

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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September 28, 2017
Start: 10:36 a.m.
Recess: 3:00 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Stephen T. Levin
Chairperson

Mathieu Eugene
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Annabel Palma
Fernando Cabrera
Vanessa L. Gibson
Corey D. Johnson
Ritchie J. Torres
Barry S. Garodnick
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Darlene Mealy
Margaret S. Chin
David G. Greenfield
Andy L. King
Laurie A. Cumbo

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

Bill Chong

Commissioner of Department of Youth and
Community Development

Susan Haskell

Deputy Commissioner of Youth Services at DYCD

Randy Scott

Unit Head of Vulnerable and Special Needs Youth
at DYCD

Aaron Goodman

Senior Deputy Counsel for Homeless Litigation at
DYCD

Lewis Fidler

Former Chair of Youth Services Committee of New
York City Council

Alexander Perez

Charles Whitewolf

Nadia Swanson

Ali Forney Center

Craig Hughes

Urban Justice Center

Jeremy Kohomban

Children's Village

Urraine Williams [sp?]

Bronx Defenders

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

Giselle Routhier
Legal Aid Society

Kate de Zengotita
Legal Aid Society

Jamie Powlovich
Coalition for the Homeless

Jenn Strashnick
Covenant House New York

Jeff Foreman
Care for the Homeless

Elia Johnson
Brooklyn Defenders

Catherine Trapani
Homeless Services United

Carolyn Strudwick
Safe Horizon

Towak Komatsu [sp?]

Reed Vreeland
Housing Works

Jawanza James Williams
Vocal New York

Nicole Giannone
Ali Forney

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

Ramone LaClerk [sp?]
Vocal New York

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good morning. I'm
3 Council Member Mathieu Eugene, Chair of the Youth
4 Services Committee, and I'm pleased to be holding
5 this joint hearing with my colleague, Council Member
6 Stephen Levin, Chair of the General Welfare
7 Committee. Before we start the hearing, I would like
8 to ask you to take a moment to think about the victim
9 of the natural disasters in Puerto Rico and the
10 Caribbean and Mexico and Texas. And as you know, as
11 we're gathering today that many people don't have
12 shelter, and we're going to talk about shelters for
13 young people, and that many young people also don't
14 have shelters or are facing difficulties to get
15 access to the basic necessities, and I want to ask
16 you to remember please to do-- to send relief and see
17 if we can alleviate the burden that they're facing
18 and also help them in their life. And unfortunately,
19 there's another tragedy in the Bronx, also. You
20 know, young people have been the victim due to
21 bullying and violence. This is another way to say
22 that we as a city, as a society, we got so much to
23 do. Make sure that all young people, they are
24 protected, all young people they have a better life
25 and they are safe. Please remember to pray for the

2 family of the victim and to do everything that we can
3 do together as a city to make sure that New York City
4 is a better place for everybody, and also to ensure
5 that those who need basic necessity can have, you
6 know, what they need in their lives to be a better
7 life. Thank you very much. The last hearing the
8 Youth Services Committee held on the runaway and
9 homeless youth was on November 30th, 2015 where we
10 heard the two bills which eventually became law. One
11 required city employees to receive training on hard
12 to identify runaway youth, homeless youth and
13 sexually exploited youth. While there's still going
14 to be required that the Administration of Children's
15 Services and the Department of Youth and Community
16 Development to submit a report including how many
17 children are self-reported on either agency, and are
18 identified as sexually exploited children. While
19 those laws were a step in the right direction, we
20 know that runaway and homeless youth continue to
21 experience significant challenges as they attempt to
22 find a safe place that provides food, shelter, access
23 to medical services, as well as support services, and
24 are helping them get back on their feet. To survive,
25 many runaway and homeless youth will sleep on

2 friend's or stranger's couch, on train or bus
3 terminal, or engage survival sex. To make matters
4 worse, homeless youth are so easy prey to people in
5 the human trafficking industry who exploit the lack
6 of enough shelter bed to entice youth to follow them.
7 I'm also worried about the youth who identify
8 themselves as LGBTQ, because they are more vulnerable
9 to violence and exploitation when they are forced out
10 of their home because of rejection, abandonment and
11 other reasons. Homeless LGBTQ youth find it
12 extremely difficult to navigate the street because
13 they're often encounter a society that blindly
14 discriminates and stigmatize them because of their
15 sexual orientation. These [inaudible] make LGBTQ
16 youth increasingly vulnerable to mental health and
17 substance abuse issue. These factors underscore the
18 importance of inadequate shelter system that provides
19 the necessary service to provide runaway and homeless
20 youth with services they need to live healthy and
21 productive lives. The experiences of runaway and
22 homeless youth emphasize the importance of having
23 shelters that guarantee their safety as well as
24 provide the necessary support services that will
25 allow them to get back on their feet. However, many

2 homeless youth have gone to shelters only to find
3 them full with long waiting lists, while some of
4 those homeless youth, including LGBTQ-identifying
5 youth, may be referred to an adult Department of
6 Homeless Services shelter, many complain that I've
7 been bullied and harassed by older adult resident.
8 This force many youth to leave the shelter and go
9 back to the street in an attempt to make it on their
10 own. This, of course, make it difficult for homeless
11 youth to access important services that are necessary
12 for them to rebuild their life. While the
13 Administration has continued to increase the number
14 of shelter beds available and put in place additional
15 drop-in center, there are serious concerns about
16 whether this will be enough to meet the need of
17 homeless youth. Last year's youth count [sic] reveal
18 there were more homeless youth than previously
19 reported. Additionally, with the City [sic]
20 regulation [sic] now are low in shelters to serve
21 youth up to the age of 24 as well as increasing the
22 number of days youth would stay in shelters, that
23 means more youth will be eligible for shelter
24 services. However, if the projected increase of
25 shelter beds is not enough to meet their demand, then

2 we will continue to see homeless youth across New
3 York City. This is not acceptable, and we must as a
4 city do better. Today's hearing will allow us to
5 learn more about what DYCD and DHS are doing to
6 ensure that runaway and homeless youth are receiving
7 the services that they need to succeed in the City.
8 I'm especially interested in what are DYCD plans to
9 modify its shelter program in response to the recent
10 change in state regulations which will allow youth up
11 to the age of 24 to stay in the transitional and
12 definitely [sic] facilities in crisis. These factors
13 underscore the importance of an adequate shelter
14 system that provide the necessary service to provide
15 runaway homeless youth with services they need to
16 live healthy and productive life. Those regulations
17 also allows crisis shelter to permit youth to remain
18 there for 120 days while teen facilities can permit
19 youth to stay for 24 months. As I mentioned earlier,
20 this remain [sic] more youth will be eligible to stay
21 in DYCD shelters and in some instances for longer
22 period of time. The bills we are having the hearing
23 on today, for [inaudible] to improve city services at
24 runaway and homeless youth. Council Member Corey
25 Johnson, who is the sponsor of two of the bills,

2 Introduction 1619 and Introduction 1700, has joined
3 us, and we'll let deliver his opening statement very
4 soon. Introduction 1619 would require DYCD to
5 provide a report on youth who have been turned away
6 from any of the shelters and provide a reason why
7 they were turned away. Introduction 1699 would
8 require DYCD to provide runaway and homeless youth
9 age 14 and older residing in youth crisis service
10 program to be allowed to stay in the program on a
11 voluntary basis for up to 60 days or 120 days if the
12 youth and parents, guardian, and custodian agree in
13 writing that the youth could stay in the program.
14 Introduction 1700 would require DYCD to submit an
15 annual report on runaway and homeless youth. The
16 report would include information such as description
17 of the type of service runaway and homeless youth
18 need. This bill would also require DYCD to provide
19 shelter services to all runaway and homeless youth
20 who request shelter. Introduction 1705 would require
21 DHS and DYCD to implement an intake and assessment
22 process for any runaway and homeless youth who want
23 to enter a DHS shelter. Introduction 1706 would
24 require DYCD to provide runaway and homeless youth
25 services, including shelter services to homeless

2 youth. Although, in the same manner, those services
3 are provided to runaway youth and homeless youth. I
4 want to thank the Youth Services Committee staff
5 Keywu Gishu [sp?], Michael Benjamin and Jessica
6 Ankerman [sp?], as well as the General Welfare
7 Committee staff for preparing this important hearing.
8 I would also like to thank Ethan Tucker [sp?], my
9 Legislative and Budget Director, for his ongoing
10 commitment to youth in New York City on a daily
11 basis. And also to all of you here, I want to thank
12 you for what you have been doing for the young people
13 in New York City, and I think that as a team, as a
14 society, we are all part of the same team, we will
15 continue to work for the young people and by working
16 together we'll improve the life of those young
17 people. And to DYCD, Commissioner, thank you very
18 much for what you have been doing for the young
19 people, and thank you to all your staff. But again,
20 we have to do more, and as a team, I'm convinced that
21 we'll continue to do better. Thank you very much.
22 Now, let me turn it over to my Co-Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Chair
24 Eugene. Good morning, everybody. I'm Council Member
25 Steve Levin, Chair of the Council's Committee on

2 General Welfare. I want to thank everybody for
3 coming out today for today's hearing on safe and
4 accessible shelters for homeless youth. I'd
5 especially like to thank Council Member Mathieu
6 Eugene, Chair of the Youth Services Committee, for
7 agreeing to join with the Committee on General
8 Welfare to conduct this hearing. As we are all
9 aware, homeless youth have a unique set of
10 vulnerabilities that make the path to permanency even
11 more difficult than their older adult counterparts.
12 Young people age 18 and older may enter the
13 Department of Homeless Services' shelter system when
14 they age out or time out of DYCD or HY crisis shelter
15 or TIL [sic] facilities, or when they are unable to
16 access these facilities because they are at capacity.
17 Although homeless youth have access to the DHS
18 shelter system, the fact of the matter is that young
19 people may feel unsafe going into the DHS single
20 adult system, and that's totally understandable, and
21 really, under no circumstances should we be in the
22 situation of transitioning young and vulnerable 18,
23 19, 20-year-olds into the DHS single adult system.
24 That's not acceptable to me and to this committee.
25 DHS currently has three shelters. That's outside of

2 the three shelters that they've-- that have come
3 online in recent years that solely house young
4 adults, including the new shelter that serves LGBTQ
5 youth ages 21 to 30. However, these DHS youth-
6 specific shelters only have a capacity of 167 beds in
7 total. Although it is difficult to gauge the actual
8 total number of homeless youth in the City, clearly
9 there are not enough beds for this population between
10 the DYCD and DHS systems, and so we must do more. In
11 April of this year, the General Welfare Committee
12 held a hearing titled, "Reforms to the Homeless
13 Services One Year Later," to discuss and evaluate the
14 46 reforms that tackle the homelessness crisis over
15 the course of the past year based on DHS' 90-day
16 review which was conducted in 2016. With regard to
17 homeless youth in the DYCD system, the 90-day review
18 included four recommendations. One, target services
19 and rental assistance for youth in DYCD shelters at
20 risk of entering the DHS system. Two, triple the
21 number of DYCD or HY shelter capacity to 5,073 by FY
22 19, which is for those of you that don't speak budget
23 language, FY 19 starts on July 1st of next year, nine
24 months from now. Number three, streamline access to
25 DYCD shelter for homeless youth. Number four,

2 targeting services for emerging new trends in the
3 single adult population, particularly those who are
4 aged 18 to 24. Today, this committee seeks to learn
5 about the City's progress in meeting these particular
6 goals from the 90-day review, which again, was
7 released in April of 2016, well over a year ago. At
8 this time, I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues who
9 are here today. We have Council Member Corey Johnson
10 sponsoring a number of these pieces of legislation,
11 Council Member Barry Grodenchik as well, and then we
12 expect to be joined by other members of the General
13 Welfare and Youth Services Committee. I also want to
14 thank the staff of the General Welfare Committee,
15 Andrea Vasquez [sp?], Senior Counsel, Tanya Cyrus,
16 Senior Policy Analyst, Doheni Sompura [sp?], Unit
17 Head, and Finance Division Numera Nuzhat [sp?],
18 Finance Analyst, Stacy Ward [sp?], Legal Fellow, for
19 putting this hearing together on the General Welfare
20 side. I'd also like to thank the Youth Services
21 Committee staff, and obviously, Council Member
22 Mathieu Eugene. I'd also like to thank my Chief of
23 Staff Johnathan Bouche [sp?] and Budget Director
24 Edward Paulino. And now, I'd like to turn it over
25

2 to-- back over to Chair Eugene and Council Member
3 Corey Johnson for remarks.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.
5 Before I call Council Member Corey Johnson, let me
6 take the opportunity also to welcome back, you know,
7 former Council Member Lew Fidler. He's here with us.
8 It is a pleasure to see you, Lew. Thank you. And I
9 want to say also, Lew Fidler was my predecessor.
10 That mean he was the Chairman of the Youth Services
11 Committee. He has done a tremendous, remarkable job,
12 and I would like to do as much as he has done, you
13 know. And I want to say that Lew Fidler have been
14 advocating for youth many years before. When I had
15 my youth organization he was one of my first, one of
16 the first supporter of my youth organization, giving
17 discretionary funding to my organization and other
18 organization to provide services to the young people.
19 Thank you very much, Lew, for everything you have
20 done for the young people in New York City. Thank
21 you so much. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Chair Eugene, I'd
23 also like to add that I'll be channeling my internal
24 Lew Fidler for the remainder of the hearing. Watch
25 out.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, now let me call
3 Council Member Corey Johnson for his remarks.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: I thank you,
5 Chairs Levin and Eugene, for holding this hearing
6 today and hearing this package of legislation.
7 Runaway, homeless youth are commonly referred to as
8 one of the most vulnerable populations in New York,
9 and the word "vulnerable" gets used a lot. It's
10 palatable in polite conversations and news stories,
11 but it doesn't fully describe the gruesome reality of
12 physical, mental, emotional, and sexual abuse and
13 exploitation that young people endure when they're
14 forced to live on the street in New York City. The
15 word "vulnerable" is not the urgent call to action
16 that this situation requires. There is no disputing
17 the great progress that our city has made with
18 respect to housing and serving these young people.
19 Commissioner Chong and I were talking about that
20 before the hearing started. The additional beds and
21 programs the Administration has provided has
22 certainly made a difference, but there is still more
23 work to be done. To fully address the needs of this
24 population, we must come to terms with the size and
25 scope of how many young people need our help. We

2 have to understand this problem fully to know the
3 resources that are needed to solve it. Also, our
4 current policies don't match the reality on the
5 ground that the service providers that are here today
6 grapple with every single day. Antiquated age
7 restrictions and stay limits in youth shelters are a
8 disservice to young people who often have spent their
9 childhood undergoing a variety of abuses, traumas and
10 stress. An old-fashioned check-the-boxes approach to
11 housing, protecting and serving these young people
12 allows too many to fall through the cracks. We have
13 to view each case individually and holistically so we
14 can give these young people a chance at a happy,
15 healthy and successful life. There are a few issues
16 facing our city more serious than this one, and we
17 must do everything in our power to take care of our
18 youth. It's been a long road that has taken us here,
19 and we have come a long way thanks to folks like
20 former Council Member Lew Fidler. That is in large
21 part also because of the incredible advocates who are
22 working on this issue here today. I want to thank
23 each one of them, and I want to acknowledge the young
24 people, the folks that some of whom have experienced
25 this and they're here to talk about their

2 experiences. So, it's not speaking on their behalf,
3 but it's them speaking for themselves and about their
4 own experiences. I'd like to thank General Welfare
5 Chair Steve Levin and Youth Services Chair Mathieu
6 Eugene again for holding this hearing today, my
7 colleagues for their contribution and support,
8 especially Council Members Gibson, Salamanca and
9 Torres. Together, I really hope that we will ensure
10 that no child is forced to ever, ever have to sleep
11 on the streets of New York City. Thank you, Chairs.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much
13 Council Member Johnson.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your
15 right hands so I can swear you in, everyone at the
16 table. Thank you. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
17 the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your
18 testimony before this committee and to respond
19 honestly to the Council Members' questions? All say
20 "I do." Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And again, thank you
22 very much, Commissioner, and thank you all of you
23 from DYCD. Thank you very much. Commissioner, you
24 may start at any time.

