we're not directly doing  
13 consultations of those sites, but we're just reaching  
14 out and trying to make sure that people know, you  
15 know, what services may be available to them.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Well, I-I-and I  
17 wonder are you seeing a-a surge in fear for renewals?  
18 Is that something that-that has kind of popped up?

19 HELEN DROOK: Well, we do this all the  
20 time. Actually, what's-what's internally we've had a  
21 lot of discussions whether or not, you know,  
22 initially whether or not we should proceed with  
23 initial DACA applications. So, once we have  
24 identified those who for whatever reasons have not  
25 applied in the past, and may be eligible today, there

2 was a certain reluctance again, and then we were  
3 facing this issues again of the renewals. Well, we  
4 determined internally that we should still, you know,  
5 forget ahead and go forward and advise people that it  
6 still will be beneficial to them to renew their DACA  
7 status, and we-- So, currently we are going ahead  
8 with both the renewals and the initial applications  
9 once those who quality are identified.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: One, I wonder if  
11 that tension--in that--in that tension we can think  
12 about informing the strategy, and so I'm hoping we  
13 can sit down and--and as we--we just passed the budget,  
14 we're really excited to be renewing our commitment as  
15 the New York City Council, and working with ActionNYC  
16 and other--other--other programs that target our--our  
17 DACA applications including the Studies Program. We  
18 should all really sit down and really think about  
19 how--how we--how we doublet up on the efforts to remove  
20 barriers, address the fear and--and get--get those  
21 renewals in and get those initial applications up and  
22 running. So, thank you for that--for the testimony,  
23 but I think--I think the next step is really to sit  
24 down and strategize shared best practices, and  
25 really--really make sure that we measure our success



2 over time and not just-- Well, actually, I am there--  
3 measure our success, and make sure that we are  
4 succeeding in this next fiscal year.

5 HELEN DROOK: Absolutely. Thank you so  
6 much for all the initiatives and for all the work  
7 that you are doing.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Absolutely. Well,  
9 you have an incredibly committed Council with not  
10 only our Finance Chair Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, but  
11 also our Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and the three  
12 of us have--have been with the Committee and the whole  
13 Council have been your--your champions on--on all these  
14 fronts, and we're going to continue to do that. I  
15 have a follow-up question for Marium and really the--  
16 the question here is--is really thinking about our  
17 immigrant--our immigrants, our Muslim immigrants, our  
18 Arab origin immigrants and thinking about our  
19 students in specific that are kind of both and--and as  
20 thinking about both and multiple identities as--as we  
21 engage in services, multiple serves--services, and  
22 thinking about their immigrant status and also  
23 religion. How can we do more to support--to support  
24 them and--and really kind of focus in on this  
25 intersectional understanding of these students, and

2 really think about how—how multiple services not just  
3 education, healthcare, mental healthcare and—and you  
4 can give us a sense about—because I think your  
5 testimony really addressed that holistic approach,  
6 but if there is one thing that we can do better as  
7 the city of New York, we'd like to hear that.

8 MARIUM KHAWAJA: So, at work this is a  
9 question that I ask myself everyday is how do---how  
10 can we address the issues that a lot of Muslims who  
11 are undocumented or face different forms of  
12 intersectionality, how can we support them in various  
13 ways? A lot of my concern—Sorry, I'm fasting today  
14 so my throat is really drying. A lot of I think the  
15 Muslim community—the Muslim's community's concern  
16 with the state has historically been our situation  
17 with surveillance, and so you have an older  
18 generation in particular that is very uncomfortable  
19 working with state and federal law enforcement  
20 occasionally because there's that fear that this  
21 information might be taken. A new generation of  
22 these people who are my age and not very, very young  
23 are more willing to organize because of the  
24 environment that we grew up in, and so honestly I  
25 would say that if—if you're looking for people

2 between the ages of like-like teenagers and like 30's  
3 you would just have to like first acknowledge the  
4 fact that Muslims are a very diverse group. Even  
5 ethnically, we have like Latino-Muslims. African-  
6 American-Muslims make up the largest portion of  
7 Muslims in the United States, and yet constantly  
8 South Asian or Arab people are considered the model  
9 Muslim when we think about-about it. So, that's the  
10 first thing that we have to start doing, and that's  
11 something that we've been trying do here at CAIR New  
12 York is that-address the fact that there are a lot of  
13 communities that face a worse intersectionality  
14 being, for example, being black and Muslim is a lot-a  
15 lot more difficult than being South Asian and Muslim,  
16 and trying to address issues that exist at that  
17 intersectionality. We've had Latino Muslims who  
18 were-feel that for being a Latina and also a Muslim,  
19 but then people don't believe that they could exist  
20 at the same time. So, honestly, the first things is  
21 just acknowledging that they exist and sort of trying  
22 to create programs where these people can sort of  
23 navigate and discuss the issues that they face at  
24 that intersectionality. I-I don't have more for you  
25 at this moment. I'm sorry because this is something

2 I think about at work a lot, and it-it is a quite a-  
3 quite a extensive question.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Well, know that-  
5 let's continue the conversation and figure out how we  
6 can continue to even as early as now in the summer  
7 really work together to advocate, and really bring  
8 everybody together to advocate for even just the  
9 awareness issue and bringing-bringing awareness of  
10 our Muslim community how diverse it is already. I'm  
11 sure the Studies Institutes might even help in-in  
12 kind of engaging that at the level of-of CUNY and  
13 have multiple partnerships, and-and I think a place  
14 like Sunset Park would be a perfect place to kind of  
15 launch some pilot projects and-and awareness  
16 campaigns about how diverse our communities are, and  
17 so I hope we-I mean even exchange information toady  
18 about how we can do that. Thank you, and I think  
19 that's it for my follow-up questions. Any last  
20 comments before I head over to the last panel. Okay  
21 thank you for your work. Thank you for your courage.  
22 We are-we are resisting everyday and all of you are  
23 really presenting that front on-the-ground vanguard  
24 of support and resistance to our communities, and so  
25 I just want to say thank you. We're going to