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Okay, good morning,
3 Chair Levin, Chair Eugene, Chair Johnson, and members
4 of the Committees on General Welfare and Youth
5 Services. I'm Bill Chong, Commissioner of the
6 Department of Youth and Community Development. I'm
7 joined by Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner of Youth
8 Services, Randy Scott, Unit Head of Vulnerable and
9 Special Needs Youth, and Aaron Goodman, Senior Deputy
10 Counsel for Homeless Litigation and Program Counsel
11 of the Department of the Social Services. Thank you
12 for the chance to testify before-- to testify today
13 on this important topic. We appreciate the City
14 Council's longstanding interest in and support of
15 DYCD's runaway and homeless youth programs. DYCD is
16 very proud of the significant progress we have made
17 in serving runaway and homeless youth. Under Mayor
18 de Blasio, New York City has made an unprecedented
19 investment to expand the number of beds and enhanced
20 services for this population by increasing baseline
21 funding for RHY programs by 20 million or 250
22 percent. DYCD's RHY programs are designed to serve
23 youth holistically, enabling them to obtain the
24 services needed to place them on a path of safe
25 shelter and stability. We are committed to helping

2 these young people, young New Yorkers, rebuild their
3 lives. DYCD funds an integrated portfolio of runaway
4 and homeless youth services that are delivered by
5 community-based providers through contracts. The
6 three types of services include residential services,
7 drop-in services, and street outreach. Residential
8 services are comprised of crisis shelter beds and
9 transitional, independent living beds serving youth
10 ages 16 to 20. The New York State Office of Children
11 and Family Services, OCFS, regulates all residential
12 services provided by youth bureaus across New York
13 State. DYCD is the designated youth bureau for New
14 York City. Crisis shelters provide emergency shelter
15 and crisis intervention services. Under current
16 state regulations, youth are housed on a short-term
17 basis for up to 30 days with a chance to extend their
18 stay for additional 30 days. Youth stay voluntarily
19 while staff take efforts to unite them with family.
20 In cases where family reunification is not possible,
21 provider staff work with youth to identify
22 appropriate transitional and long-term placements.
23 Transitional independent living residents represent a
24 longer term option that provide support and shelter
25 as well as youth establish independent life through

2 educational programs and vocational courses, job
3 placement and assistance, counseling and training,
4 and basic life skills. Youth may stay at a TIL
5 shelter for up to 18 months are typically referred
6 from crisis shelters. Drop-in centers serve young
7 people up to age 24 and are located in each borough.
8 Youth provided with basic needs such as food and
9 clothing and supportive services such as recreational
10 activities, health and educational workshops,
11 counseling and referrals to additional services,
12 including shelter. Street outreach focuses on
13 locations in the City where runaway and homeless
14 youth tend to congregate, offering on-the-spot
15 information and counseling. The goal is develop a
16 report with young people and connect them to
17 services, eventually shelter. Under Mayor de
18 Blasio's leadership, this Administration has taken
19 very specific actions to improve the lives of runaway
20 and homeless youth. Beginning with his first budget
21 in Fiscal 2015, the Mayo initiated an expansion of
22 DYCD shelter beds, adding funding for 100 beds,
23 followed by another 100 beds in Fiscal 2016, bringing
24 the total of funded beds to 453 at that point. In
25 January 2016, Mayor de Blasio announced investments

2 to fund another 300 shelter beds by Fiscal Year 2019.

3 This Administration will have tripled the funding for

4 RHY programs. Currently, 525 RHY shelter beds are

5 open and available to young people, double what was

6 available under the prior administration. In the

7 current fiscal year, 120 beds are in progress, 52 in

8 contract, 38 are proposed and being evaluated through

9 an open-ended RFP, and funding is available for an

10 additional 38. Having served under the prior

11 Administration, I remember the annual instability we

12 faced regarding the City's funding of runaway

13 homeless youth programs and the budget negotiations

14 would take place every year between the

15 Administration and the Council. For several years,

16 much of the funding was not agreed upon until the

17 adopted City budget, leaving shelter bed providers

18 and the youth they served in a state of uncertainty.

19 In contrast, this Administration has committed every

20 year to make additional investments and has brought

21 stability and growth through the services that

22 runaway and homeless youth need and deserve. More

23 youth can access shelter beds than ever before, and

24 on average night there are dozens of beds available

25 to help a young person in need. The average

2 residential program utilization rate has been about
3 90 percent. We're always planning for the future
4 delivery of RHY programs and services. On September
5 18th, DYCD released a concept paper for its RHY
6 services. Highlights of the concept paper include
7 funding for a planned shelter bed expansion and two
8 24 drop-in centers as well as an increase in the
9 price per bed to 47,000 dollars. Comments are due by
10 October 24th, 2017. An RFP will be issued later this
11 year for contracts and is scheduled to begin July 1st
12 of 2018. We've also made investments to ensure that
13 runaway and homeless youth have access to high-
14 quality mental health services. All DYCD RHY
15 programs receive ThriveNYC funding to support youth
16 mental health needs through direct services,
17 including mental health assessments and wellness
18 activities. Each month, providers share success
19 stories with DYCD to highlight the impact of these
20 resources on young people. We are pleased to hear
21 that young people are seeking help more than ever
22 before. In a recent West Stat [sic] survey of young
23 people in TIL programs, 72 percent of young people
24 reported accessing mental health services. Before
25 turning to the legislation on today's hearing agenda,

2 I want to share exciting news. Last week, first lady
3 Chirlane McCray announced the New York City Unity
4 Project, the City's first ever multiagency strategy
5 to deliver services to address the unique challenges
6 and unmet needs of LGBTQ youth. A high proportion of
7 the overall runaway homeless youth population
8 identifies as LGBTQ. We are thrilled that DYCD is one
9 of 16 agencies involved Unity Project. As part of
10 the announcement, the City invested in new funding to
11 enhance services at all seven DYCD drop-in centers to
12 serve an additional 2,400 young people annually. A
13 second drop-in center will open 24/7 in Queens
14 modeled after the successful 24/7 drop-in center
15 provided by the Ali Forney Center in Harlem. I will
16 now offer comments about the proposed legislation on
17 today's agenda. We welcome the opportunity to meet
18 with Council sponsors after today's meeting and to
19 discuss the bills in greater detail. Intro. 1619
20 would require an annual report on the number of youth
21 who are turned away from DYCD shelter beds. As I've
22 mentioned earlier in my testimony, we are fortunate
23 to have available beds on any given night for young
24 people who need them. If one site does not have the
25 availability, providers refer young people to

2 programs that do have availability. No one is turned
3 away from shelter. Regarding the next four bills, I
4 want to first recommend-- comment on the new on the
5 new State Law that was enacted in June and will take
6 effect January 1st, 2018. These State Law Amendments
7 to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act authorize
8 municipalities of youth bureaus to provide expanded
9 services to the 21 to 24-year-old population.

10 Unfortunately, the State did not provide any funding
11 for program expansion and so we have significant
12 concerns about the feasibility of implementing
13 aspects of these revised laws, as they would be
14 extremely financially onerous. Department of Homeless
15 Services recently estimated that there were 19,000 21
16 to 24-year-olds in adult shelters, including 700
17 single adults and 1,200 single females with children.
18 DYCD collaborates closely with HRA and the Department
19 of Homeless Services to support youth ages 21 to 24
20 in several areas. Examples include: DYCD and DHS are
21 piloting a new process to streamline shelter access
22 for young people who are aging out or timing out of a
23 DYCD-funded shelter. When a young person nears the
24 point of aging out or timing out, a DYCD shelter bed
25 provider will obtain the youth's consent to provide

2 certain information to DHS in advance to exiting.

3 This will allow DHS to obtain certain need intake and

4 assessment-related information in order to identify a

5 program shelter bed. Young adults will be able to

6 bypass intake and assessment in the single adult

7 system and in the families with children and adult

8 family system so they can be placed directly in

9 shelter with presumptive shelter eligibility. DYCD

10 is training intake staff at all sites on expanded RHY

11 resources to inform young people ages 18 to 20 who

12 are seeking shelter about DYCD's funded RHY services.

13 As part of the City's 15/15 Supportive Housing

14 Initiative, the City has designated approximately

15 1,500 units as youth-specific supportive housing for

16 ages 18 to 25. The City released an RFP on February

17 24th to concrete [sic] supportive housing units.

18 Runaway and homeless youth will be eligible for these

19 units. We're working with HRA to help eligible youth

20 apply for and access LINC housing subsidies. This is

21 part of the broader effort to streamline the City's

22 various rental assistance programs and we will

23 continue to update the committee as details are

24 finalized. DHS is also improving services for young

25 adults, including opening Marsha's House in Council

2 Member Ritchie Torres' district in the Bronx, the
3 first-ever shelter for LGBTQ young adults in the
4 adult system. DYCD has been able to facilitate
5 successful referrals for youth coming from the RHY
6 programs. I want to emphasize that we support the
7 intent of the following bills. It would be extremely
8 challenging-- while we support-- I want to emphasize.
9 While we support the intent of the following bills,
10 it would be extremely challenging for the
11 Administration to implement these measures without
12 adequate funding. I encourage legislators and
13 advocates in this room to use their voices to
14 advocate to the state to take the steps necessary to
15 sufficiently fund such an expansion. We have another
16 fundamental concern about the Council's proposals.
17 Under State Law, DYCD and other youth bureaus
18 throughout the state have been designated the
19 authority to create a comprehensive plan for
20 providing services including residential services for
21 runaway and homeless youth. This discretion from the
22 state is limited, in that we must attain state
23 approval for our plan and shelter providers must
24 comply with OCFS regulations. The state law gives
25 DYCD more flexibility than those bills would allow.

2 These four bills are inconsistent with the state
3 legislative and regulatory framework than entrust
4 responsibility for these programs with localities'
5 youth bureaus. Intro 1699 would increase the maximum
6 length of stay to 120 days in crisis shelters and 24
7 months in TILs. DYCD supports the increase and
8 length of stay. In fact, I've advocated with this
9 change to the OCFS Commission since 2014. This
10 increase in length of stay was included in the new
11 state law. While we agree with the substance, we have
12 concerns that the bill would inhibit DYCD's
13 administrative authority as the youth bureau for New
14 York City and our discretion to determine what to
15 include in the City's annual plan submitted to OCFS.
16 It is essential that we retain flexibility to adjust
17 program design to be responsive to changing and
18 evolving needs. Intro. 1700 would require a new
19 annual report on runaway and homeless youth and would
20 mandate DYCD's providers to offer shelter services to
21 all runaway and homeless youth who request it using
22 the RHY definition of up to the age 24 as authorized
23 in the new state law. There is significant more
24 young adults age 21 to 24 than there are youth under
25 age 21 who are homeless in New York City. An

2 unintended consequence of this bill could be to
3 potentially displace younger, more vulnerable youth
4 and slow down the progress we've made in meeting
5 their needs. While we are also very concerned about
6 the information that Intro. 1700 seeks to include
7 into annual runaway and homeless youth report, as it
8 would be very difficult and in some instance
9 inappropriate to collect some of this information.
10 For example, some young people may not wish to
11 discuss sensitive personal matters such as physical
12 disability or religion. In other instances it is
13 duplicate of the current laws and such efforts such
14 as the demographics data required by Local Laws 126,
15 127 and 128, or information about sexual exploitation
16 required in the Safe Harbor Report. Finally, DYCD
17 would not be able to report nonprofit resources
18 available to serve runaway and homeless youth.
19 Intro. 1705 proposes a significant policy and service
20 change with DHS and DYCD. It would require DYCD to
21 conduct intakes and assessment process for all young
22 adults seeking access to DHS shelters, thereby
23 transferring the responsibility from DHS to DYCD.
24 Reflected of the state law, the changes would include
25 young adults ages 18 to 21-- ages 21 to 23 who are

2 not in DYCD services. DYCD is currently working with
3 DHS to create and test a referral process for youth
4 ages 18 to 20 in DYCD-funded programs, and we believe
5 that legislating this procedure is premature.

6 Further, we are concerned that the Council
7 legislation would mandate approaches beyond DYCD's
8 current capacity. Intro. 1706 would require all RHY
9 services to be provided to youth ages 21 to 24 in the
10 same manner as services from ages up to 21. Young
11 adults have different needs than youth ages 16 to 20.

12 This bill would not allow for different program
13 models for young adults and may be more appropriate
14 than what's been developed for the 16 to 20 year
15 olds. Discussions are ongoing within the
16 Administration as to the best approaches and program
17 models for shelter beds and services for young adults
18 ages 20 to 24 in the roles of DYCD and DHS. Intro.
19 1706 would negate these discussions and mandate an
20 approach before the Administration has fully
21 evaluated and decided on the right strategy for
22 serving young adults. Moreover, this bill is
23 reflective of the new state law which although
24 substantially praiseworthy remains unfunded mandate.

25 Moving forward, Mayor de Blasio and DYCD remain

2 committed to meeting the needs of runaway and
3 homeless youth. We've made incredible progress and
4 we're focused on continuing the expansion of
5 residential programs that triple the number of
6 available beds for youth ages 16 to 20 by 2019. We
7 greatly appreciate the City Council's support and
8 interest in ensuring that runaway and homeless youth
9 have quality services that meet their needs. We look
10 forward to continuing to work together to improve the
11 lives of these young people. Thank you again for the
12 chance to testify today, and we welcome your
13 questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,
15 Commissioner Chong. How many young people, youth,
16 homeless youth that you are serving currently?

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: How many young
18 people--

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] I mean,
20 homeless youth you are serving currently.

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Oh. You want to--

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We have 525
23 beds open. Some--

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Can
25 you state your name for the record, please?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Susan
3 Haskell, Deputy Commissioner of Youth Services.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: How many you said?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We have 525
6 open beds. So, at any given time we have up to 525
7 young people in those beds. Our utilization tends to
8 hover around 90 percent. So, we typically have about
9 50 beds available. So, something, you know,
10 approximately 475 young people each night in our
11 crisis in total beds.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, you have serving
13 approximately 400-- 469?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Seventy-
15 five, approximately, roughly.

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Every night?

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's an average of--

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Yeah.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Because we have 525
20 beds available, and so not all programs are fully
21 occupied. So, the average system wide is 90 percent
22 utilization rate. So, 90 percent of 525 is 475, or--
23 yeah, 475.

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, we can say
25 approximately 475 youth.

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right,
3 approximately.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Approximately.

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I mean, it's a
6 snapshot any given night. It might be higher. It
7 might be lower.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, what was the
9 number-- what was the number last year?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I'm looking
11 for the MMR numbers for last year. It was
12 approximately-- it was in the few hundreds for youth
13 served in our Transitional Independent Living beds,
14 and it was in the-- [off mic] and it was
15 approximately 2,300, I want to say. If you give me a
16 second, I got to put my glasses on. I can find the
17 exact number.

18 RANDY SCOTT: [off mic] Hello, my name is
19 Randy Scott. I'm the Unit Head of the Vulnerable and
20 Special Needs--

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Is
22 your-- I'm sorry.

23 RANDY SCOTT: [interposing] Can you hear
24 me now?

25 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes.

2 RANDY SCOTT: Alright, great. Again, my
3 name is Randy Scott. I'm the Unit Head of the
4 Vulnerable and Special Needs Youth. And in Fiscal
5 Year 17 we served about 2,340 youth in our crisis
6 shelters and 659 in our Transitional Independent
7 Living facilities.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, altogether?

9 RANDY SCOTT: Altogether that was 2,999.

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Two thousand nine
11 hundred?

12 RANDY SCOTT: Ninety-nine.

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Ninety-nine. So
14 what was the number for last year, 16?

15 RANDY SCOTT: For Fiscal Year 16 we
16 served 2,539 in our crisis, 519 in our TILs for a
17 total of 3,058.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: If we want to go
19 back one more year, 15, what was the number, 15?

20 RANDY SCOTT: In Fiscal Year 15 we served
21 2,193 in our crisis, 361 in our TILs for a total of
22 2,554.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: That mean the number
24 keep increasing, right? You have more homeless youth
25 than before.

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, no, I think it
3 reflects the growth of the system, because you have
4 to understand in 2015 is when we released funding to
5 add 100 beds. So, those beds didn't come on line
6 until 2016, and so since the last five years since
7 2016, 100 beds have been added. The money was
8 available in FY 15. So, what this says I think is
9 that as we make services more available, the
10 community groups do more outreach and are able to
11 fill the beds. So, it's growing capacity. I think
12 the need-- the number is the number that I'm getting--
13 - everyone agrees, I think, the Chairman mentioned
14 that it's a difficult number to actually come to a
15 conclusion of what is the number of homeless youth,
16 because many of the young people couch surf, meaning
17 that they stay with friends, non-relatives. So, I
18 think by making these services more available and
19 then growing them, we're able to get young people
20 from staying with their friends to staying a shelter.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, what is your
22 estimation? Do you believe that there are more young
23 people, homeless youth, that have been served today
24 than one or two years before?

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Without a doubt,
3 because I think we're doing better outreach. We have
4 more beds available. I referenced earlier in my
5 testimony I spoke to Lew Fidler that one of the
6 things that happened routinely when I was Deputy
7 Commissioner of Youth Services under the previous
8 Administration is that half the residential programs
9 that DYCD had relied on one-year funding by the
10 Council. So, every June, and this is one of the
11 things that made no sense, every June many of these
12 programs that had one-year funding had to empty the
13 beds and refer these young people to the homeless
14 service-- Department of Homeless Services or other
15 places because they weren't sure they would have
16 funding continued past July 1st. So, we've gone
17 beyond that situation. Young people are staying
18 longer. We have more beds, and you know, we
19 recognize that, you know, we need to have more beds
20 even further, because as we grow the utilization rate
21 has stayed about 90 percent. It's been pretty
22 consistent. As opposed to, let's say in the
23 Bloomberg Administration, many beds were at 100
24 percent. I mean, that was-- that was challenging,
25 because when you're at 100 percent you have nowhere

2 to go. So, we had growth now. We have capacity. We
3 feel very confident that any young person shows up at
4 any given night about 10 percent of the beds are
5 open, and we can find a bed for them.

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Before I ask you my
7 next question, I just want to mention that we have
8 been joined before by Council Member Greenfield. I
9 think he had to leave, and Council Member Margaret
10 Chin is with us also. Could you give us the
11 percentage of homeless youth who didn't have the
12 opportunity to have a bed or to receive service from
13 the shelters?

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I'm sorry--

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Based
16 on the number, the general number, of young, of
17 youth, of homeless youth you believe that exist in
18 New York City.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, let me--

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] So,
21 what is the percentage--

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] start
23 and then--

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: that don't have the
25 opportunity to receive services?

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Let me start, and
3 then--

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Or do
5 you believe that we serve 100 percent of the
6 homeless?

7 COMMISSIONER CHONG: There is no
8 universally agreed to number. I think everyone kind
9 of agrees that there is no universal number. So, I
10 can tell you what we have been doing over the last
11 few years, and then Susan and Randy can talk about
12 it. So, we do an annual youth count, which is a four-
13 day youth count for the last four years, and we work
14 with our network of providers, and it's over four
15 nights tied to the Department of Homeless Services
16 Hope Count, and we reach out to young people at
17 places not only where we have services, but at
18 libraries, wherever we think young people who may be
19 homeless are congregating. And so Susan and Randy
20 can talk about what that analysis has shown. The
21 other bit of information we have, that again this is
22 on the ground real numbers, is that usually each year
23 our street outreach programs which are designed
24 specifically to reach out to young people who might
25 be homeless on the street, and they operate late at

2 night from 10 to four in the morning to speak to
3 young people who are just hanging out to make sure
4 that they have a place to stay. On average, the-- is
5 it three programs? Yeah, three programs average
6 about 100 transports, meaning young people who are on
7 the street at night and to a shelter for services.
8 But you want to talk a little bit--

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL:
10 [interposing] Per year.

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Per year. Per year,
12 okay. So you want to talk about the youth count?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah. I
14 think we're approaching the answer to your question
15 in terms of how many young people, percentage of
16 young people get turned away from a few different
17 angles. We do ask our providers, and we work with
18 some other community centers and libraries, for
19 example. On the night of the HUD Hope Count where
20 you know the City goes around streets in the middle
21 of the night on one day to count the number of street
22 homeless people, DYCD initiates youth count which
23 doesn't look for young people on the streets at night
24 in that way because we've learned from our providers
25 and through our experience that you really don't tend

2 to see a lot of young people just sleeping on the
3 street. In that way, they're very resilient.
4 They're resourceful. They'll find places to go. So,
5 we ask our providers to use the following four days,
6 Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday to find
7 young people who were homeless on that Monday night
8 through surveys, through phone calls, through
9 incentives to come to the drop-in centers like metro
10 cards, etcetera, and we use that four days to try to
11 assess how many young people were in need of shelter.
12 And the number of unsheltered youth, like truly
13 unsheltered youth has been very small for the past
14 couple years, around 44 unsheltered youth age 21 or
15 under as part of the youth count. Many more are
16 unstably housed. We recognize that. We work with
17 those young people throughout drop-in centers.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, that means you
19 don't have a clear idea of the number of the
20 percentage of young people who have been served or
21 those who have not been served. There's no clear
22 count, you know. There's no exactly number.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: If I could
24 add one more thing to that. We-- DYCD has never
25 asked our provider to report to us young people that

2 they're not serving. They report to us young people
3 that they have served. But we have-- we do work
4 closely with our providers, and at times they have
5 told us the number of people that they haven't been
6 able to serve, that what their-- the number of people
7 that they've turned away or that they have, you know,
8 on their own waiting list, whether or not a bed was
9 available at another provider. We have seen some of
10 the providers that has the longest, the biggest
11 numbers of young people who couldn't be served for
12 say we really don't have to turn a young person away
13 anymore. Providers like Covenant House, one of our
14 largest providers, or Ali Forney are telling us we
15 really don't have to turn-- we can find a bed for any
16 young person right now. And that is also proven in
17 our vacancy rates. We don't only have approximately
18 50 roughly speaking beds available each night, but we
19 look at those beds, does that include beds for males,
20 beds for females, beds for socialized in LGBT, too.
21 We kind of look to make sure we would have everything
22 covered. And it's too early to say we're done. It's
23 way too early. We have more expansion to do, but
24 evidence right now shows that, you know, if you're
25 telling me you have a young person who can't get a

2 bed, you need to call us and let us help you access
3 available resources.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I think that even--
5 I do appreciate, you know, your effort and your
6 services that you provide to the young people, but I
7 think that we have to know how many young people that
8 we serve and how many also that are seen out there
9 and who don't receive services. You have to be able
10 to qualify or evaluate that. How many young people
11 we have on the street and they don't get access to a
12 shelter, that don't get access to those beds, how
13 many are they? We have to know that in order for us
14 to improve the services--

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well, I
16 think the youth count is a good example. I mean,
17 we're working with the people who are serving young
18 people who are homeless, and based on their efforts the
19 last two years it's been 43 young people who are
20 truly unsheltered. That doesn't mean-- that doesn't
21 necessarily count the people who might be staying
22 with friends, and that's the hard number to try to
23 get to. That's a universe of people that's probably
24 bigger than we really know, but truly unsheltered,
25 meaning they really had nowhere to stay on that

2 Monday night of the count was 43. So, if that was--
3 and that's a pretty accurate number, because it's the
4 number for the last two years. So, the larger
5 universe, which is the one that's the unknown is
6 those that are couch surfing, and that's something
7 that, you know, we continue to work to get word out
8 about our services. That's part of the reason why we
9 advocated for additional funding to have a 24-hour
10 drop-in center added to Queens because we know that
11 the lives of young people are not nine to five, that
12 they may be working, that-- we want to make it easier
13 for them to access services. Because those that are
14 couch surfing are the ones that probably the hardest
15 to find.

16 RANDY SCOTT: Thank you. I just want to
17 add from the Department of Social Services HOME-STAT
18 program, the investment that we've made in HOME-STAT
19 has allowed us to do so much more outreach on the
20 streets, and what we're seeing on the street from our
21 HOME-STAT teams is very similar to what my colleagues
22 have been talking about with the point-in-time
23 counts. We are not-- we are seeing a very small
24 number of youth under the age of 21 on the streets,
25 and 21 to-- ages 21 to 30 in the last HOME-STAT

2 count, about 3,500 individual-- unsheltered
3 individuals on the street, for the ages of 21 to 30
4 there were about 250 of that 3,500 counted in that
5 age cohort and a much smaller percentage, around 40,
6 that were under 21.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, what happen to
8 the young people-- Let's say for example, the young
9 people who come to DYCD shelter and they're turned
10 away, what happens to them? Are they referred to
11 other services, and do you have any follow-up to find
12 out what happened to them?

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No one is turned away
14 now, because we've grown the system so dramatically.
15 That was the case three years ago where I would say
16 that because there weren't enough beds we had 100
17 percent utilization that if a young person showed up
18 and you had 100 percent utilization, they would be
19 refer-- and if they were 18 and older, they would be
20 referred to the Department of Homeless Services. The
21 numbers are probably non-existent referral to DHS
22 shelters now, because we're growing the system to the
23 point where those who present themselves for
24 services, we can find a bed for them. It may not be
25 the program they want, but there's a bed for them.

2 But we continue to expand the system because we have
3 recognized that the needs of young people, whether
4 they're homeless or not, are diverse. So we want to
5 have specialization. That's why I'm proud of the
6 fact-- you know, I was discussing with Lew Fidler how
7 the whole conversation about expanding services for
8 homeless gay youth really started when he and former
9 Speaker Quin allocated 1.2 million discretionary
10 money for Ali Forney, Green Chimneys and Celia's
11 Place [sic], and that was the first-- and that was 12
12 years ago. Well, today we have such specialized
13 services for gay youth. We've opened our third
14 resident for transgender youth. So, I think we're
15 trying to grow the system, but also continue the
16 specialization because we know the needs of young
17 people are very diverse.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: It seemed that the
19 new rules from the State, the new state regulation
20 creates some challenges [inaudible] shared our
21 resources, strategies. What is your plan to address
22 this situation? What are you going to do work
23 together with the other provider, DHS, to address
24 this issue? It seemed that, you know, there are
25

2 normal challenge that have been created because of
3 the state, you know, requirements.

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, as I said in
5 my testimony, and I'll repeat it, is that we think
6 that-- we encourage those who want to expand services
7 for older youth to ask the state to invest in this.
8 I asked my staff to do a quick analysis of what
9 percentage the state funding is in our programs, and
10 it's an extraordinary. In Fiscal 2013, which is the
11 last full year of the Bloomberg Administration, a
12 full calendar year, the state investment in our
13 runaway homeless-- the baseline programs, you know,
14 baseline funding, was 17 percent. Today, it's six
15 percent. That's very unfortunate. I mean, I think
16 the state which regulates these services has, I
17 think, an obligation to support them.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Of course I
19 appreciate that, that you ask the other providers to
20 ask the state to invest more funding. This is an
21 "ask" you are going to ask. You don't know what the
22 result is going to be, but do you have another plan,
23 another alternative in case it doesn't work? What
24 was--

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well,
3 you know, as I mentioned in the testimony, that one
4 of the things, and I guess this speaks to being
5 around as long as I've been around, and I was
6 speaking to the Council Member that I've served four
7 mayors, and I have to say that this Administration is
8 probably the most collaborative any Administration
9 I've worked for, and Project Unity was a great
10 example of it where 16 different agencies, including
11 DYCD, were working together to figure out how to pull
12 together all the different resources in different
13 agencies. So, the fact that for the first time that
14 there is money for supportive housing for young
15 people between the ages of 18 and 25 is a big deal.
16 It is historic, and I don't use that word lightly,
17 because for young people who have aged out of runaway
18 homeless youth program at 21, they can now access
19 supportive housing. The first of the 1,500 units is
20 coming online in February with Project Jericho. So,
21 I think our response is let's work together, the City
22 as a team, to look at the different resources,
23 because every young person who ages out at 21 is at a
24 different place. Some might need supportive housing.
25 Some might need to continue services through

2 something like Marsha's Place which is a great
3 facility which we refer young people to. Some young
4 people might be able to live on their own if they can
5 get assistance, a rental assistance voucher. So, I
6 think we have a multipronged strategy. We're not--
7 we're hoping the state comes through, but we're not
8 waiting for them.

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you. We have
10 been joined by Council Member Darlene Mealy. How
11 much money you estimate that is necessary to address
12 his financial burden created by the new requirement
13 from the state?

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We don't have a
15 number because the state hasn't given all the
16 information out. We're waiting. They keep on saying
17 they're going to be issuing regulations, because the
18 regulations will tell us how much square footage a
19 young person is entitled to. Under the current
20 regulations, anyone under 21, they have to have 30
21 square feet. What the staff qualifications are,
22 whether there will be a cap on the number of people
23 served at a particular facility. Right now, only 20
24 beds can be at any given facility. All that will
25 drive the cost because it'll determine how big of

2 space you need to get. How big of space you need to
3 get will determine the cost because the two big
4 drivers of costs in residential programs are space
5 costs and staff costs. So, as soon as we have more
6 information from the state as to what the regulations
7 guiding older youth between 21-- we can make a more
8 informed decision about the cost. The cost
9 currently, residential services for young people
10 under 21 is 47,000 dollars per bed.

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: When after receiving
12 all the detail or information that you need from the
13 state and you figure out what the cost will be, let's
14 assume that the state decided to give you a partial
15 contribution, not the full amount, something, and
16 then what is your plan? What will be the next step
17 to make sure you got enough funding, enough resources
18 to address the crisis?

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's too soon to
20 make those decisions because one, we need more
21 information to stay, and two, as you all know, and
22 this has come up in the budget hearings earlier this
23 year, that there's still great deal of uncertainty
24 about the federal budget, even though the federal
25 budget starts this Sunday they postpone decisions

2 about the recommended cuts to federal funding. So,
3 the budget cycle, as you know, starts in the early
4 part of next year. So, I think it makes sense to
5 make informed decision when we have information,
6 whether it's what the state regs are, whether the
7 state will submit additional money, what impact the
8 federal budget will have. So, I can say at this
9 point what our plan is because there are so many
10 things we don't know at this point.

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,
12 Commissioner. Let me now turn it over to my Co-
13 Chair, Council Member Levin, please.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
15 Chair Eugene. Commissioner, I want to ask, so the
16 Administration announced on January 8th, 2016 the
17 expansion to 300, you know,-- there are 300 new beds,
18 up to 753. You laid out how that's progressing in
19 your testimony, and we have some information from
20 Coalition of Runaway Homeless Youth that is a little
21 bit different but somewhat in line. That commitment,
22 753, is that 753 beds on line at the beginning of
23 FY19 or at the end of FY19?

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's the funding--

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Is it
3 funded or is it online? I guess the question--

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] So,
5 it's funded. It's funded.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It's funded?

7 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because there's a lag
9 between--

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: funded and on line,
12 right?

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How long is that lag?

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, again, I'll
16 speak to it a little bit, and then-- so it's the 753
17 for FY 19 is funded. So, we try to address this
18 because it's a rolling deadline. We have what's
19 called an open-ended request for proposal, meaning
20 that people can apply at any point because there's no
21 deadline until the money runs out.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, that's good.

24 That's actually something we've never done before and

2 that's something we borrowed from our partners at
3 DHS.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Because-- and so,
6 we're on pace. In fact, the 525th bed came on line
7 last week.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Another 132 in the
10 pipeline. So, I think we're making good progress.
11 The challenge we face because we're governed by the
12 State Office of Children and Family Service
13 regulations, there is a certain protocol we have to
14 follow which requires multiple site visits by the
15 Buildings Department, the Fire Department, the state,
16 and you want to talk a little bit about sort of what
17 typically-- how long it takes?

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I think you're--
19 sorry. I think you're explaining your answer before
20 giving your answer. So, there will-- I want to ask
21 this. Will there be 753 beds on line in FY 19?

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: At some point.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In FY 19 by June 30th
24 of 2019 there will be 752 beds on line?
25

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We're on pace to do
3 that, because--

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] You're
5 on pace to do that?

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because you've added
8 in a year and a half, you have 100 and-- how many new
9 beds do you have on line? You have 70. You have 72
10 new beds on line from the date of January 8th. Okay,
11 this is the question here, how about this? January
12 8th, 2016, point in time, how many beds did you have
13 on line?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I'm going
15 to ask Randy to look at that. I don't know that
16 specific date, but I want to tell you why we're
17 optimistic about FY 19. In each of the other years
18 where 100 beds came on line, the funding came in
19 place very close to the year it was to put in. We
20 needed this time, the lag time that Bill was talking
21 about, to get them up. Now, we have the funding. We
22 know about funding for FY 19. We have a mechanism
23 out right now for providers to apply for all of those
24 and start that six to eight month process. So we're

2 ahead for 19 further than we were for 18, 17, 16,
3 because we have more notice about funding coming up.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So,--

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] So, we
6 gave you that number at that point in time. It's not
7 the kind of number we can just--

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] It
9 wasn't 453? On line, the day that you announced the
10 new commitment.

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: You know, we'll give
12 you the exact number.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: No, wait, wait, wait,
14 wait. Let's-- I'll wait. I'll wait.

15 RANDY SCOTT: So, for Fiscal Year 15 we
16 had 337 beds.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

18 RANDY SCOTT: Fiscal Year 16, 441.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 441.

20 RANDY SCOTT: Fiscal Year 17 we had 465.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 465, okay, so Fiscal
22 17, 465 beds on line? 465 beds on line, and today
23 you have 525 on line, right?

24 RANDY SCOTT: Right.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, 525 minus 465,
3 right, is 60, right?

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: And we have 132
5 beds--

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I just--

7 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] in the
8 pipeline.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I got it. I got it
10 about the funded, right? But what I want to know is,
11 so you have increased the actual beds on line from FY
12 17, which was the year 2016, by 70 beds. So, since
13 that announcement, around since that announcement,
14 there's been an increase of 60 or 70 beds on line,
15 but you're saying that in the next year and a half
16 there will be 230 or 240 new additional beds that
17 will come on line even though in the last year and a
18 half, it's taken a year and a half to get the first
19 60 or 70 on line?

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think we have a
21 running head start, and that's the point I think that
22 Susan was trying to make is that--

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I got
24 it.