2 continue to support in the City Council. So, just  
3 keep going the good work. Thank you, and our final  
4 panel for folks here, and—and I will say this is the  
5 final panel, but if anybody did not submit testimony,  
6 we have Jake La Ross from Immigrant–Immigration Task  
7 Force, and the Manhattan Young Democrats. We have  
8 Lindsay Bower from Brooklyn Defender Services;  
9 Josiana Gorman from the Emerald Isle Immigration  
10 Center, and Sandra Perez–Perez from NMIC. You can  
11 come up here. If you–your name was not called, and  
12 you want to testify talk and sign up. Talk to the  
13 sergeant of–the sergeant-of-arms and get a slip.  
14 Otherwise, this will be the last panel for this  
15 discussion, and we were joined by Council Member  
16 Espinal from Brooklyn. [pause] Great, if we can  
17 start over. Please introduce yourself.

18 JAKE LA ROSS: Thank you and good  
19 afternoon Chair Menchaca and attendees. My name is  
20 Jake La Ross and I am the Chair of the Immigration  
21 Task Force at the Manhattan Young Democrats. The  
22 Manhattan Young Democrats are the official youth on  
23 the Democratic Party in Manhattan County, and we are  
24 comprised of and represent the Millennial young adult  
25 Democrats of Manhattan from the Progressive Blue Dogs

2 and in between. Our members and leaders are  
3 steadfastly united in supportive policies that  
4 address the problems and difficulties that young New  
5 Yorker and young Americans face, and so we seek to  
6 champion the legislation that protects and defends  
7 our rights as young adults. Undocumented youth and  
8 so-called DREAMers despite their lack of legal status  
9 are deserving of such protection as we are because  
10 they are as much New Yorkers and Americans as us all.  
11 The majority having spent almost their entire lives  
12 in the United States. Manhattan Young Democrats like  
13 many other young Americans recognize that the status  
14 of specific labels with which undocumented immigrants  
15 and DREAMers are plastered belie the fact that they  
16 are first and foremost our neighbors, our colleagues,  
17 our friends, our family. They are us. A person's  
18 humanity is not given permission to exist by virtue  
19 of their status, and so those of us without status  
20 should not be denied service and protection simply  
21 because some have forgotten that we are all equally  
22 human. Passing the New York State DREAM Act would  
23 not only fulfill the promise of equality of  
24 opportunity that our state projects, but also  
25 inarguably be in all our mutual interests. Every

2 year thousand of documented students graduate from  
3 high school in New York, yet less than half later  
4 enroll in college largely because of the prohibitive  
5 costs of higher education, and their inability to  
6 access most sources of financial aid. Already New  
7 York's undocumented youth adults—undocumented young  
8 adults contribute over \$140 million annually in state  
9 and local taxes. This administrative economic  
10 contribution pales in comparison to what they could  
11 accomplish if they were put on the same frame as  
12 their American born peers. The state should have  
13 taken measures to level the higher education playing  
14 field by giving undocumented young adults access in  
15 state tuition rates and financial aid have seen both  
16 decreases in the undocumented high school drop-out  
17 rate and increases in their rate of college  
18 enrollment. Why should our state deprive this action  
19 of its young adults, of the fair opportunity to  
20 higher education in itself with the enormous benefits  
21 that unleashed potential would bring? The need to  
22 pass the BRIDGE Act is similarly pressing. The  
23 current state of the DACA program and by extension  
24 the protections and benefits that it provides is  
25 unclear, despite the few hollow promises offered up

2 by the Trump Administration. Many Republicans and  
3 conservatives, establishment and friends alike accept  
4 the call for DACA's completer termination while  
5 immigrant extremists from organizations like the  
6 Southern Poverty Law Center has identified as hate  
7 groups, secure high level jobs in the West Wing and  
8 DHS. These individuals to disenfranchise and  
9 dispossess DREAMers and other members of the  
10 immigrant community are seemingly boundless, and so  
11 our will and metal to safeguard these protections  
12 through measures like the DREAM-like the BRIDGE Act  
13 by speaking (sic) truly unflinching. In back this bill  
14 the, the Manhattan Young Democrats further recognize  
15 that the Trump Administration's inhumane and frankly  
16 un-American actions and rhetoric have cast a pall  
17 over the lives of the members of the immigrant  
18 community in New York and the country at large. I  
19 would thus be remiss if I did not address two  
20 additional issues relevant to today's hearing that  
21 also merits some response from the City Council.  
22 First, the Manhattan Young Democrats are disturbed by  
23 the fact that the Trump Administration's draconian  
24 crackdown on the immigrant community would raise with  
25 arrests taking place in courts and at children's



2 soccer games and in houses of worship. It's  
3 purposefully (sic) targeting law abiding immigrants  
4 who have criminal records like Diego Ismael Puma  
5 Macancela, the high school senior who was arrested by  
6 ICE just hours before his prom in Westchester two  
7 weeks ago. We hope that this body will continue to  
8 condemn these actions. Second, we are concerned about  
9 the Trump Administration's gutting of the  
10 availability of prosecutorial discretion in  
11 Immigration Court proceedings, which has been a  
12 widely accepted document in the immigration context  
13 that became all the more important as our Immigration  
14 Courts have been inundated by a backlog that now  
15 exceeds 585,000 cases nationwide. The top-down  
16 assault by this administration and prosecutorial  
17 discretion, and similar collaboration requiring  
18 procedural tools clearly demonstrates its inability  
19 or unwillingness to enact policies in accordance with  
20 fact and reality. It is exceedingly important if not  
21 morally imperative that our city continue to  
22 demonstrate its dedication to the protection of  
23 undocumented immigrant New Yorkers because ours is—  
24 ours is a city inextricably tied to the immigrant  
25 experiences I know personally. My great, great

2 grandfather arrived in New York City in 1895 at the  
3 age of 23. He became a prominent member of the Lower  
4 East Side Lanceman Shaft of the B.L. Succor(sic)  
5 Jews, and played a leading role in the planning and  
6 construction of the B.L. Succor (sic Home for the  
7 Aged in the late—in the late 1920s, the same building  
8 that continues to stand today and has become a city  
9 landmark in 2015. My story is neither unique nor  
10 rare among New Yorkers many of whom have similarly  
11 deep ties to the very brick and mortar of the city to  
12 their own ancestors' immigration journey. It is the  
13 young who are tasked with carrying on the memories  
14 and lessons of those who came before, and so the  
15 Manhattan Young Democrats take on this responsibility  
16 now by endorsing the proposed legislation at issue  
17 today. Our shared humanity—humanity shows our fellow  
18 young New Yorkers who lack legal status, the humanity  
19 they share with our forebears who made the fateful  
20 decision to start their lives in the new United  
21 States and humanity that will run through all of our  
22 descendants when we are gone calls now—now calls us  
23 all to action. We must answer. Thank you for—for  
24 inviting my testimony. I look forward to working

2 with committee and City Council on this important  
3 immigration issue and others in the future.

4 LINDSEY BULER: Hello. Good afternoon.

5 My name is Lindsey Buler and I'm a BIA Accredited  
6 representative of Brooklyn Defender Services. We're a  
7 public defender office in Brooklyn. In my work I do  
8 a variety of immigration applications, but I would  
9 say a vast majority are DACA applications, initials  
10 and renewals. Our clients come to us in kind of a  
11 unique way, they come to us through often our  
12 Criminal Defense practice or our Family Defense  
13 practice. So we're sort of uniquely suited to sort  
14 of reach young people who might not otherwise be real  
15 keen to reach out to legal service providers or have  
16 access to those networks. So, in a strange way  
17 sometimes criminal justice contacts can turn into a  
18 point of entry for these young people to really get  
19 legal services that they might not otherwise be  
20 interested in or-or know to access. We also get  
21 referrals from the community as a result of outreach  
22 that we do or various-some of the adult education,  
23 and English Language programs will refer to us.  
24 We've seen sort of a down tick in that lately, and I  
25 don't know if that's a result of sort of a chill in

2 the community generally, or if it's a result of there  
3 being fewer of those programs available. I wanted to  
4 share a story of a client because I think it is  
5 representative of a lot of—of what a lot—a lot of our  
6 clients go through. Sophia is 19 years old from  
7 Mexico. She's been living here since she was 9 years  
8 old. She came to us after she had already submitted  
9 her own DACA application with the help of a tax  
10 preparer who wasn't really qualified to help her and  
11 she has been denied. So, we were able to help her  
12 sort of overcome the deficiencies and she was  
13 ultimately granted, and we helped her apply for a  
14 second time, and that approval came just before she  
15 graduated high school. So, she's now completed her  
16 first year at—let me get the name right—at Guttman  
17 Community College, and she hopes to transfer to John  
18 J. or Hunter. She's pursuing an associate's degree  
19 in liberal arts and humanities, and while this is a  
20 really positive development for Sophia, she is  
21 struggling to—to get by financially. She's not  
22 eligible for federal financial aid. She was  
23 explaining to me how some of the sort of private  
24 fellowships that are available have requirements like  
25 community service, things that she just doesn't have

2 time for because she's a full-time student who is  
3 also working to try to pay her way through school. A  
4 lot of our students also find themselves suddenly the  
5 first movers of their families not only pursuing  
6 higher education, but the only member of their family  
7 with lawful employment authorization. So, they're  
8 struggling between this opportunity to go to school,  
9 but also they might find themselves the primary bread  
10 winners as the only people legally authorized to work  
11 in their families at a pretty young age. So, we feel  
12 that, you know, young people in New York should not  
13 be forced into the role of primary breadwinners for  
14 their families, and anything that we can do to help  
15 them qualify for financial assistance to pursue their  
16 dreams of higher education, we are very much in favor  
17 of and we feel like the DREAM Act, you know, goes a  
18 long way to doing that. We encourage the City  
19 Council to think about how we can all work better to  
20 support college age youth and ensure that they get  
21 the education they deserve. Another thing I wanted  
22 to bring up was you were talking a bit about the  
23 access to public benefits and healthcare and things  
24 like that. Something I see a lot is that even if  
25 people are aware of those benefits being available,