25

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: when you-- it's hard
3 to go from zero to 60 when you have two months'
4 notice, but it's easier once you get the momentum
5 going to build out over time, which is why I think
6 when we designed the expansion we knew that it's
7 better to do it over a multi-year process because it
8 does-- it is a challenge to bring on beds, and--

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay,
10 but that wasn't quite clear in the way that it was
11 rolled out, because the way it was rolled out was 300
12 beds over three years, 100 new beds each year, and
13 here we are 18 months later-- whatever, what is this,
14 a year-- it's almost 20 months later and there are 70
15 or so new beds on line.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: If I could
17 interject? That number is changing weekly, monthly,
18 really quick. We--

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Sure.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: also noted
21 we have 52 beds contracted in the process of OCFS
22 certification like pending opening. So, if you talk
23 to us next month, some of those 52--
24
25

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] If you
3 could help us expedite things with the state, we'd
4 appreciate it.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I'll get to the
6 state in a second.

7 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Because usually the
8 big bottleneck is the state certification, and so
9 often times what happens is the programs have to hire
10 staff, they have to pre-clear, and they're waiting
11 for a final sign-off by the state. So, the program,
12 for all intents and purposes, is open, but they can't
13 serve any young people.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But there's also, you
15 mentioned, beds that are funded, but not contracted.
16 That shouldn't be-- there shouldn't be any reason for
17 state lag between funded and contracted, right?

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's--

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] You have
20 the discretion to contract with whoever--

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] That's
22 why it's open-ended RFP because the biggest
23 challenge, and I'm sure providers will tell you this,
24 is finding a location, because there are very onerous
25 state regulations about how much square footage every

2 young person is entitled to. These facilities with
3 the exception of Covenant House, which is more the
4 exception than the rule, many of these programs have
5 20 or less beds, so they're conversions of two and
6 three-family houses. Not the easiest thing to find.
7 Then they have to make sure the square footage is
8 there. They have to make sure the egress issues are
9 addressed. So, part of it is driven by the safety
10 regulations that the state has imposed to make sure
11 that they're done in the right way. So, I think the
12 biggest challenge is not money. It's finding
13 locations that meet those regulations. So, someone
14 doesn't propose until they know they have a space.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. You are con--
16 I mean, this is-- the issue that I have--

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I just want to make
19 sure that we are meeting the commitments that we
20 made.

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I didn't-- nobody
23 forced the Administration to commit to 300 beds in
24 three years.

25 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I just want to make
3 sure that we are actually-- it doesn't, because you
4 know, to my eyes it doesn't quite seem like we're on
5 track because as I explained, you know, we're at 60
6 or 70 at 20 months. So you're saying that there's
7 lead-out [sic] time, but what you've just pointed to
8 is a problem that has to do with real estate and
9 regulations and so on and so forth. Are we-- do you
10 commit that we're still on track?

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So, I'll
13 hopefully still be around at the end of-- on June
14 30th, 2019. So, I should expect on that day when I
15 call you up and say are we at 753, you'll say yes,
16 there's 753 funded and on line, contract.

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. The concept
19 paper that just came out a couple of weeks ago, 10
20 days ago, mentions that it's funding 487 crisis and
21 TIL beds, right? So, obviously that doesn't match
22 up. Why? Is it this is for a different contract?
23 This is leading out some contract, so that was right?

24

25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah, the
3 most-- the contracts that were in place before this
4 Administration were mostly based on an RFP from 2008.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: And when we
7 started expanding, very often if we don't have time
8 to get an RFP out, because we're trying to bring the
9 beds on line as quickly as possible, if we have
10 providers who have the ability to get them up, we'll
11 amend one of those contracts from 2008. So, this
12 concept paper is just meant to refresh RHY contracted
13 services from that old RFP of 2008 which is most of
14 our residential programs, all of the drop-in centers,
15 and the street outreach providers. So, the newer
16 contracts that came off of recent expansion RFPs,
17 they don't have to reapply in this concept and in
18 this RFP.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Got it. Got it.

20 What I've heard from advocacy organizations is that
21 the new beds that have come on line have been skewing
22 towards TIL and not towards crisis, and that there's
23 a great need for crisis beds. You know, if anything,
24 if it's a little bit more than 50/50 should be
25 towards crisis, do you have a framework for how many

2 of the 300 beds will be TIL and how many will be
3 crisis, and what's your methodology for deciding how
4 to allocate those resources?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah.
6 That's a good question. We-- I think there is a
7 perception that we've been skewing high. We have
8 been recently, but initially the first 100 beds were
9 all crisis that the Mayor-- so that was all crisis,
10 the--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] But that
12 was as a result of a-- that was in response to
13 litigation, right?

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: This is in law-- this
16 wasn't-- the first-- which hundred beds--

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] This
18 was, I think, in Fiscal 15, right?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah.

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah. There was 100
21 beds. We brought them up pretty quickly. In fact, I
22 think, you know, the decision was made I'm going to
23 say May of 2014, and so that money was available
24 immediately. We did an RFP, and most of those were
25 crisis shelter beds.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And those were not in
3 response to litigation.

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No, there was a
5 clear need. I think the Administration was
6 commitment from the very beginning to expand services
7 in this area. It'd been neglected for many years in
8 the previous Administration, and so I think there was
9 an attempt to try to begin to expand services her.
10 So, the first hundred beds was really-- there was no
11 running start. I mean, literally I remember the
12 conversation. It was in May of 2014 with Deputy
13 Mayor Lilliam Barrios-Paoli at the time. And so we
14 ramped up very quickly. Since then, the new
15 commitment of 300 beds in January of last year allows
16 us give more runway to do more diverse programming.
17 And there have been more TILs, because I think-- and
18 part of it, I think the challenge is that, you know,
19 the length of stay issue has, you know, impacted how
20 long people can stay, so we're still waiting to see
21 what impact that will have going forward when a young
22 person can stay 120 days in two years. We may have
23 to, you know, re-think utilization where that is,
24 because if a young person stays longer, that means
25 that bed is occupied longer. So, all those things

2 are part of the, I think, the ongoing analysis we
3 have to do. We obviously want a balanced approach,
4 but then ultimately the providers will tell us what
5 their needs are, and we do see some needs in crisis
6 shelter.

7 RANDY SCOTT: And I just wanted to state
8 that we do have crisis beds in the pipeline ready to
9 come on line. So, about 58.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Fifty-eight. So,
11 okay, I'm going to ask a kind of straightforward
12 question here. How many young people on a day like
13 today where it's kind of warm out-- right, we're in
14 late September. How many young people are homeless,
15 including those that are unstably housed? So, that
16 would be people that would qualify if they were to
17 present themselves for a crisis shelter, a DYCD
18 crisis shelter?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: There's no
20 concrete answer to that, but we do have some data.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What do we think?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We, I mean,
23 we have the youth count, which is in the 40's. We
24 have the HOME-STAT--

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: which is
3 the 40s.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, I'm going to just
5 speak-- okay. So, I'll just interrupt you there.
6 Okay.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Let me say
8 a few more data points. Commissioner mentioned
9 street outreach transporting just over 100 young
10 people over the course of the entire year. This is
11 an experienced provider that knows where young people
12 are who need help. Drop-in centers, about 150
13 referrals over the course of the year, and I think
14 that our progress has exceeded communication so we
15 continue to tell anyone who will listen, including
16 Council and all the advocates here, that there are
17 beds available. There is no reason for a young
18 person not to seek help in an RHY shelter bed. So we
19 want-- we want that word to get out there. We want
20 more people to-- we don't want empty beds. We want
21 young people to come access service.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, and that would
23 include youth that are in shelter, drop-in center,
24 transitional living, in churches, couch surfing due
25 to a lack of stable housing, boyfriend or

2 girlfriend's place due to lack of stable housing,
3 hospital/mental health facility, hotel/motel, jail,
4 juvenile detention prison, sex for shelter, forced
5 sex for shelter or trafficked. Does it include that,
6 those categories? This is-- I'm going--

7 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Any
8 young person under the age of--

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] of the
10 youth count report.

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, that's what's
13 listed under unstable living--

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: situations.

16 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Any young person
17 under the age of 21.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, that is the
20 answer. Who is not either--

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Stably
22 housed.

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: is in stable
24 housing. So, any young person--

25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] And
3 what-- right. So, what's-- so you think that number
4 is?

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Based on the actual
6 outreach. This is the on-the-ground outreach done by
7 providers.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You think the number
9 is?

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, based-- for
11 the unsheltered, truly unsheltered meaning those who
12 had nowhere to sleep that evening, couch-surfing, it
13 was 44 in the last youth counts.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, right, okay.
15 So, just the youth counts. So, I want everybody to
16 know this, right? So, youth count happens on Feb--
17 it's a winter day. This is based on-- this is based
18 on the Hope Count.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: This is a winter day.
21 So you're saying--

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Can I
23 finish?

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [cross-talk] There's a
25 youth count--

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Okay,
3 but can I finish?

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: for the unsheltered.
5 Sorry, does truly unsheltered youth count include
6 people sleeping on subways, because the Hope Count
7 doesn't?

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No, I think-- I
9 can't speak to the Hope count, but the other data
10 point, which again, this comes from the people who
11 actually do the work.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I understand--

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] The
14 street outreach, which is year-round, and it's cold
15 weather--

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I just--
17 I'm looking out there. I'm seeing a lot of shaking
18 heads.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, but the number
20 is--

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] And you
22 guys say 44, so.

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: one hundred. So, if
24 you ask Safe Horizon, if you ask any of the people
25 who run the street outreach programs, that is 24--

2 that is 365 days a year during cold weather and hot
3 weather, the total number of transports is about 100.
4 SO, again, the un-- the big unknown number, and I
5 said that earlier, is those that are couch surfing.
6 Those are the ones we're trying to reach, those who
7 might be in, you know, what we call unstable living
8 situations.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Unstable, because
10 that's--

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Those
12 are the ones I think they're the hardest to reach,
13 but the most--

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Sex for
15 shelter.

16 COMMISSIONER CHONG: The most that are--

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Staying
18 overnight in a 24-hour McDonalds.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right. But as far as
20 actually young people sleeping on the street--

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] That's
22 not what I asked.

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I know, but I'm just
24 telling you, that's the number that we have a pretty
25 good-

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right,
3 yes. So, I would say yes.

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, can I say--

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] There
6 might be 44-- there might be 40. I just want
7 everybody to know. There might be 44 young people--

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: sleeping on the street
10 outside in the middle of February. Yes, maybe, okay.
11 That might make sense.

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So--

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] You'd
14 have to be pretty, pretty serious dire straits--

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Council
16 Member, can I finish my point?

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: sleeping outdoors
18 when it's 20 degrees outside in the middle of
19 February.

20 [applause]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, yeah, okay,
22 that's 44 people.

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So--

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, makes sense.
25

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, the number we
3 don't know, and I challenge anyone who can come up
4 with that number is the number of young people who
5 are couch surfing. That is a difficult number. What
6 we try to do is more outreach. You know, we--

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] But
8 there's other-- there's more than just couch surfing.
9 Couch surfing is one criteria in the youth report of
10 unstably housed. I just listed the other seven. So,
11 there are people staying in a hotel/motel, sex for
12 shelter, boyfriend and girlfriend's place due to lack
13 of stable housing, transitional living, church, any
14 of that stuff. So, that's-- so when I ask the
15 number, that's the number that we're-- because
16 that's-- I think that Council Member Eugene said,
17 look, we have to understand what our universe is. If
18 we have one report that says 3,800 that was
19 commissioned by the Council, 3,800, and then in this
20 testimony we're kind of saying, oh, 44. Obviously
21 44, the difference between 44 and 3,800 is vast.

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I mean, it's just--
24 we have--

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] I think
3 we're going to have to--

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] How do
5 we plan to move forward with such wide disparity?

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, I-- I think
7 the 3,800 was a report from 12 years ago, and I'm not
8 quite sure of its accuracy. So, I can only go based
9 on the people who delivered the service and what
10 they're telling us. There's more we can do, I agree.
11 There's a unit [sic] set [sic] people we need to
12 reach. We have to-- that's part of the rationale of
13 opening up a second drop-in center, because that's
14 how people access services. They can go there and
15 find these services. So, we're prepared to grow the
16 system. We're moving as quickly as we can, and I
17 think, you know, we're committed to expanding the
18 programs.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But--

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] If you
21 ask me what the number is, I cannot give you a
22 number, because--

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] It's
24 important to know. I mean, but to say that there are
25 44, you know, going by this-- look, anyone that works

2 in the-- in homeless, you know, services knows that,
3 you know, when that Hope Count methodology of going
4 out on the coldest night of the year, that's-- we
5 passed a bill that requires that they do quarterly,
6 you know, count, because we need DHS, because we know
7 that--

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: yes, that is supposed
10 to track those, you know, the absolute bottom line
11 most chronic homeless.

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right? So, that's
14 fine, but I don't think that that gives us an
15 accurate picture, and so anytime you recite that
16 number, I suggest that you use the caveat that that
17 is people-- I mean, you-- I'm the one that mentioned
18 that it was in the middle of February, not you guys.
19 You guys should mention it in your public testimony
20 that this is in the middle of February. This is--
21 these are the hardcore people that really have
22 nowhere else to go, not the--

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL:

24 [interposing] If I could just--

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: unstably housed.

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Could I say?

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah.

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I'll defer to
5 Homeless Services, but I believe he just said that
6 their quarterly counts show about 40 some-odd young
7 people.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In the middle of--
9 you say--

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] [cross-
11 talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In the middle of the
13 summer there are only 40-- there are the same number
14 of people that are in the middle of February in the
15 middle of summer sleeping on the street?

16 AARON GOODMAN: We're not seeing any
17 greater significant number than that.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I'm sorry, can you
19 state your name for the recording, please?

20 AARON GOODMAN: Aaron Goodman. We're not
21 seeing any greater numbers, percentage of numbers in
22 either quarterly counts that we're doing through
23 HOME-STAT for under-- for 21 and under, and as I
24 said, from 21 to 30, which is the next age bracket of
25

2 how we've broken down that population, our last HOME-
3 STAT count came across 250 in that age bracket.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, but don't you
5 think that--

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] And
7 this is--

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: defies logic that
9 there are the same number of people sleeping outside
10 in the middle of February as in the middle of July?

11 AARON GOODMAN: I won't speak. I can't
12 really fully speak to the reasons why that it's
13 happening, but we can suggest that these are
14 individuals who have chosen to engage with our street
15 outreach workers, and our outreach workers through
16 HOME-STAT and throughout the year do Herculean
17 efforts on the streets to try to engage everyone out
18 there. To the extent that there are still the
19 unstably housed population we are not encountering on
20 the streets, which is quite possible. That is why we
21 continue to encourage our advocate communities and
22 encourage young people across the City is to access
23 shelter programs, to access drop-in centers, and to
24 interact with our street outreach programs so that we
25 can get a better count of that number.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, okay. Does DYCD
3 track turn-aways to the HRY-- to crisis beds?
4 Because you said nobody gets turned away now. Do you
5 track that?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We have
7 begun working with our providers to ask them to send
8 us documentation or just a referral note if they have
9 had to turn a young person away due to a lack of
10 capacity, and we haven't seen a night where there
11 haven't been multiple available beds in many, many,
12 many months, I would say possibly over a year without
13 looking at it more closely. And so-- and those
14 referral forms that we used to get that were, if I
15 can remember, like maybe approaching 200 a couple of
16 years ago is down to zero when you look at the
17 eligible, current eligible RHY population.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, do you anticipate
19 that when you bring the next up to 753 beds on line
20 that you'll have a vacancy rate of 30 percent?

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No, because I think
22 the big unknown here is what impact the length of
23 stay will have, because if a young person is
24 occupying a bed longer instead of 60 days in crisis
25 shelter, 120 days, that bed is no longer available.

2 The same is also true for the TIL. If a young person
3 is occupying a bed instead of 18 months, 24 months,
4 that bed is no longer. So, it's too soon, as I said,
5 I think to declare victory on anything here. I think
6 we're committed to focusing our resources on the most
7 vulnerable young people to those under 21.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So, I will ask
9 then about the expansion. So, DYCD's position is you
10 support the expansion to 24 so long as there's
11 funding for it.

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We haven't made a
13 decision on that. I think we agree on the need to
14 provide services for 21 to 24. I think our strategy
15 is rather than put all your eggs in one basket is to
16 really mobilize all the resources of the City of New
17 York, whether it's supportive housing, whether it's
18 rental assistance vouchers, whether it's any number
19 of arrays, whether it's Marsha's Place expanding,
20 Marsha's Place. So our goal is to expand services
21 for 21 and 24-year-olds. That does not mean we made
22 a decision yet to--

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] What
24 percentage of people go out of youth-- or go out of
25 DYCD shelter into permanent housing?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: What do you
3 mean by permanent housing? It's-- I mean, it's hard
4 for a 21-year-old to be ready for independent living
5 if that's what you mean. That's the importance of
6 having the connection with our partners on housing
7 subsidies, on supportive housing, on other housing
8 options.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, okay. So, in
10 terms of subsidies, we can talk about this for a
11 second, Commissioner Tietz testified at our
12 supportive housing hearing in the spring that by
13 December youth coming out of DYCD system will have
14 vouchers in-hand, by December of this year. Is that
15 on track?