2 there's sort of a stigma I think with certain  
3 communities, and the idea that no I shouldn't apply  
4 for those things because it's going to look back for  
5 my immigration case later. So, dispelling that myth  
6 I think is something that we can work on with at  
7 least some communities, and then the application fee.  
8 I don't know if—I think there used to be a bit more  
9 assistance available. At this point we do refer  
10 clients to get loans that they pay back for the DACA  
11 fees, but it's one of the few immigration fees for  
12 which there is no fee waiver available. You have to  
13 pay the fee. There is a very, very small carve-outs  
14 for like people who are homeless and very few. I've  
15 never had a client qualify. So, anything we can do  
16 to help because many clients find themselves in the  
17 position of renewing DACA for \$500 or, you know,  
18 putting that money towards tuition or books or  
19 something else to pursue their—their dreams. So, I  
20 just wanted to thank you again, and we firmly support  
21 Resolution 14804–1484 and strongly encourage its  
22 adoption. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

24 SANDRA PEREZ: Good morning. My name is  
25 Sandra Perez, and I'm the Coordinating Supervising

2 Immigration Attorney at Northern Manhattan  
3 Improvement Corporation, which is also known as NMIC,  
4 and on behalf of NMIC we thank you for inviting us to  
5 present our views on Resolution 1484 and passing the  
6 DREAM Act, and extended protections for undocumented  
7 youth. NMIC is a community based settlement house  
8 founded in 1979. We have grown into a leading multi-  
9 service agency with a staff of over 100 serving all  
10 of New York City. Our mission is to serve as a  
11 catalyst for positive change in the lives of the  
12 people in our community. Our legal and social  
13 services programs include Immigration Legal Services,  
14 Housing Court representation and eviction prevention  
15 and counseling for victims of domestic violence. Our  
16 education and career services provide the community  
17 with additional tools necessary to both secure and  
18 prosperous futures. NMIC does not charge any fees  
19 for its service and we represent mostly low-income  
20 and indigent people in Northern Manhattan, Inwood,  
21 Washington Heights, and the Bronx. NMIC is one of  
22 the few legal service providers available to serve  
23 the high volume demand for immigration services in  
24 Upper Manhattan. Our 9-story office building is  
25 ideally situated in the heart of Washington Heights

2 where a large immigrant and multi-Spanish speaking  
3 population can easily access a broad range of  
4 services available. For example, a DACA client can  
5 be referred to our education services in order to  
6 fulfill the education requirement and then send them  
7 back to our legal team on the seventh floor to file  
8 an application. Should this client have housing  
9 issues or facing eviction, our experienced housing  
10 litigators can intervene and preserve their apartment  
11 as they go through this process. NMIC's immigration  
12 unit provides access to an extensive array of  
13 immigration services. We are a designation ActionNYC  
14 site in partnership with the Mayor's Office of  
15 Immigrant Affairs, MOIA since the very inception of  
16 the ActionNYC program, and we are very excited to  
17 partner with the city in this endeavor. Our  
18 Immigration unit provider services ranging from  
19 preparation of applications for U.S. citizenship,  
20 family based petitions, Deferred Acton for Childhood  
21 Arrivals, DACA, to conflicts for a released such as  
22 U-Visas and Violence Against Women Act petitions,  
23 also known as VAWA. In addition to conducting daily  
24 immigration screening through ActionNYC, our  
25 Immigration Unit offers walk-in consultations twice a



2 month. NMIC also provides Know Your Rights workshops  
3 on various issues including the protection against  
4 fraud by immigration notarial. We also have—we also  
5 have experienced a recent surge in the demand for  
6 consultations on the immigration consequences of  
7 criminal arrests not just convictions, as well as  
8 many RFEs from USCIS asking for documentation on  
9 dismissals, on former arrests and on Ramota arrests  
10 from 20 years ago, on what used to be s  
11 straightforward application. This has added  
12 substantially to the fear and the distrust by  
13 prospective applicants in pursuing immigration  
14 benefits in the community. At NMIC we have been on  
15 the front lines in the quest of expanding DACA. Many  
16 young college bound immigrant have relied and trusted  
17 NMIC for assistance and representation. Our office  
18 has witnessed numerous young, intelligent and hard  
19 working recipients anxiously awaiting a future  
20 opportunity to obtain permanent status.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] Ms.  
22 Perez, can I pause you there and ask—

23 SANDRA PEREZ: [interposing] Sure.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --just for  
25 clarification.

2 SANDRA PEREZ: [interposing] Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: The applications  
4 you're referring to, these are DACA applications, and  
5 you're saying there's an increase?

6 SANDRA PEREZ: There's an increase in  
7 RFEs and I apologize—Request for Evidence through—  
8 with DACA and for example for Marijuana arrest that  
9 result in—in adjournment and contemplation in  
10 dismissal. In other words, no conviction, no plea of  
11 guilty but not just of DACA. We've also experienced  
12 that with a wide range of different immigration  
13 benefits, which was not the case previously on this.  
14 It was a conviction or—or a list we're apply for  
15 citizenship, which it's a privilege and not a right,  
16 and so they can inquire as to the good moral  
17 character. But now we're seeing it across the board,  
18 and—and we--

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] And  
20 when did that change?

21 SANDRA PEREZ: We've noticed a change in  
22 the last couple of months and it's—it's—it's--

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] So  
24 this is a Trump--

25 SANDRA PEREZ: [interposing] Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --Administration,  
3 and do you know if there's anything associated to the  
4 memos or any kind of official stance that--that the  
5 Administration is-is making?

6 SANDRA PEREZ: Our position is that this--  
7 and--and this is based on our experience or--and what  
8 we've seen that it could be due obviously to the--well  
9 Attorney-General Session's Memo, which, you know, has  
10 a broad language, and doesn't--and has vague language  
11 as well, and doesn't specifically say that the DACA  
12 recipients will be--will not be subject definitely to--  
13 to this language, and also the contradiction language  
14 between that and the Executive Order where it speaks  
15 to any arrest or crimes whether convicted or not,  
16 whether pending. There is also language speaking  
17 about in the discretion of the immigration officer,  
18 or acts which could be charged as a crime. There is  
19 so much there that even laypersons who are not privy  
20 or may not understand the language, they--they have a--  
21 they have an idea in a sense that things are not the  
22 way they used to be. We also have a lot reports of  
23 clients who have traveled, and even though they are  
24 let go, and they're not subject to deferred  
25 inspection where they remove their Green Card and ask

2 them to come back to the airport. They're held for  
3 sometimes two or three hours. They're documenting.  
4 They're--they're putting their information in a  
5 database at the airport. They're asking them many,  
6 many questions, and then they let them go, but they  
7 leave thinking okay they let me go, but what does  
8 this mean for later? So, we--we also have a lot of  
9 clients who were really worried about traveling again  
10 or wondering if as a result of all of that  
11 documentation that was taken at JFK will they be  
12 coming to my house? Will they be knocking on my  
13 door--

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]  
15 Right.

16 SANDRA PEREZ: --which has caused us to  
17 conduct many additional Know Your Rights and outreach  
18 and--and information materials for the community. Did  
19 you have any other comments?

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I have one follow-  
21 up, and I'm sorry for interrupting--

22 SANDRA PEREZ: [interposing] It's okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --your testimony.

24 I just want to just to step in here, and one--one  
25 final follow up and I'll--I'll come back for some more

2 questions. The consistency again I want to get a  
3 sense of the consistency in—in your applications DACA  
4 whether or not this is something that's across the  
5 board or—or is this a kind of piecemeal approach, or  
6 all your applications as of a couple months ago  
7 receiving this kind of scrutiny?

8 SANDRA PEREZ: We've—we've seen it with  
9 all of our applications, but the—interestingly  
10 enough, lately a lot of the—the DACA renews who have  
11 had any arrests from the past they—they are  
12 increasingly concerned and worried as to what—what  
13 are they going to—what will the ramifications be and,  
14 you know, will they be detained at some point. You  
15 know, they're applying for better jobs because  
16 obviously as one of our colleagues said, education is  
17 a great equalizer, and now they're—they have the  
18 ability to change their circumstances to move up in  
19 society, to get—to have a higher earning capability.  
20 And so, they're hesitant now and they wonder what—  
21 what will the future hold and how this new  
22 administration will really be treating them going  
23 down the line now that there's so much information  
24 collecting.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And—and -and then  
3 also just for clarification, is this happening with  
4 new DACA applicate—applications and renewals?

5 SANDRA PEREZ: This is happening mostly  
6 with renewals and—and I must say that we—we did not  
7 get hardly any renewal recently. Not—I'm sorry, not  
8 renewals, initial DACA. There was a lot of—there  
9 were telethons, there was a lot of Know Your Rights  
10 information that was disseminated upon—after the  
11 election and so, I think people were being advised by  
12 many, many organizations to be wary of initial  
13 applications due to the risk, and due to the—the fact  
14 that we did not know what was going to happen or how  
15 DACA would be treated. So, we did—we—we—we did not  
16 have many initial DACA.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So this is all  
18 happening with renewals--

19 SANDRA PEREZ: [interposing] Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --that you're  
21 submitting with an extra added review that could be  
22 associated with the Sessions' memo that came out?

23 SANDRA PEREZ: Absolutely.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay.

2 SANDRA PEREZ: For instance, one of the  
3 most recent request for evidence was based on a  
4 dismissal from Bronx County where they're asking if  
5 the case was dismissed we need for you to provide  
6 documentation as certified from the courts showing  
7 what it was dismissed and, you know, clearly and-and  
8 I can speak as a former prosecutor from many years  
9 ago a lot of information is created [bell], a lot of  
10 records are created when someone is arrested, which  
11 can have--initially, anyone can accuse anyone of any  
12 thing, and that's why we believe that people are  
13 innocent before proven guilty. But in the interim a  
14 lot of paperwork, which can be very damaging, and a  
15 lot of the accuse--accusations can be documented,  
16 which I saw that USCIS is now requesting even in  
17 cases of a dismissal for a proof of what happened,  
18 and they want a narrative for the district attorney's  
19 office and/or the courts, which is very troubling.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Very troubling,  
21 and--and just to get a sense about--about rates for the  
22 renewals and applications, have you gotten report  
23 backs from the renewals for DACA? Are people going  
24 to be needed even with this extra layer of review  
25 for--?

2 SANDRA PEREZ: We have not—we have not—  
3 this is the other thing: Because they're asking for  
4 so much documentation, everything is taking longer  
5 now, and so--

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: How many—how many  
7 applications have you completed for renewals at this  
8 point?

9 SANDRA PEREZ: At this point we have  
10 approximately in the last couple of months I would  
11 say it's not a large number perhaps 30.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay.

13 SANDRA PEREZ: So--

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And as the  
15 percentage of your kind of full caseload is that—is  
16 that a small percentage? Is that—is that--?