16 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We still are working
17 toward that target. We're finalizing--

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Tick-
19 tock, that's--

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] We
21 certainly understand. The initial LINC programs when
22 they were rolled out in September, in the fall of
23 2015 to the spring of 2016 were done as emergency
24 rules in order to fill an important needed vacuum
25 that was left from the prior Administration's

2 termination of Advantage. We are still learning
3 where the gaps were in that rule-making process and
4 how we can improve rental assistance vouchers across
5 the system, not only for runaway and homeless youth
6 in DYCD programs, but also for the rest of the
7 populations in DHS shelter and those who may be in
8 need of shelter, those at risk of homelessness and
9 those programs are being reviewed. We are working on
10 those rules and are hoping to roll them out as soon
11 as possible. Our goal is, of course, by the end of
12 the year as stated by Deputy Commissioner Tietz.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry, taking one
14 step back about the turn-aways. So, The Door-- are
15 you familiar with this? [inaudible] That they tracked
16 their turn-aways from June to August of 2017. So,
17 that's this summer, 45 percent of RHY coming to the
18 door ages 18 to 21 were unable to get emergency
19 shelter on the night that they requested it. That's
20 based on an average of 20 to 30 RHY a month.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I know.
22 We've been in conversation with Sarah at The Door,
23 and I know she met with Randy and Tim. I don't know
24 if I have the details on how that worked out, but
25 we've done an analysis of the dates when she's

2 reporting that young people needed to be turned away,
3 and we had empty beds. So, we've got to dig into
4 that further and say, "Why aren't these young people
5 getting into available beds?" One thing Sarah has
6 noted is that sometimes it's not the appropriate
7 crisis bed, but a TIL bed is available, and can we
8 make that referral directly to TIL, bypassing crisis
9 more quickly, because sometimes it takes a couple of
10 days instead of immediate.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because there's
12 different threat-- there's different qualifications,
13 right? There's different-- can you get it? You can
14 get a TIL bed like walking in? That night you can
15 get a TIL bed?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We're
17 working on the process with more limited resource.
18 It was always like go to crisis and then go to TIL.
19 We're saying, "Hey, wherever there's available bed,
20 we want to get you in." So, we got to-- this is the-

21 -

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay, so
23 then before when I asked if anyone was turned away,
24 you said, "Well nobody's turned away because every
25 night there's capacity." Right? But here's a

2 provider, a well-regarded provider that was good
3 enough to share their information, you know, even if
4 it's not really to their benefit to do so, and they
5 said that 45 percent were actually turned away. So,
6 even if there is capacity in the system, it might not
7 fit. There were still people turned away. That's
8 just one provider.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That is the
10 only one provider that I've heard this from, and
11 we're trying to figure out why that's not--

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Well,
13 have we asked all the other providers?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We asked
15 every--

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] And no
17 other provider turned anybody else away? They turned
18 45 percent of their-- the youth that walked in their
19 door--

20 RANDY SCOTT: [interposing] Well, I have--

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: away?

22 RANDY SCOTT: I have statistics here, and
23 you spoke about The Door, and in Fiscal Year 17 they
24 submitted 58 referral forms of where they referred
25 people and based on that information when my staff

2 checked into why these youth were not referred to a
3 particular program, the staff just didn't take the
4 steps to so. We've put in place so many different
5 steps for youth to get beds. One, we've allowed for
6 our drop-in centers to now refer directly to our TIL
7 facilities. Two, we put in a policy for youth who
8 are 16 and 17 to be directly placed in a facility.
9 Three, if they are need of a bed and they're having
10 difficulty, they can call me, and I make sure that
11 that youth is placed in a bed. So, these are steps
12 that we've put in place for all of our programs in
13 terms of making sure that no youth is without a bed
14 on any given night. Now, whether the programs take
15 advantage of these particular steps that we've put in
16 place, that's something that we have to work with
17 them on to make sure that they do it better, but the
18 thing is that we put in place systems so that any
19 youth at any given time can be placed in a bed, and
20 that's giving my number out, which they can call me,
21 and some providers have called me.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm sorry, what's the
23 number?

24 RANDY SCOTT: I'll give it to you. I've
25 not a problem.

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: She got it, see.

3 UNIDENTIFIED: Oh, she's going to write
4 it down, even better.

5 RANDY SCOTT: The number is-- everybody's
6 ready? 1-646-457-2705, and this phone works even
7 when I'm on vacation where it can be accessible so
8 that I can communicate with my staff to make sure
9 that they are doing their jobs and assisting all of
10 our providers get beds for any youth.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I-- so, going back to
12 the issue of expanding the 18 to 24 here. The policy
13 issue of expanding 18 to 24. So,--

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing]
15 Twenty-one to 24.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry, 21 to 24,
17 sorry. If right now if the state share is six
18 percent, right, isn't it a little unrealistic to say--
19 - and maybe this isn't what you're saying, but that
20 if the state were to pay for it, then we would do the
21 expansion? Because currently we're operating and
22 we're expanding to 753 beds based on a model where we
23 pay for here in the city 94 percent, we took that on.
24 So, even though their funding has decreased over the
25 years from 17 to six percent, we're still willing to

2 expand the system as a whole, triple the size of the
3 system, paying for 94 percent of it. So, when we're
4 looking at expanding to 24 years old, you know,
5 realistically we have to-- if we're going to do it,
6 we have to be prepared to pay 94 percent, because we
7 were prepared to pay 94 percent to expand the system
8 as a whole. So, in other words, it's un-- it's kind
9 of a little bit of a red herring, I think, to say
10 we'll do it if the state pays for it. We know the
11 state's not going to pay for it. We're pretty clear
12 the state ain't paying for it. They pay six percent.
13 So, it's on us, but if we want to do it, we can do
14 it.

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: But I think you
16 missed the point that I've said before. The City's
17 already expanding services for young people between
18 the ages of 21 to 24. The supportive housing request
19 for proposal, 1,500 beds. That is twice the capacity
20 we have at our growth. No, I'm just saying.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I don't want to get
22 into it. There was an article today in the New York
23 Post, and I'm not like loving the New York Post, but
24 they're behind schedule, at least that's what that
25 article.

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, I can tell you
3 is that the first supportive housing program for
4 young people who have aged out of homeless services
5 is coming out in February, and so you know, the
6 rental vouchers, that's part of it. Marsha's House,
7 they were able to put up 81 beds, 81 beds in one
8 program when it takes us a year or more as you've
9 said to get to 100 beds. So, I don't think the City
10 is saying we're not providing services for 21 to 24.
11 The issue is do we exercise the flexibility that the
12 state law grants. We haven't made that decision yet.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Outside of those
14 three programs, how many young people annually are
15 discharged to a DHS facility, excluding the three
16 programs that we've talked about because they're
17 specifically for young people, but into the general
18 single adult DHS population, how many young people
19 are discharged from DYCD into general population DHS
20 single adult facilities?

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah, we have to get
22 back to you. I mean, 21, those who are-- turn 21.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep.

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Alright, okay. We'd
25 have to look into that and get back to you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How many young people
3 over the -- younger than 21 or 21 to 20-- sorry, 18
4 to 24, how many young people are in the DHS general
5 population system?

6 AARON GOODMAN: Sure, we-- I can give you
7 a snapshot of--

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Sure,
9 I'll take it.

10 AARON GOODMAN: the recent snapshot that
11 in the single adult system there are approximately 70
12 individuals aged 18 to 20 and 700 individuals aged 21
13 to 24. We also have in our families with children
14 system approximately 1,250 single adult-- oh, I'm
15 sorry. Head-- women, female heads of household with
16 probably young child in the families with children
17 system.

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Twenty-one and
19 older, right?

20 AARON GOODMAN: I'm sorry, yes, from 21
21 to 24.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because DYCD has
23 programs for younger than age 21.

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right. And, you
25 know, the number--

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] For
3 single-- for single head of household with child.

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes. And just to
5 give you again some perspective, the 70 that are in
6 the DHS system that are under 21 was much larger a
7 few years ago. It was in the several hundreds when--
8 before we started the expansion. So we've been
9 working diligently to make sure every young person
10 who is 18 to 20 who shows up at DHS immediately gets
11 sent to us, because we want to make sure they get the
12 specialized services for those under 21.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because I will say
14 this,--

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: That's correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: nobody under the age
17 of 24 should have to go through 30th Street and go to
18 Ward's Island and go through the single adult system,
19 because that, it is-- it can be soul crushing for a
20 young person to have to go through that experience.

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We've-- thank you,
22 and we recognize that, and as you mentioned earlier
23 today and has been brought to this Council's
24 attention through the 90-day reforms and through
25 updates provided by Commissioner Banks, Deputy

2 Commissioner Tietz in prior testimonies before the
3 Council, DHS and DYCD are partnering to release a
4 pilot to streamline access from DYCD shelter to DHS
5 shelter for youth who are aging out or timing out of
6 that system. It will bypass and take an assessment
7 for single adults and grant presumptive eligibility
8 for families with children and adult families. We
9 are--

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] But
11 nobody should be going into a single-- a general
12 population, single adult DHS program out of a DYCD
13 shelter. The other three programs, great, right? But
14 nobody should be going into that general population
15 out of a DYCD system. Shouldn't happen.

16 [applause]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I'll turn it
18 back over to my co-chair. Thank you very much for
19 your testimony.

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,
21 Levin. Now we're going to call Council Member
22 Johnson, some questions.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you very
24 much. I want to not be repetitive, but I do want to
25 follow up on some of the questions that Chair Levin

2 had. So, when it comes to funding, the formula is
3 correct that the Chair mentioned which is the City is
4 covering 94 percent and the state's covering six
5 percent, is that accurate?

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: In the current
7 budget, six percent of the funding is state.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so to expand from
9 21 to 24, how much do we think-- not the percentage,
10 not the breakdown hard dollars-wise between the city
11 and state, but what would that total cost be to
12 expand?

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think I answered
14 that, and the question is we don't know because the
15 driver costs, the drivers of the cost is the state
16 regulations which determine a host of things that the
17 program has to fulfil, like square footage, like
18 staff qualifications, like how big the program is.
19 All those will determine what a potential model for
20 21 to 24 years would look like. Will it be more than
21 the 47,000 we pay per person under 21? Will it be
22 less? We don't know. So, I don't want to guess that
23 number because the state, despite repeated requests
24 from youth bureaus around the state, has yet to issue
25 those regulations even though the clock is ticking.

2 The law technically takes effect January 1st, and as
3 soon as they issue those regulations, we can make an
4 informed decision about what the true cost of it is.
5 And then, you know, we'll be glad to share that, and
6 then hopefully we can make an informed decision about
7 whether to exercise that flexibility.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: And again, the
9 size of the population that we believe is need from
10 21 to 24 is how many?

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, based on the
12 DHS numbers-- you want to talk about that, because I
13 don't want to [inaudible] them.

14 AARON GOODMAN: Well, I could just check
15 in [sic]. The number that we have of single adults
16 ages 21 to 24 in our system is approximately 710.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Seven hundred
18 and 10, and right now the cost is approximately,
19 Commissioner Chong, 47,000 for under 21?

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: For under 21, yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: So, we don't
22 think that it would-- I mean, again, I know you don't
23 want to guess and you want to understand what the
24 regulations are that the state promulgates and puts
25 into effect, but-- I'll take my calculator out. I

2 mean, if we're going to say that the-- let's say it's
3 700 young people times 50,000, though it could cost
4 more than that, that's 35 million.

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: That's doubled our
6 projected budget, I think, right? Eventually, we're
7 going to get to 35 million by FY 19. So, that would
8 mean doubling our budget.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Doubling your
10 budget of what currently is allocated?

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, the path after
12 the next round of expansion in Fiscal 19, I think our
13 budget is going to be about 33 million. Well, we're
14 at 33 this year, and we're going to be at 37 next
15 year-- 39 next year. So that'll be almost double our
16 budget.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thirty-three
18 million--

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Now.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Now to do what
21 exactly? What's the 33 million for?

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's basically to
23 fund the residential services and the other related
24 services, the drop-in centers and the street
25 outreach. So, but the growth really has been mostly

2 in the beds, the 100 beds for the last three years
3 and the 100 beds this year and the hundred beds last
4 year will get us to 38 million, 39 million. Yeah,
5 and that will be the peak. And just to give you some
6 idea-- it just blew me away when I looked at these
7 numbers. In the last fiscal year of Bloomberg, full
8 year, Fiscal 13, our baseline budget was 4.7 million,
9 4.7 million. We'll be at 39. And you know, we want
10 to make sure that--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing]
12 What's the total budget in DYCD for all RHY-related
13 work?

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: That's 39 million.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: That's 39
16 million, right, currently?

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Eventually.
19 Thirty-four million right now. Going to go up to--

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Thirty-
21 nine.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thirty-nine,
23 okay. DHS, how much money has the City spent in the
24 last three years on expanding homeless services? How
25 much money has been put in?

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I can get that back
3 to you--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing] I
5 think the number is almost 1.8 billion dollars.

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: That, I believe, is
7 what our current budget is, and if I remember
8 correctly, toward the end of the last Administration
9 our budget was about 900 million.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: So, almost
11 double.

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think that's
13 right.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Almost double,
15 okay. So, the point is is that we put hundreds of
16 millions of dollars, rightfully-- I mean, I support
17 this-- hundreds of millions of dollars into new
18 funding for DHS to do all sorts of programs that the
19 City has rolled out, whether it be HOME-STAT, a
20 supportive housing plan related to working with the
21 state and getting the money released to do things. I
22 mean, there's a whole host of things that DHS does,
23 increase street outreach, the list goes on. Hundreds
24 of millions, and we're talking about-- again, I don't
25 want to say this in a trite or banal way. The most

2 vulnerable population of the homeless population,
3 which are primarily young people who we think it's
4 appropriate to define up to the age of 24 years old,
5 not stopping at the age of 21 years old, and doing
6 some rough math-- I know we're guessing, as
7 Commissioner Chong said-- to expand it further based
8 on what the current population is of that 700 and the
9 cost is around what it is now, 50,000. It could be
10 more. That's 35 million. That's not a lot of money
11 when it comes to the City budget. Now, I do think
12 it's good to have perspective that the budget was
13 four million dollars in the last year of the previous
14 Administration, and now we're up to 34 million.
15 That's almost eight-fold increase, and that's huge,
16 and the de Blasio Administration deserves credit for
17 that, but the disconnect that I have in hearing the
18 line of questioning from Chair Levin and then hearing
19 the testimony here today is there seems to be some
20 disclarity [sic] around what the actual needs are as
21 it relates to the number of beds that we need,
22 because what I'm not understanding is we're saying,
23 okay, we're going up to, you know, 753 beds by Fiscal
24 Year 2019, and you talked about how you're going to
25 speed that up and get that done, great. Right now

2 we're hearing people are being turned away. I mean,
3 I heard we-- people shouldn't be turned away. We're
4 hearing people are being turned away. That's not
5 happening, Susan? No one's being turned away?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: It might
7 be, but it shouldn't be.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: You can turn
9 your mic on.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We don't
11 want that to happen. We have beds available. We
12 want young people in beds. If they need a place to
13 stay, we want them to come into our program.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: So, then why--
15 so then why are we expanding the beds? Why are we
16 even putting money towards expansion of beds if the
17 need isn't really there? Is the need there?

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, see, that's
19 the questioning.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: This is the
21 disconnect that I'm not understanding. We're not
22 turning anyone away or we are. We have enough beds
23 or we don't have. Like, what do we need?

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, so let me
25 explain it this way. I think the need is difficult

2 to get a handle on because of the unknowns like the
3 young people who couch surf. So, the very fact that
4 we continue to add beds and our utilization rate is
5 still 90 percent means there's clearly a need there.
6 The fact that when we put an open-ended request for
7 funding, people continue to apply means that there's
8 still a need there. I don't think we should say
9 we've declared victory. I don't certainly feel that
10 way. That's why when we implement the new length of
11 stays, the utilization rate may actually go up
12 because young people are staying longer because they
13 can stay longer. So, that's why we're fully
14 committed to serving the most vulnerable youth, those
15 under 21, and getting the full 753 beds. I think in
16 the case of The Door, clearly there was a
17 communication breakdown. We're trying to figure out
18 how to make it easier for them because they seem to
19 be the only one who has expressed problems with
20 accessing a bed. To make it easier to get access to
21 a bed on any given night, and so to the point where I
22 think Randy has made his phone number available to
23 any young person who runs into any issues. So, I
24 think--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing] But
3 are people under 21 more vulnerable than people over
4 21?

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think so. I think
6 if you--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing]
8 Why?