17 SANDRA PEREZ: That is a small  
18 percentage.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay.

20 SANDRA PEREZ: That is a small  
21 percentage.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: It would be great  
23 to follow up with you, and actually this is going to  
24 allow us to kind of follow up with everybody who is  
25 doing DACA right now and figure out—I want to go back



2 and actually ask folks that same question: Are you  
3 seeing this, are you noticing this and-and where-  
4 where are-where are we getting the percentage  
5 renewals? What are the percentage renewals and then  
6 return with-with-with the affirmation for renewals as  
7 well. This is-this is helpful for us to-to follow up  
8 with our organizations include the Mayor's Office of  
9 Immigrant Affairs. Sorry. Do you want to finish  
10 that testimony?

11 SANDRA PEREZ: We-yeah we will-we will-we  
12 will be happy to provide all that information.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]  
14 Thank you.

15 SANDRA PEREZ: As I stated earlier,  
16 we're-we're in partnership with ActionNYC and the  
17 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and we're a  
18 site. So, we will be happy to share that information  
19 because we also have an expanded Immigration Unit  
20 aside from our ActionNYC team. And just to wrap up,  
21 and-and going back to education as a great equalizer  
22 and why we stand in solidarity with this cause and  
23 passing the DREAM Act and our Resolution 1484,  
24 speaking here before the City Council English is my  
25 second language. I am a product of Dominican

2 immigrant parents. My sister is a doctor. We had to  
3 learn English where there was no second language back  
4 in the '70s, and—but for those two hardworking  
5 immigrants, we would not have been where we are  
6 today, and this is very personal to us because we see  
7 what an incredible difference it can make in your  
8 life, and we see by contrast what happens to those  
9 who do not have access to education living in the  
10 same neighborhood, growing up in Washington Heights  
11 they do not have the same results. So, this is  
12 something that we applaud, and we are passionate  
13 about, and we will be more than happy to provide any  
14 further details or information or any work that is  
15 needed to push this along. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, and  
17 thank you for sharing your—your personal commitment  
18 to this—to this issue. Thank you, and wrap us up.  
19 Thank you.

20 JOSIANA GORMAN: Hello. Good afternoon.  
21 [coughs] Thank Chairman Menchaca and everybody. My  
22 name is Josiana Gorman. I work at the Emerald Isle  
23 Immigration Center, which is an organization  
24 providing immigration and social services and  
25 employment related services to immigrants through its

2 offices in Woodside, Queens and Woodlawn in the  
3 Bronx. We assist more than 20,000 clients annually  
4 by providing case assistance information and  
5 referrals. EIIC officer legal counseling on  
6 immigration and naturalization matters to indigent  
7 immigrants and New York City residents. Over the  
8 past five years we provide legal assistances and  
9 social services to over 100 DACA recipients. EIIC  
10 would like to thank the New York City Council for the  
11 opportunity to submit testimony regarding this  
12 legislation affecting immigrant students in New York  
13 and especially thank Chairperson Carlos Menchaca of  
14 the Committee on Immigration and the New York City  
15 Council for their continued support to our—to our  
16 work to assist in the New York City immigrant  
17 community through the Immigrant Opportunities  
18 Initiative, IOI. On June 15, 2012, the Obama  
19 Administration moved the country forward by providing  
20 the nation's youth with discretionary relief of  
21 deferred action by passing the New York State  
22 Development and Education for alien minors, the DREAM  
23 Act of 2017 at the state level as well as the bar  
24 removal of individuals who dream and grow our  
25 economy, BRIDGE Act of 2017 at the federal level.

2 New York State will be one of the pioneering  
3 jurisdictions providing youth the opportunity to  
4 reach higher education and further deportation  
5 relief. There are currently two million undocumented  
6 immigrant-immigrant youth living in the United  
7 States. 65,000 are undocumented youth who graduate  
8 from high school through the United States each year  
9 and 400,000 are immigrant youth living in New York  
10 that will benefit from the passage of this New York  
11 DREAM Act of 2017. The United States Citizen and  
12 Immigration Services provide the statistics as to  
13 federal progress of deferred action. As of March  
14 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017, there are 1,889,311 undocumented youth  
15 nationwide submitted Deferred Action requests. Of  
16 that matter, 111,233 came from the New York—from New  
17 York. More specifically, the New York DREAM Act of  
18 2017 allows all students regardless of immigration  
19 status access to financial aid such as the Tuition  
20 Assistance Program, Higher Education Opportunity  
21 Program, our College Science and Technology Entry  
22 Program, Educational Opportunity Program, which is  
23 already in other community colleges, allowing  
24 students to be eligible for financial aid also has  
25 tremendous benefit for the economy. According to the

2 physical or the Fiscal Policy Institute, the median  
3 earned income for a family state worker with a  
4 Bachelor's Degree is \$25,000 higher per year than  
5 someone with just a high school diploma. The  
6 additional taxes paid by the Bachelor's Degree  
7 holder, would amount to about \$3,900 per year to  
8 state and local government, and a two-year degree  
9 would initial-would entail an \$8,000 state investment  
10 in aid, which means the maximum top aid of \$4,000 at  
11 a two-year college. The median income of a two-year  
12 college graduate would amount to about \$10,000 more  
13 per year higher than a worker with just a high school  
14 diploma. The state and local taxes paid each year  
15 will also be about \$1,000. Thus, there is quite a  
16 huge a huge return on investment for the New York-for  
17 the State of New York. Further, if New York allows  
18 all of its students both documented and undocumented  
19 more access to higher education, New York will also  
20 have an increase in highly educated workers, which  
21 means more productivity. Also, the New York DREAM  
22 Act of 2017 is not a route to providing legal  
23 residency for undocumented youth. In fact, not all  
24 undocumented youth would be affected by the New York  
25 DREAM Act of 2017. So there is-so there are certain

2 requirements for eligibility. The New York DREAM Act  
3 of 2017 eligibility requirements include the attended  
4 be registered in a New York high school for-for two  
5 years or more, graduated from a registered New York  
6 City-New York high school and applied for attendance  
7 at the Institution of Higher Education for  
8 Undergraduate Students-Studies for which an award is  
9 sought within five years of receiving a high school  
10 diploma. Attended and approved program for a state  
11 high school equivalency diploma, received a diploma  
12 and applied for attendance at the institution of  
13 higher education for undergraduate studies for which  
14 an award is sought within five years of receiving  
15 such diploma. Or, is otherwise eligible for the  
16 payment of tuition and fees at a rate no greater than  
17 that imposed for resident student. New York [coughs]  
18 -of the State University of New York, and CUNY or  
19 community colleges. To help immigrant families  
20 prepare for higher education expense, the DREAM Act  
21 will also allow families to open in New York State a  
22 529 Family Tuition Account under the New York State  
23 College Tuition Savings program. If they have an  
24 individual Taxpayer Identification Number, estimates  
25 shows that roughly 4,500 undocumented students who

2 graduated from a New York high school every year,  
3 only 5 to 10% are able to pursue a college education  
4 because of financial burden. EIIC also supports the  
5 passage of the BRIDGE Act of 2017 at the federal  
6 level and urges Congress to provide qualifying DACA  
7 eligible individual Provisional Protected Presence  
8 and employment authorization for three years. The  
9 Bridge Act of 2017 would offer Provisional Protected  
10 Presence, and employment authorization for three  
11 years to those meet the guidelines to apply for DACA.  
12 BRIDGE Act will be a legislative shield against the  
13 unilateral revocation of DACA by the President, and  
14 further protection from deportation. A new study  
15 shows that people who have DAC contribute to our  
16 economy and education growth. Further, it would  
17 ensure that these undocumented can continue to work,  
18 study, file income taxes, and be a productive member  
19 of society as long as they continue to meet the  
20 eligibility criteria. The EIIC urges the New York  
21 State Legislature to pass the New York DREAM Act of  
22 2017 and for the Governor Cuomo to sign the Act  
23 making the pursuit of higher education for all  
24 students possible regardless of one's immigration  
25 status. The EIIC also urges Congress to pass the

2 BRIDGE Act of 2017 to safeguard DACA holders and  
3 eligible applicants from deportation and encourage  
4 them to contribute to America's future prosperity.  
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for that  
7 and—and I think what you did was really lay out all  
8 the different pieces of this conversation and full  
9 support for the reso and really understanding the—the  
10 intricate nature of the work that needs to happen and  
11 the—the kind of impact it's going to have on our  
12 communities is vital. So thank you so much for—for  
13 being here. I really thank—thank you all. I don't  
14 know if you have any other comments to share with me  
15 today. We're going to—we're going to close it up,  
16 but I want to make sure that you all know from—and  
17 I'm just kind of looking at my notes here, and  
18 looking at all the new—the new textures of the  
19 dynamic nature of this administration, really  
20 thinking about the impact of high school students for  
21 example that are—that could be positively energized  
22 as they go through high school to know there's going  
23 to an opportunity and a bridge to our college  
24 experience will actually change the drop-out rates.  
25 I mean that's—that's just—that—that's something that



2 I think we—we kind of knew, but you really kind of  
3 created an opportunity in a narrative for us to talk  
4 about that, and how this one—this one resolved state  
5 opportunity that we can take can really transform our  
6 drop-out rates and—and not only increase college  
7 acceptance rates from the DREAMers, but actually  
8 solve something else that's happening our  
9 communities, which is the drop-out rates as well. So  
10 thank you so much for—for that, and really kind of  
11 think—thinking about how our legal services are  
12 really providing that—that change as—as the dynamics  
13 are changing. As we're seeing from—from your  
14 testimony a real sense of—of new review for the  
15 renewals that's going to really put ICE on—and I—I  
16 don't mean to use the word ICE, actually. We're just  
17 going to chill—have a chilling effect on our renewals  
18 and our new initial DACA applications that—that we  
19 still the opportunity as of now. That could change  
20 tomorrow from this president, but right now he knows  
21 that there's a—there's a real economic engine that  
22 we're all—I think we're all seeing and talking about.  
23 I don't now if you have another item to—to add?

24 LINDSEY BULER: Just on the idea of sort  
25 of collecting data in terms of foreseeing more

2 denials now. I think what is more so happening at  
3 least in my practice is that sort of borderline  
4 applications that we might have submitted before  
5 knowing that it could get denied but taking that risk  
6 isn't really happening any more because we—we see  
7 that a denial might lead to enforcement whereas  
8 before it wouldn't. So, some of the data might get  
9 skewed by the fact that we just wouldn't even submit  
10 the application to get denied in the first place.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So, just to repeat  
12 what I heard, the—the denials prior—in a prior  
13 administration meant something different from the  
14 denials in this current where someone is going to  
15 expose themselves to a new government that will—that  
16 will potentially in after paperwork has been created  
17 a possible enforcement action—a detain and a removal?

18 LINDSEY BULER: Right whereas they might  
19 have before just sort turned a blind eye or not  
20 active turned that case over to ICE or ICE may not  
21 have been actively looking for it because ICE and CIS  
22 will share information. It's just a question of who  
23 is kind of affirmatively going—going after the  
24 information. So, whereas, before we could rest  
25 assured that as long it wasn't sort of an issue of

2 national security or something gang related that the-  
3 the person might be safe with a denial on record.  
4 Now, that's—that's not so much the case and we can't  
5 sort of encourage clients to apply if we think the  
6 risk is too high.