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, because
10 they're still young people. They're still not
11 adults.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: But if you were
13 someone that has experienced parental rejection,
14 family loss, physical trauma, sexual trauma, selling
15 yourself for sex to survival sex, alcohol, drug,
16 mental health-related issues, you're in an unstable
17 living situation, you're staying at a DYCD shelter,
18 and you've had all of this family trauma and life
19 trauma that's gone on in our life, all the sudden
20 when you're 21 and you turn 22 it hasn't gone away.

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, that's why I
22 think Marsha's Place has been a huge asset. I know
23 when it first was announced that the program was
24 opening I made an effort to meet immediately with
25 Janette Burn [sp?], the Executive Director who I had

2 worked with many, many years ago to make sure that we
3 had a referral system in place for young people who
4 timed out at 21, and we've done a lot of referrals,
5 and maybe Randy can talk about--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing] No,
7 but the point I'm trying to make-- that's great, and
8 I'm so glad that the City has been supportive of
9 Marsha's Place. It's amazing. It's great. We all
10 should be happy--

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] I hope
12 we replicate it.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: But all I'm
14 saying is we can't draw this bright line that, you
15 know, all the sudden you are more vulnerable when you
16 were 21 than you were when you turned 22.

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: But that's--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing]
19 That doesn't really make any sense.

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, that's why
21 strategy of the City is to have continuity of
22 services using all the different resources available
23 to the City. Marsha's Place is one example, the
24 supportive housing that we're pushing to get on line,
25 the rental assistance, because a young person who

2 leaves at 21 may be at different places. They may be
3 extremely vulnerable, as you said, and Marsha's Place
4 might be a good place. They might be able to live
5 independently, and they-- then a rental assistance
6 voucher makes sense. They may need continuous
7 supportive housing. That's why the Jericho Project
8 might make sense. So, to try to continue services
9 beyond 21 is certainly a commitment of this
10 Administration. It's being done in different places.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Again, I know
12 this was talked about earlier. Remind me, the total
13 number of DYCD beds that currently are on line is
14 what number?

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Five hundred and
16 twenty-five.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Five hundred and
18 twenty-five. Right now, we could go out, 525 beds
19 that are open and operating.

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right, and 132 in
21 the pipeline that are at various stages. Either
22 there was, what, 50? How many were waiting for
23 certification? Fifty-two are waiting for the state
24 to say yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. So, then
3 we're going to go up to 753 by the next fiscal year.

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: By sometime during
5 the next fiscal year.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: And then after
7 the next fiscal year?

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No decision has been
9 made. We'll see-- I think the City wants to see
10 where we're at as far as utilization rates.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: So, 753 is where
12 we're going--

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Headed.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: to go. We'll
15 make further decisions as we see what the needs are.
16 What ultimately do we think that number needs to be?

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's hard to say at
18 this point because I think a lot will be driven by
19 what the utilization rate is. So, for example, if
20 the utilization rate drops dramatically from 90
21 percent, that's something to look at. If the
22 utilization rate goes up significantly beyond 90
23 percent, because of the length of stay is extended.
24 So young people are occupying a bit longer. So, it's

2 hard to say what-- those are the factors that will
3 determine whether additional investments are needed.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: I have a
5 question for DHS. So, last night in the shelter
6 system, how many people slept in the shelter system?
7 In the DHS shelter system, 60,000?

8 AARON GOODMAN: A little over 60,000.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Over 60,000.
10 How many of those were children under the age of 18
11 years old? Approximately 25,000?

12 AARON GOODMAN: [off mic] We can get those
13 percentages.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: But it's appro--
15 I mean, the numbers have been out there. The trend
16 has typically been 25,000--

17 AARON GOODMAN: [interposing] Twenty-five
18 thousand.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: About that.
20 And a lot of that 25,000 are not children on their
21 own. They're children that have parents--

22 AARON GOODMAN: [interposing] They're
23 children within families.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: who have family.
25 There's family homelessness where they've lost their

2 home, they've been evicted, they've fallen on hard
3 times. They've--

4 AARON GOODMAN: [interposing] Well, all of
5 them, Councilman. In that number we're counting
6 under 18, and we don't have anyone under 18 in our
7 single adult system. So those are all within family.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Okay, so it's
9 all family, okay. So, the reason why I bring that up
10 is there is-- the DHS system right now is housing
11 young people. Do you have the number?

12 AARON GOODMAN: Yeah, our last daily
13 report, there were 22,971 children in shelter.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: I mean, that's
15 heartbreaking, of course.

16 AARON GOODMAN: We don't disagree.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Yeah, I know.
18 And it's hard-- the reason why I bring that number
19 up, if it's just under 23,000, it's hard for me to
20 believe that the-- to go back to Chair Levin's
21 questions to Commissioner Chong, that the existing
22 need right now for this distinct population we're
23 talking about is under 1,000. It--

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well,
25 I'll point out, in that--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing] I'm
3 not talking-- no, I'm talking about--

4 AARON GOODMAN: [interposing] They don't
5 necessarily enter the DYCD shelter system by the time
6 they're turning-- you know, that-- those are
7 separate.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: I can't hear
9 you. Is your mic on?

10 AARON GOODMAN: I'm sorry. That's not--
11 that cohort doesn't involve necessarily individuals
12 who then would be entering the DYCD shelter system.
13 Those--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing]
15 Sorry, that's not what I was trying to say. What I
16 was trying to say is when we're talking about the
17 DYCD need, when we're having that conversation here
18 today, and I know you can't give us an exact number,
19 but we're-- the goal is to get up to 753 beds. When
20 you look at the other populations that exist that are
21 currently in DHS, it's hard for me to think that the
22 need isn't significantly higher than what we're
23 talking about here today.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I don't
25 know if you were here when we talked about the number

2 of 18 to 20 year olds in the DHS system who are head
3 of household is really small. It's been under 100
4 any time that we've looked at it. There aren't a
5 lot of head of household young adults in the DHS
6 system.

7 AARON GOODMAN: Right. Like we said, do
8 we-- our last snapshot was about 1,200 21 to 24
9 single adult-- young parents in the shelter, family
10 shelter system.

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: But the number for
12 under 20 was 70, and again, I remember from the
13 Bloomberg years that was in the several hundreds of
14 18 to 20 year olds who were in DHS, and part of the
15 problem was we were at 100 percent utilization rate.
16 We didn't have as many beds, and when a young person
17 who is 18, 19 or 20 shows up, we had to refer them to
18 DHS. That trend is reversing. In fact, we want to
19 get the remaining 70 into our system so that they
20 don't have to use a DHS shelter.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Commissioner,
22 you said in your testimony we have another
23 fundamental concern with the Council's proposals.
24 Under state law, DYCD and other youth bureaus
25 throughout the state have been delegated the

2 authority to create a comprehensive plan for
3 providing services including residential services to
4 run away and homeless youth. This discretion from
5 the state is limited and that we must obtain state
6 approval for our plan and shelter providers much
7 comply with OCFS regulations. The state law gives
8 DYCD more flexibility than these bills would allow.
9 These four bills are inconsistent with the state
10 legislative and regulatory framework than entrust
11 responsibility for these programs with localities'
12 youth bureaus. State law requires that
13 municipalities to submit the plan in consultation
14 with the youth bureau, correct?

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: right.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Doesn't that
17 indicate that other entities like a local
18 legislature, like a local city council play a role in
19 the development of the plan?

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I'm not a lawyer so
21 I'm not going to be able to say yes or no to that
22 question. We can certainly ask the Law Department to
23 research that, but in the years I've been at DYCD,
24 DYCD is a recognized youth bureau for the City of New
25 York, just as other cities have similar designated

2 youth bureaus. So, it's our responsibility to submit
3 this plan every April, and then the state has to sign
4 off on it.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Well, the point
6 that I'm making is that this council has, I think,--
7 we have a good City Charter, and I think this council
8 has charter-mandated responsibilities when it comes
9 to legislative action, when it comes to oversight,
10 and when it comes to budget, all things that are
11 related to the issues that we're talking about today.
12 And the development of this plan is something that
13 this council is, of course, very, very interested in
14 which is why this legislation was introduced and it's
15 why we're having this hearing today. So, I think to
16 say that these bills are inconsistent with state
17 legislative and regulatory framework than entrust the
18 responsibilities with locality youth bureaus is a
19 narrow reading. We are connected to what you all do.
20 We oversee the budget. We have oversight over you.
21 We have legislative authority. So, I wouldn't say we
22 just are going to have consultation with the youth
23 bureaus. The City Council is a separate branch of
24 government that of course has some interest in this
25 and has some charter-mandated responsibility. So, I

2 just think it's important that it not just be just
3 about the consultation with the youth bureaus, it's
4 consultation with the City Council.

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We'll be happy to
6 sit down with you and your staff to continue this
7 conversation because, again, I'm not a lawyer. I'm
8 not going to be able to comment on the jurisdiction
9 of the state law and how it interfaces with the City
10 Council's responsibility, but certainly we've been
11 important partners in the expansion of services for
12 homeless youth, and so I think how that is codified
13 is something that certainly requires more discussion.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Who-- I'm not
15 saying this in an antagonistic way. Who wrote your
16 testimony?

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No, it was a
18 collaborative effort of--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing] Was
20 there a lawyer involved in writing your testimony?

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah, there are
22 always lawyers involved.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Okay, well--

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Not to
25 defame lawyers.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: I mean, I just--
3 I think it's important that, you know, this council
4 as a whole our values are very much in line with the
5 Administration, with the Mayor and with a huge amount
6 of work that city agencies do, and the reason why I
7 raise this point is, you know, this is not
8 Washington, D.C., or it's not even Albany where there
9 is a huge ideological divide between the Executive
10 Branch and the Legislative Branch when it comes to
11 issues that are of importance to the City. there's,
12 of course, healthy, normal tension and give and take
13 that exists, and that's probably not a bad thing, but
14 I would just say that this paragraph really sticks
15 out to me in your testimony, because if you're not
16 sure by saying, "You're not a lawyer, I'm not a
17 lawyer either," or if, you know, this is fully
18 accurate or if it's the best way to put it, I would
19 just say I wouldn't try to pre-empt you talking about
20 these different pieces of legislation in your
21 testimony by saying, you know, it's really the youth
22 bureaus, localities' youth bureaus. No, the City
23 Council has a role here, and we're going to exert
24 that role, and we're doing it in a way where we work
25 with advocates and we've heard from young people and

2 we see some of the deficiencies involved, and that's
3 why we're pushing this forward.

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We're looking
5 forward to continuing the conversation. This is, I
6 think, a start of that conversation, and maybe we'll
7 bring the lawyers together to talk more about that
8 specific issue.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: And I would add
10 that when I talked before about the potential cost
11 related if it was at 50,000 dollars per young person
12 and the number 700, we said 35 million, something
13 around that. I mean, I actually think there would
14 probably be cost savings from not sheltering those
15 700 people in DHS potentially. So, it's not a huge
16 new expense. There would be some new expense, but
17 there would be some cost savings, I would imagine,
18 but that's something we have to analyze.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, as we have
20 more information we can make a more informed decision
21 about whether to exercise the flexibility that the
22 state law will grant.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: So, I want to
24 turn it back over to the Chair. I want to say,
25 Commissioner Chong, thank you for the work you've

2 done in increasing capacity to where we are now, and
3 for really expanding the RHY program in your
4 department. you've been a good partner to the
5 Council, not just on RHY but SYEP and other important
6 programs that have been important to this Council, so
7 I want to thank you for that, and I want to rally put
8 in a good word for Susan Haskell, because--

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Thank
10 you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: when I have had--
12 - you know, I have Covenant House--

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: located in my
15 district, which is one of the largest, it might be
16 the largest, DYCD designated facility when it comes
17 to dealing with young people. Is Covenant House
18 perfect? No. Any facility of that size is going to
19 have issues. They do very, very important work, and
20 where there have been issues, when there have been
21 problems, whether it be at Covenant House or the Ali
22 Forney Center or any other provider that has come to
23 my attention. Susan has been unbelievably
24 responsive, thoughtful and taken charge that relates
25 to individuals young people that are bringing brought

2 to her attention in following up and getting
3 information and really getting the important
4 questions answered for each young person that we
5 bring to her attention. So, you know, her advocacy
6 and having her in that position, my experience with
7 her on a one-on-one basis and seeing her commitment
8 to young people is really, really important to me,
9 and too often it's easy for us to sit up here and
10 yell at you all over some of the important policy
11 disagreements we may have, but I think it's also
12 important to recognize the good work that's done on a
13 daily basis. No one is doing this work because
14 they're looking to get rich. People are doing this
15 work because they're looking to feel enriched by the
16 work that they do, and that's what I think Susan does
17 on a daily basis. So, I wanted to put in a good word
18 for her and turn it back over to the Chair.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah, she already
20 told me she's coming for a raise later. But--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: [interposing] She
22 deserves it.

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Let me just say
24 that, you know, I know from the first year of the
25 Administration you've been a great partner on these

2 issues, and I know with Covenant House being such a
3 high profile residential program in the City that
4 you've been very hands-on on making sure that young
5 people were safe. I mean, that's, you know, one of
6 the reasons why we don't try to publicize these
7 locations because we know when they're publicized it
8 becomes magnets for predators, and so I know you were
9 very hands-on in all the different issues that have
10 come up over the course of the last three years, and
11 we look forward to working with you as we grow this
12 program.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you,
14 Commissioner.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
16 Member Johnson. Council Member Darlene Mealy for
17 questions.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you. I have
19 another hearing. So I just want to thank the both
20 Chairs, and you, Commissioner, and I definitely want
21 to thank Lew Fidler, the Youth Chair, who this was
22 his mantra years ago, always wanted youth to be safe
23 and more beds for homeless youth. I just had like
24 two or three questions. In regards to-- between the
25

2 crisis shelter beds and the TIL beds, which would
3 DYCD say that the City needs the highest?

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [off mic] Can answer
5 that.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We take
7 that-- we take that one proposal at a time and we
8 look at utilization rates where, you know, do we look
9 like we have balance. The Commissioner talked about
10 a balance. We strive to create a balance. We
11 charted the growth of TIL and crisis beds since like
12 2005, and it's been very consistent. So, although
13 we've had some years where one bumps up high. The
14 next year it's balanced by the other. It's remained
15 consistent form like 2005 to 2017. We watch it.
16 Every time we grow the system we watch to see we're
17 balanced.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: It keeps trending.
19 That was my next question. What have been trend over
20 the years? Has it just been a lot, a little?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: When I
22 started in 2005 we have 60 crisis shelter beds and 88
23 TIL beds. We remain kind of proportional to that.
24 Again, it goes up and down as one big crisis shelter
25 comes on line or one big TIL comes on line. We've

2 been fairly consistent. Very recently we've had a
3 spike in TIL, but it's still very balanced.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Balanced, okay.
5 So how many beds are available for parent and youth?
6 Could you give me the percentage, and how much of you
7 budget do you put in just for-- because I know some
8 of our youth do have children.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: While
10 Randy's adding up that number, I'm just going to note
11 we have Covenant House providing those programs. We
12 have SCO [sic] Family of Services has programs for
13 mother/child, and--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing]
15 That's going to be next question about Covenant
16 House.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Children's
18 Village does parenting. I think it's those three
19 providers, and Randy can get you the number in a
20 minute.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: What percentage of
22 your budget you feel goes to this?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Can we get
24 back to you in a second? We're--

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] We're
3 adding up the numbers. I mean, we could always send
4 that information to you, to the Committee. But, year
5 one of the things that when we-- you know, both Susan
6 and I worked at DYCD in the Bloomberg Administration.
7 So, one-- the first major re-design of this
8 initiative was in 2005, and one of the things we
9 recognize is that the needs of young people are
10 diverse. So, just as we created residential programs
11 for gay youth, we created residential programs for
12 young women who were in sex trade, gems [sic]. We
13 created programs that served, you know, parenting
14 youth. We have many [sic] programs--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] So,
16 what percentage are you really putting towards
17 parenting?

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think it's-- well,
19 giving you-- he's [inaudible]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Because it's almost
21 like we can't discriminate against our parents--

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] No, no,
23 but it's--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: and youth.
25

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: a market-driven
3 process. So, it's-- when we put out money we let
4 people tell us what they need to do. We don't say
5 you have to do this, you have to do that. It's
6 driven by the needs of young people and by the
7 nonprofits that run these programs. So, as Susan was
8 saying that each year the number of crisis shelters
9 and TILs will vary, but the equilibrium, the balance,
10 is about the same. So,--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] Can I
12 ask you a question, Commissioner--

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] He's
14 going to give you the number. You want the number?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yes, but--

16 RANDY SCOTT: It's about 20 percent.
17 Currently we have about 110 beds that could be for
18 pregnant mothers or mothers with children.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Twenty percent of
20 that budget.

21 RANDY SCOTT: Right.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: That's--
23 Commissioner, how much permanent housing do you put
24 aging out youth into every year?