7 SANDRA PEREZ: And—and touching on—on gang  
8 membership, which I—I briefly addressed in my written  
9 testimony, one other things that—that should be  
10 considered is statistically it is shown that if youth  
11 is no aimless and if they're part of something, if  
12 they have both an opportunity there are least—less  
13 likely to fall prey to recruitment and to gangs and—  
14 and to other forms of—of coercion and servitude to—  
15 to—to fatty criminal predators who used the young to  
16 do their bidding, and who force them into this type  
17 of life. So, that's something that I think there's—  
18 there's a lot of talk about gangs, but we should also  
19 think about how to avoid that and how to prevent  
20 that, and—and passage of this resolution and of the  
21 DREAM Act is absolutely mix in the butter at least  
22 really address it in a meaningful way, and I think  
23 that's something that—that should be another factor  
24 to consider in—in this in this mission.

2 JAKE LA ROSS: Yeah, Justin relation to  
3 the rising—the rising enforcement I just—I think it's  
4 incredibly worrying the way the changing enforcement  
5 priorities have really led to this enormous explosion  
6 in the way otherwise or previously applicants who  
7 wouldn't, you know, have—need to worry or have great  
8 need to worry, you know, suddenly it's a completely  
9 different world where previously President Obama and  
10 Secretary Johnson were very specific in their  
11 priorities about the prioritization of national  
12 security and, you know, real public security threats,  
13 and the order in the memorandum from November 2014,  
14 now with Secretary Kelly's February memo it's, you  
15 know, it is worryingly any crime it makes—it makes it  
16 up (sic) and more worryingly, any climb that you've  
17 been charged of, but that case has not been resolved.  
18 So, you know, it's as if undocumented immigrants have  
19 no right to innocent but guilty—innocent until proven  
20 guilty.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And this is where  
22 we find ourselves in so many ways, and so really my  
23 final thoughts as I close this hearing is the work  
24 ahead of us is tough. It's going to be tough, but  
25 tougher than the federal government is really our

2 only commitment, and so thank you for sharing your  
3 personal stories. My-my connection to this is also  
4 very personal being the first in my family—coming  
5 from an immigrant family, I also experienced some of  
6 the same thing being the first in my family to go to  
7 college, but also growing up in an all Spanish home.  
8 English was not my first language here. Head Start  
9 and pre-school were the first places. The city is  
10 now engaging in a very massive operation to get young  
11 people including our immigrant families connected to  
12 that first taste of education, and really building a  
13 network of community resources to bring the whole  
14 family up into education not just our preschoolers  
15 but our parents as well to get them adult education  
16 classes. And that's where you heard earlier the \$12  
17 million that's coming in to make sure that our  
18 parents are learning English and our young people are  
19 learning English, and the whole family can get  
20 education. And then where DACA comes in is really  
21 changing the way that—that our young people can  
22 actually get access to the economic engine of  
23 progress. Economic wise, civic engagement wise,  
24 really changing the fabric of our community so people  
25 can feel connected, and can come out of their shadows

2 to really allow for democracy which is under attack  
3 right now in a very real way by this Administration  
4 to be stronger, and it can be stronger in our  
5 neighborhood. It can be stronger in our cities, and  
6 that's why I think we are as a city working with our  
7 administration—the real vanguard right now against  
8 and, you know, resistance against this federal  
9 government. As—as the topic of today's hearing is on  
10 education as the equalizer, we need to figure out  
11 ways to—to remove the gaps of opportunities, not just  
12 to education, but to all services, and all of you  
13 really spoke to that. The last thing I want to say  
14 is that as we heard from today's testimony—multiple  
15 testimonies this changing people's lives, and this is  
16 why we need to act, and this is why the Reso will be  
17 passed from the City Council with massive enthusiasm,  
18 and make sure that the state and the federal  
19 government do their work. We're asking everyone to  
20 make their voices heard. If you have opportunities  
21 to make that happen, talk to your local legislators,  
22 talk to your federal and your state legislators to  
23 make sure that this year is a year that we pass the  
24 DREAM Act in both the Assembly and that—and the  
25 Senate, and get it to the Governor's desk to sign,

2 and make sure that we hold them accountable to make  
3 sure that BRIDGE Act moves forward from New York  
4 State. New York State should be leading on this  
5 issue, and this an opportunity to do that. So,  
6 everyone at home hearing this message, make your  
7 voices heard. Now is the time to make that happen,  
8 and so I really encourage you to make that happen,  
9 and also just thank you. On the ground you're making  
10 this happen if you're a legal service provider part  
11 of the Manhattan Young Dems, you're all part of this  
12 fabric of resistance, and so, I just can't thank you  
13 enough. We need to grow our participation, and that  
14 means everybody is involved and invited no matter  
15 your immigration status, your gender or sexual  
16 orientation or age. No what, if you're a New Yorker,  
17 you have a voice and it matters and it's heard, and  
18 it's being heard here at the City Council. So, I  
19 want to say thank you to my staff who helped make  
20 this happen, and our counsel Indiana Porta for  
21 making-making today-today possible, and with that, I  
22 want to close this hearing on Immigration on-for our  
23 DREAMers and our DACA-our DACA New Yorkers. Thank  
24 you. [gavel]

1 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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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 July 15, 2017