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We will have to get
3 back to you. I don't think we track that information,
4 per say. How many--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] And
6 see, this is the problem that I'm having. It's like
7 we keep putting a Band-Aid on an open sore. Here it
8 is we have some multi-dwelling units in this city
9 that some is being foreclosed on, and we have a lot
10 of youth that are aging out of foster care and
11 shelters that could go into permanent housing that we
12 could build just as we build affordable housing for
13 everything else, and we going to have an even higher
14 rate of homeless children, not just LBGQ. We're
15 going to have everyone, because people are being
16 priced out of their homes, and here it is we're not
17 building really affordable housing. The City is
18 building condominiums, high-rises. So, I'm asking,
19 when are we going to get to a point where we are
20 building housing just for youth. If we could build
21 housing just for one nationality or just affordable
22 housing, something for all [sic] shelters, or-- right
23 now is the trend that I thank God that we put a
24 moratorium on just studio apartments. We can't just
25 do just all buildings with studio apartments. We

2 have people with families. So, have you ever sat
3 down with HPD or the City and said let's build
4 housing just for runaway youth that once they
5 transition and you have all these programs, some of
6 them you have put them in place now that they have a
7 job. They know how to come on time. They making a
8 well living, and they could pay their rent and live a
9 warm, healthy life.

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, I don't think--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] Have
12 we transitioned any of our youth from the shelter to
13 that?

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, I don't think
15 you were here during my testimony--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] Yes
17 or no, I just want to hear that first.

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, let me just
19 repeat myself.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Can I hear that
21 yes or no first?

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, I said in my
23 testimony the City just released funding for 1,500
24 units of supportive housing for young people--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] What
3 you call supportive housing? I'm asking you, do we
4 have any youth that transition out of a shelter--

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] And the
6 answer is yes, but we--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] that
8 they don't need supportive housing. They have a job
9 now and they can live independently on their own--

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] The
11 answer is yes, we can get you more data--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] Can
13 you give me--

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: on that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: How many?

16 COMMISSIONER CHONG: But as I said in my
17 testimony that one of the key ways of making sure
18 people transition to stable, permanent housing is
19 making the rental assistance vouchers more accessible
20 to young people, because you're absolutely right,
21 some young people are ready to live on their own, but
22 they need some help. And so we've been working
23 closely with our partners at the Department of Social
24 Services to streamline the process to access a rental

2 assistance voucher because young people-- I mean,
3 many years ago when I was young--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] See,
5 this is another problem--

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I remember having
7 roommates.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: the assistance
9 vouchers is like almost like Section 8 vouchers.

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right, and so--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] The
12 City can pull it at any time. We need sustainable
13 housing that people without a program--

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well,
15 I will pass on your concerns to the HPD Commissioner.
16 I know they're doing everything they can.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Have you talked to
18 them about it?

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, I-- that's
20 their responsibility. I think they understand the
21 needs of citizens.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: You should be
23 thinking about the need just as well. You're the
24 Commissioner of our youth.

25

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, we are working
3 with HPD.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: We're all one
5 city, remember?

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I agree, and so I
7 think this HPD works closely with all the city
8 agencies and look at the needs across the City. And
9 so, certainly just as we've been working with the
10 Department of Homeless Services on young people who
11 age out at 21, you know, HPD has been very helpful.
12 But you know, they have a big taste before them. So,
13 I will pass on your concern about the lack of
14 affordable housing.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you Chairs.
16 He still didn't answer.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.
18 Commissioner, could you tell me what type of programs
19 or activities that our provided to the runaway and
20 homeless youth in the different shelter services.

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah. Randy will
22 answer that.

23 RANDY SCOTT: Okay. So, at each of the
24 programs we don't, DYCD doesn't provide the direct
25 services. However, we work with provider agencies.

2 Some of them big scale who may have services on site
3 such as medical, such as our mental health services
4 that they are able to do through ThriveNYC. Some of
5 them have educational programs as well as employment,
6 and if they do not, then they are encouraged to
7 create linkages within their communities with these
8 programs so that they can provide these services to
9 their particular youth in those programs. We also at
10 DYCD join monthly provider meetings. We bring in
11 folks who work within three various areas of need for
12 youth to be able to talk about programs and services
13 that they provide, and then to create linkages so
14 that they can continue to sustain the needs of the
15 youth whether it's around housing, whether it's
16 around employment, whether it's around education,
17 whether it's around mental health, medical needs, or
18 just someone who is available to provide them with
19 some type of communication. So, those are some of
20 the services that are provided, but most are directly
21 around those key areas that you've identified when
22 they meet with their case manager for counsel
23 consultation.

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Is it mandatory for
25 those youth to participate, you know, in the

2 programs? Is it mandatory they have to participate
3 through the programs?

4 RANDY SCOTT: Nothing is mandatory. The
5 services are voluntary. So, youth have the
6 opportunity to come in and out as they please. It is
7 encouraged that if they are in need of assistance and
8 want to work on a specific area that they meet with
9 their case manager t their respective sites to talk
10 about those things and create an individualized
11 service plan around that so that they can gain that
12 assistance, that help and independence.

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yeah, you say that
14 it is not-- that, you know, nothing is mandatory, but
15 since those young people there, young people with
16 special needs who always they have, you know, some
17 type of challenges and mental issues and they have
18 been traumatized, you know, mentally and physically.
19 Don't you believe that they are certain services they
20 are man-- you know, that should be mandatory for them
21 to receive?

22 RANDY SCOTT: We definitely agree, you
23 know. And through ThriveNYC we were able to provide
24 financial support to our different contractor sites
25 so that they could bring on professionals, they could

2 bring on services, they can provide additional
3 assessments or consultation. So everything is driven
4 by the youth. You know, we can't force a youth to do
5 a specific thing, but we can definitely talk to them
6 or the providers can talk to them, and hopefully they
7 will be encouraged to accept the services, the
8 feedback they are receiving so that they can receive
9 the help with respect to mental health So far we've
10 serviced a lot of youth within programming around
11 mental health. You know I think last year was around
12 in the 3,000's individualized youth who received
13 mental health services. So, and it's growing each
14 year as we bring on new programs and as, you know,
15 the trust is built at the different sites. They're
16 able to accept that particular help. And I think in
17 the Commissioner's testimony he spoke to about 72
18 percent who have received mental health services.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I understand you say
20 that you cannot force them to be part of the program,
21 but when we consider some of those young people that
22 may have mental condition and they may be in need of
23 mental, you know, services, and don't you think that
24 that should be part of the requirement and you should
25 have a way for them to understand the urgency and the

2 need to be part of the program. Because if you just
3 advise them, I don't think this is enough, because
4 when you deal with young people, a human being with
5 special needs, this is something very, very important
6 to make sure that they follow or receive the proper
7 assistance that they need to get back on feet and
8 also to improve their life.

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think the City has
10 made a huge investment under the ThriveNYC and, you
11 know, I think the fact that 72 percent of the young
12 people said last year they've gotten services means
13 that we're heading in the right direction. We should
14 be at a 100 percent, and I agree with you, but you
15 know, it's hard for someone to get help. They have
16 to be-- that have to kind of meet you half way on
17 this, and so we continue to get to the other 20
18 percent.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Do you have a meter
20 or a way to quantify, to evaluate how many young
21 people, homeless youth, who have been through sexual
22 abuse, who have been through other type of challenges
23 and also who are suffering from mental illness or
24 disease or disturbance? Do you have, you know, a way
25 to evaluate that and to track that?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I mean,
3 that information is really dealt at the individual
4 level with our providers working one-on-one with a
5 young person. That information would be in a young
6 person's case file. DYCD doesn't collect that
7 information centrally in terms of city government.
8 We assume that the young people who come to us have
9 been significantly traumatized. We know just from
10 general data that there's a tremendous amount of
11 sexual abuse and physical abuse, domestic violence,
12 mental health issues. So, we take that approach. We
13 encourage our providers to make those connections,
14 assuming that, you know, doing trauma-informed care,
15 which is that we know that you've been trauma, so
16 we're going to approach you with that framework and
17 make sure that when you need services they're
18 available to you.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, we don't collect
20 that information because it's confidential. Part of
21 this is that, you know, this kind of sensitive
22 information many of the young people don't want to
23 share outside the case manager, but we-- our
24 commitment is to provide the resources to make sure
25 they have the services, and the fact that 72 percent

2 last year said that they had accessed mental health
3 services means there's a big need there, and so we're
4 not going to pry into people's private lives. We
5 won't-- government doesn't want to do that. The
6 nonprofit and the case manager has the relationship
7 with any given young person and we want to make sure
8 that they have the resources to help that young
9 person, and that's the commitment of this
10 Administration.

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: We do know that in
12 term of medical information we cannot invade, you
13 know, the personal information, and you know, private
14 information of the client or patients. What I think
15 as the leading organization providing the resources,
16 you should know exactly where the resources should
17 go, what type of resources that organization needs,
18 because of the constituency that they're serving.
19 Let's say, for example, I think that it is-- it makes
20 sense for DYCD to know how many young people need
21 mental services and medical services.

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well,
23 that's--

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: How many young
25 people are traumatized because they went through

2 sexual, you know, abuse? I think this is-- it is not
3 confidential information. I'm not talking about
4 detail. What are the number?

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well--

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] You
7 got to know how many young people, you know, needs,
8 you know, what type of services in order for you when
9 you are to look at resources.

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Do we have that?

11 Okay. I mean--

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] When
13 you have to look at the resources--

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] what we
15 can do is--

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing]
17 Commissioner, Commissioner--

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: DYCD is taking a
20 decision in providing the resources, but you have to
21 know exactly the resources that you are going to
22 allocate is going to be served or used for this
23 category of people because there's a need over there.
24 There's a need over here. This is something, you

2 know, very vital important information that DYCD
3 should have.

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, I can say to
5 you--

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] In
7 order to a better, you know--

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] we have
9 regular meetings with the network of providers. So,
10 certainly we can ask them to provide us information,
11 and then once we have it, we'll share it with you. If
12 it's general information that doesn't disclose
13 individual histories and names, I think the programs
14 would be more willing to share this if it's just an
15 aggregate number. Like, of the 50 young people, x
16 number-- I mean, so we can design a survey and with
17 their help gather that information and we'll be glad
18 to pass it on to you. I'm just mindful of the
19 confidentiality of young people, and what we collect
20 in our data system, you know, we've seen data systems
21 can be hacked left and right. So, a lot of the case
22 managers in the nonprofits that we fund are reluctant
23 to put too much information in an electronic database
24 because once it's in the data base it can be
25 accessed. So, it's in the case files, the paper

2 cases files in the programs themselves. But we can
3 survey providers and we'll certainly get back to you.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: When I'm talking
5 about services, I know that it's not services for
6 homeless, runaway homeless youth. It's not about
7 providing their money [sic] with bad [sic] with the
8 shelter, but remember there are people with special
9 needs. We just mentioned those needs. So when you
10 are taking the decision to allocate the funding or
11 the resources, you should know exactly-- I repeat
12 myself-- you know, where the funding should go based
13 on the facts that you have. For example, if we have
14 a large concentration or population of young people
15 suffering from, you know, certain, you know,
16 pathology [sic] or issues, you should know that this
17 is important to increase the funding over there
18 because this issue.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, I agree with
20 you, and that's why we give the maximum flexibility
21 to each program to meet the young person where
22 they're at, because you know, because young people
23 come in and out of the program. The person who is in
24 program in January might be a different program than
25 the person in December. So we want to give them a

2 broad array of services and then allow the nonprofit
3 agencies to adapt those services to meet the young
4 people where they're at. So, I think we definitely
5 believe in customized services, but we also want to
6 give the greatest flexibility so that the needs of
7 young people are met on any given day.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: The staff members
9 who are serving the young people, who are providing
10 the services, what type of training that they
11 receive?

12 RANDY SCOTT: Well, one of the
13 requirements of OCFS is that each of the staff who
14 work with youth receive 40 hours of training on a
15 given year, and that training can, you know, be about
16 mental health services, child abuse, HIV/AIDS and an
17 assortment of others. So, each of the staff, and the
18 requirement when we do our site visits is to look at
19 training and making sure that they're in compliance
20 with the state in making that 40. Plus in addition to
21 that, DYCD has a Capacity Building Unit where we work
22 within getting technical assistance on different
23 things such as case management, crisis management,
24 mental health first aid, and others so that they have
25 those at their disposal for staff, and one of the big

2 things that we're doing right now is around mental
3 health first aid, and we just provided a training for
4 all of our provider agencies on mental health first
5 aid, youth mental health first aid, and one of the
6 great things is that with ThriveNYC they have the
7 ability to go out to our particular provider agencies
8 and provide their staff onsite with mental health
9 first aid training. So we look at training as an
10 essential within programming and making sure that
11 they're in compliance with both state and city
12 requirements.

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: We all know, and I,
14 you know, mentioned that several times, that New York
15 City is home to so many people coming from all over
16 the world, a lot of immigrant people, young people
17 who speak other language other than English. What do
18 you have in, you know, in your system to ensure that
19 all the young people regardless of the language they
20 speak that can benefit from the resources that are
21 available for them?

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, in all our
23 requests for proposals we ask that the people who ask
24 for funding demonstrate their cultural competency,
25 meaning they are able to work with a diverse set of

2 people, and so we would expect that a program deals
3 with large population that speaks a specific
4 language, that they have those language capacities.
5 So, it's required in-- when we ask-- when we give out
6 money we say you have to show how you're going to
7 meet this need.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay, but can you
9 mention for us some of the languages? We know that
10 in New York City there are seven languages, you know,
11 that people should use to provide services in New
12 York City.

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We can do a survey
14 of the providers to see what their language capacity
15 is. I don't think we have that number right here.
16 Right. Okay? So we'll get back to you with that.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Can you send these--

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: send the information
20 to our office?

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: My Co-Chair and
23 myself. Thank you very much. You know, everything
24 in life, there's no perfect system. We know that.
25 No perfect system. You probably do everything that

2 you can do to address issues and to do the best that
3 you can do, but there are challenges, always
4 challenges. What are the most important challenges
5 at your office in DYCD in your effort to serve the
6 homeless, runaway homeless youth? What are the most
7 important challenges that you encounter?

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think it's to grow
9 the capacity of the system, because--

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Say it
11 again.

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Grow the capacity of
13 the system, because we know that the needs of young
14 people are very different. So, that's why we don't
15 have one-size-fits-all. That's why we need
16 facilities that serve parenting youth. We need
17 facilities-- there's a program, Rachel's Place. It
18 serves young women who have been made homeless
19 because they're from the Orthodox community and they
20 pushed out by their homes. So, we know that the more
21 specialized services we provide the better, and so we
22 want to build the capacity. That's why I'm so proud
23 of the fact that, you know, we've opened up third
24 residential facility for transgender youth. That
25 wasn't even on the radar a decade ago. So, I think

2 challenges, making sure we have enough providers who
3 can meet different needs of young people because we
4 know that we just can't treat every young person the
5 same.

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And for, you know,--
7 based on your experience and your tradition and, you
8 know, experience working with the providers, what do
9 you believe the most important challenges is for the
10 providers?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I mean,
12 I'll say one thing, is that they need to take care of
13 themselves as they take care of young people, because
14 as we've discussed, like the trauma that they are
15 seeing on a regular basis working with young people
16 can't help but, you know, impact their own well-
17 being. So, we do try to ensure that we have supports
18 we can offer to them or through training for the
19 professional development and conferences that Randy
20 has put together. I think it has-- the work that is
21 being done by our providers is obviously
22 significantly harder than the work we do here as like
23 city bureaucrats, and they really need to take care
24 of themselves. I think the biggest challenge is the
25 work that they do every day. That's beautiful when

2 you say that they have to take care of themselves,
3 but can you give us more detail? What do you mean
4 by they have to take care of themselves? What I'm
5 talking about challenges that they encounter while
6 they're providing the services to the youth, not only
7 personal or physical or, you know, challenges, but
8 the challenges that they encounter in terms of
9 providing services for young people.

10 RANDY SCOTT: When folks ask me about
11 challenges, I like to say that we don't want to look
12 at them as challenges. We want to look at them as
13 talking points of need. And one of the things that
14 we've done over the course of a year, especially with
15 this administration, and this administration, is
16 we've looked at things. One of the challenges that
17 was on the plate was the fact that youth were not
18 eligible for supportive housing, because they didn't
19 have a serious mental illness right? So, we looked
20 at how that was being looked at by other systems.
21 One, HUD didn't identify DYCD's TILs and crisis
22 shelters as being homeless. So we took that
23 information, sat down with HUD, and made sure that
24 they understood that these places, these residents
25 who should be eligible. So, we took care of that

2 challenge. Folks we're talking about that-- the
3 providers we're talking about youth needed, bio [sic]
4 psycho socials. ThriveNYC came. That allowed for
5 them to be bio psycho socials more at their
6 facilities. So, these are some of the things that we
7 look at. I definitely don't like to say challenges.
8 I like to say we have needs that we have to see how
9 we can get them met, because if you haven't attempted
10 to try to work on them, then you can't consider it a
11 challenge, right? So we said, what are the things
12 that we talk about in our monthly meetings? They
13 come to us, and we bring it to the table. Another
14 thing was concerns that they may have had at DHS. We
15 bring DHS officials to our meeting to talk to them to
16 see how they can better communicate. So, we like to
17 work with our sister agencies, with folks in the
18 community to identify what the trends are talking
19 about so that they can be addressed so that youth can
20 access those things. We also have when Susan was
21 talking about self-care, we have our Healing the Hurt
22 Conference that we do on an annual basis where we
23 bring folks in to one, learn about various trauma and
24 how they can manage trauma. And one of the great
25 sells of our conference is being able to participate

2 in a self-care workshop where you can do yoga, learn
3 how to do these things at your desk where it helps
4 you in terms of managing yourself, managing your
5 work, and then taking on the task at-hand and working
6 with the particular youth or internal structures our
7 external structures.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You know, when we
9 are trying to provide services to the young people, I
10 think it is very important to include them among the
11 staff when we're making decision about them. It
12 makes sense to have them among the staff from DYCD or
13 the service providers, because there's a culture that
14 belong to them. See what I mean? There's something
15 that we can learn from them. There's selling [sic]
16 contribution that they can provide. They can, you
17 know, bring a good addition to your staff. Do you
18 have young people working among the staff of DYCD or
19 the service providers, part of your staff? Or when
20 you have to take decision, do you, you know, make--
21 you know, you call, did you call these young people
22 to be part of the decision, you know, to advise you
23 and to get their thought and try to find out exactly.
24 Because when you have a young person living

2 [inaudible] always in the street [sic]. There's a
3 reason why that doesn't happen like that.

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Let me just add, and
5 then--

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] And I
7 think that the young people that talk among them are,
8 also--

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] So,--

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: they share the same,
11 you know, values and they're facing the same
12 challenges.

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, one of the
14 hallmarks of the way we develop programs is we always
15 involve young people in the development of the
16 programs. We have focus groups. So, when we
17 released the next round of funding I expect we'll do
18 focus groups with young people to under-- to hear
19 from them how has it worked, what needs to be
20 tweaked, what are the changes that make sense? I
21 know on the ground day-to-day a lot of the
22 residential programs have house meetings for the
23 young people meet on a regular basis to discuss
24 issues, what bothers them, what are the rules, how
25 are things? So, I think from a government

2 perspective when we design program that youth voices
3 are very important at the grassroots level. On the
4 day-to-day, the nonprofit service providers recognize
5 it's important to have ongoing communication with
6 young people because it's a voluntary program. So,
7 that's important that there is buy-in by young
8 people. They're not there because they are told to
9 be there. It's not like a secured detention program.
10 They're there because they wanted to be there,
11 because they need the services. So, the constant
12 communication back and forth is essential to making
13 that program successful. Do you want to add?

14 RANDY SCOTT: I do want to add that DYCD
15 does have a youth advisory committee where very
16 second Tuesday of every month from 5:30 to 7:00, we
17 convene with youth from various of the contracted
18 sites to talk about their issues, and you know, it's
19 the first where we're able to bring youth to talk to
20 government and tell government what their issues are
21 and us putting together a plan of how we can address
22 those issues. So, we do have a youth advisory
23 committee that meets regularly at our location every
24 Tuesday from 5:30 to 7:00.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.
3 I have another public hearing. I'm going to step
4 out, and want to pass it over to my Co-Chair. Thank
5 you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
7 Chair Eugene. So, I just have a couple of more
8 questions here. So, during this hearing we did
9 receive some additional information about turn-aways,
10 and so one thing that we got was that last night Ali
11 Forney reported that they had 12 youth in their drop-
12 in center overnight because of a lack of crisis beds
13 to send them to.

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Were they 21 and
15 under? Because I mean, that's the key question.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Say again, I'm sorry?

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Were they 21 and
18 under, because I have spoken to Carl repeatedly, and
19 he has made the case passionately that we need to add
20 services for those 21 and older, and I know that he
21 has young people who are over the age that we're
22 currently allowed to serve.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] We were-
24 - [off mic] Excuse me. We were told that it was for
25 lack of crisis beds. So, we were not-- we weren't

2 told that it ws because they were over the age of 21.

3 So I'm assuming then that they're under the age of

4 21. I can get back to you on that.

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] We can
6 look into that.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But they said it was
8 lack of crisis beds.

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: This has been an
10 ongoing conversation I've had with Ali Forney that
11 they don't have crisis shelter beds for 21 and older.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, I know.

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, we'll certainly
14 investigate this and get back to you, but you know,
15 my understanding is that Carl has said to us in the
16 past to our staff that he has a place for anyone who
17 shows up, and that's in the context of 21 and under.
18 So, we will look into this and get back to you.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: If it is
21 under 21, I'm not sure, but if it is, Carl has just
22 submitted he's got two proposals pending as part of
23 that group coming online for space that that you've
24 identified, so we're-- our expansion would help
25 address that.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Just to get
3 back to the question of whether or not anyone is
4 turned away on any given night, whether-- and
5 whether-- I think that it just kind of speaks to if
6 we're hearing from providers that they are turning
7 people away because they don't have access to the
8 crisis beds, and you're telling us that there's
9 always access to a crisis bed or an acceptable and
10 accessible TIL bed, obviously we here, we don't-- how
11 are we-- we're hearing two different things that
12 don't jive. So, it's up-- honestly, it's up to you
13 guys and the providers to explain either why you're
14 not on the same page or, you know, or somehow come to
15 the conclusion that you happen-- that you are on the
16 same page, and there's just different perspectives on
17 that. Or but if you're not on the same page, why?
18 And why they may be turning people away, but
19 according to you guys nobody's turned away.

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We'll, certainly,
21 you know, continue to have conversations with the
22 services providers. We know that the beds are there.
23 It might be a question of how to access them and make
24 it easier, and that some of the things that Randy has
25 talked about are things we'll continue to work on.

2 We definitely know for 21 to 24, if a young person
3 shows up who's over 21 it's more challenging, and
4 that's why we're trying to expand the services, not
5 just only through what we do, but through what other
6 city agencies are doing.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So we've just
8 been told it's 12 under the age of 21, seven over the
9 age of 21.

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Okay, we'll look
11 into that then.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, that shouldn't
13 happen, right?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: You're
15 right. We have a responsibility. As we expand to
16 communicate, to coordinate to talk to providers who
17 are saying they're having challenges getting in the
18 beds and understand that, that's our challenge.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right. So, I hope we
20 don't have to do a bill, or maybe we do have to do a
21 bill that requires you guys to track nightly the
22 turn-aways.

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right. I think I
24 might be-- and this is more nuanced thing, and we'll
25 look into it, is that there's a preference for

2 certain types of beds, and that becomes more of an
3 issue. It's a-- if it's a--

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] TIL
5 versus crisis, or is it some other--

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] No, a
7 facility that only serves gay-- the primary serves
8 gay youth versus a crisis shelter bed that serves all
9 youth. So, that might be part of the nuance here is
10 that-- because we know on a day-to-day basis there
11 is-- there are beds that are available, but--

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I mean,
13 we can go back to them and ask them whether that was
14 kind of self-selecting.

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes, right.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But we were told that
17 it was because there wasn't the capacity.

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We'll go back if we
20 could--

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] And it
22 might be--

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] get
24 further categorization of why.

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It might very well
3 been that Carl doesn't have a bed in the programs he
4 runs, and he didn't want to refer them to another
5 program that he doesn't run. So,--

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Why not?

7 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I know system wide
8 there is under-utilization. That is undisputed fact.
9 So, we--

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You're saying that--
11 see, in that instance that's pretty serious thing to
12 say that programs aren't referring youth outside of
13 their program if they don't have the capacity.

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well--

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] That
16 would be problematic, obviously. Again, that would
17 be then--

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] No, I--

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] the
20 role of DYCD to bring everybody together and say,
21 hey--

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well, I
23 think that's been communicated consistently--

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] there
25 are beds confirmed.

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: But I think in that
3 situation there is as you said earlier self-
4 selection. Young people may have a preference for a
5 certain type of program or they may-- they want to
6 stay in the Ali Forney thing. This is why we're
7 happy that Ali Forney's has two more proposals in the
8 pipeline--

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Sure,
10 but--

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: because we want to
12 grow--

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I'm
14 going to go back. I'm going to find out that on the
15 night of the 27th of September--

16 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: of those 12, I mean,
18 I'll do-- and that'll be a little micro chasm.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And I'll see what
21 happens at this one center on this one night.

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And maybe it'll
24 elucidate a little bit of what we're talking about.

25 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Please ask
3 that personnel to look into the system and see how
4 many available beds there were.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, sure.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Because
7 they have access to that information.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Take a little
9 snapshot.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Even where
11 those beds are available.

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great. And then the
14 last question is about benefits and whether or not
15 staff is able to end DYCD shelters, enroll youth into
16 public benefits, SNAP, cash assistance, anything HRA
17 benefit-wise, because what we've heard is that
18 programs are being told, and in fact we have access
19 to an email from OCFS saying that they consider that
20 "double-dipping," direct quote, "double-dipping."
21 But you know, if you were to ask me as the Chair of
22 the General Welfare Committee, whether youth that
23 qualify for public benefits are somehow not being
24 signed up for public benefits by their service
25 provider, I mean, this is the-- these are the people.

2 If you-- you know, they shouldn't have to go to an
3 HRA intake center to be able to sign up for food
4 stamps, period. And we have here I have the regs
5 that I could read you, Crisis Reg, Section 182-1.5
6 general requirements for approved programs 9NYADC182-
7 1.5, services: One, a current list of community
8 providers for youth services shall be maintained at
9 each program site. Two, program staff shall assist
10 youth in accessing relevant community resources in
11 order to ensure comprehensive services are provided
12 to youth in accordance with individual cases. Three,
13 program staff shall assist eligible youth in
14 obtaining care services from the local services,
15 social services district. And the TIL regs, Section
16 182-2.5, general requirements for approved programs
17 9NYADC182-2.5 services, current list-- it's the same
18 text for TILs and crisis. What is DYCD's
19 interpretation of the regs on whether or not they're
20 allowed to provide enrollment in social services
21 programs, and if not, what then do we do about this?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I'm happy to
23 have the opportunity to clarify this publicly for our
24 providers. There has been some miscommunication on
25

2 that. We 100 percent support our providers to support
3 young people to access all eligible benefits.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great. Okay, now are
5 they equipped with the resources to be able to do
6 that, because if somebody walks up to me on the
7 street and says, "Hey, can you sign me up for food
8 stamps?" I'll say, "No, I can't." Right?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We've done-
10 - we've had HRA do presentations at RHY provider
11 meetings. We're going to take this opportunity. This
12 communication was brought to our attention through a
13 request. We're familiar with that email. We're going
14 to take this as an opportunity to further clarify for
15 our providers. I think the qualification to that is
16 it should be in the best interest of the young
17 person. So, while you're in a long-term housing and
18 your basic needs are being met, we want you to just
19 be wise about the way you access benefits that you're
20 using in terms of timing of access, but we in no way
21 want to communicate a barrier to access to all
22 eligible public benefits, and we will clarify that.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And it's not double-
24 dipping for a youth in DYCD to have food stamps?

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: No.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I mean, you
4 are having your food. You are getting three meals a
5 day in a shelter, but if you have-- we want young
6 people to access all eligible benefits in their best
7 interest.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: In their
10 best interest.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: By the way, if
12 somebody comes up to me and says, "Can you help me
13 with access to food stamps?" yes, of course, I can
14 help. I can refer, but I don't have the wherewithal
15 to do it myself. Okay, that's important to clarify.
16 Thank you for doing that. So, sorry. One other
17 question. Just-- so I'm looking at the youth count
18 from 2016. You guys might not be able to answer this
19 here, but you mentioned that in sheltered youth that
20 there's the 700-- this is that are in DHS single-
21 adult. There are 70 that were--

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing]
23 Eighteen to 20.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Eighteen to 20, 700
25 that are to 24. Right, and so you-- so, I'm sorry.

2 So, here we go on page eight of that 2016 report. It
3 says overall comparison of youth 24 and under
4 sheltered, the number was 1,653 on this report here,
5 1,653 for 2016. If we were to-- so, between the 700
6 that are between 21 and 24 in single-adult, 70 that
7 are 18 to 21, that's 770, 500 then within the DYCD
8 system. That gets you to 1,270, and the number
9 reported here is 1,653, roughly a 400 headcount gap
10 there. Is that something that you'd be able to--

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Yeah, I
12 don't know that I can fully respond--

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] explain
14 right now?

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: to that right now,
16 but I can suggest that that number may also include
17 single mothers who fall within that age group who are
18 in family with children shelter.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: No, yeah, I know,
20 because that's mentioned as parenting youth then on
21 the next-- that's unaccompanied youth, and parenting
22 youth has been listed as 2,261 for 2016.

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Also, you're saying
24 2016. I can also say that, you know, these numbers
25 obviously do change. There were more youth in our

2 system in 2016 than there are now within that age
3 group as the Commissioner has stated, because they're
4 expanding their system. Some of the youth has gone
5 over there, but we can certainly take that back and
6 give you a better breakdown so we understand--

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yeah, it
8 might be a point, a different point in time.

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But that's a pretty
11 significant gap of, you know. What is that like
12 about 25, 30 percent difference?

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We will absolutely
14 take that back and look.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay. Thank
16 you all very much. I appreciate you taking the time.
17 You've been here for, you know, almost three hours,
18 so I really appreciate you taking the time to do
19 this. We're going to have public testimony now.
20 We're just going to take a five-minute break and then
21 we'll reconvene, and the first panel will be former
22 Chair of the Youth Services Committee on the City
23 Council Lew Fidler, Charles Whitewolf [sp?], and
24 Alexander Perez [sp?]. We can call up Charles
25 Whitewolf and Alexander Perez. Whoever wants to

2 begin? If you have to turn on the mic, the red light-
3 - there you go.

4 ALEXANDER PEREZ: It's on. Well, I guess
5 I'd like to say good afternoon, because now it is the
6 afternoon, and thank you for letting me speak today.
7 I am Alexander Ray Perez, and I am here to testify
8 because I know what it is like to be out here on the
9 streets not knowing where to go, to have days that
10 felt like years and nights feel even longer. I
11 travel from Florida back to this great big city only
12 to find that it has failed people like me, young
13 people who faced the cold hard truth of aging out. I
14 speak to you today as a concerned, terrified and
15 appalled 24-year-old young person, a person who now
16 has to understand why things like funding come in
17 between the City's youth having a semblance of what
18 home is. Not only has the internal struggle of
19 knowing that I am homeless consume my thoughts and
20 riddled my days with worry, but I feel like NYC, the
21 place I'd like to call home has made me feel put out
22 and stranded. At this point, it's too late for me
23 because I age out May 8th this following year. So,
24 not only am I testifying because it's the right thing
25 to do, I'm testifying because the youth after me was

2 me and are many of my friends, and some of which I
3 consider family. And as I present I realize I'm
4 under a great quote by Lincoln, "A government of the
5 people, by the people and for the people." So, let's
6 think about that. And so I ask humbly, please pass
7 Intro 1706, 207 because like all of you I am a
8 person, a person who just needs to know what home
9 feels like.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. If you
11 look up right there, this is what governs us. We
12 greatly appreciate your testimony. Thank you.

13 ALEXANDER PEREZ: Thank you.

14 CHARLES WHITEWOLF: Think that's the
15 button or this button. Hi, my name is Charles
16 Whitewolf. I go by they and them [sic], and I did--
17 oh, sorry. Is that better? Okay, cool. I did have
18 one, I made copies, but after hearing what happened
19 today it just infuriates me even more. I am now
20 housed, but I am a former homeless person. I've been
21 homeless since the age of 16, and I have been through
22 abuse, and I have been through the DA-- excuse me--
23 the DHS system all along with Covenant House. DHS
24 was not a form fit for me along with my biological
25 father. It was a moment in time where I was abused.

2 I have scars to prove it. I have gun marks in my
3 legs from Covenant. I've been bullied. I got
4 threatened, and Covenant just wasn't the place for
5 me. What I've learned over the past few years that I
6 have been homeless is I have not seen these beds that
7 have promised or the beds have gone to just strictly
8 sis-gendered people. There are none provided to
9 those who are LGBTQ. There have none been provided
10 for those who are-- who have children. I don't have
11 kids, just saying that, but I have not seen any of
12 these beds. And each time I'm wondering where these
13 beds are at, they're going to Covenant. Covenant is
14 not safe, and it never will be safe. They're too
15 conservative. I've been used in a broadcast saying
16 that Covenant was awesome and this, that and the
17 third. It's really not. It's actually a fight for
18 your life. I fought every day not to get in trouble,
19 not to get shot, not to even breathe. At a moment in
20 time when I actually was coming out as a non-binary
21 person, I was told to go to the female floor. Even
22 there it's uncomfortable. I had to choose either to
23 be raped or to be beaten because of my gender or how
24 I identify. So, what I'm saying today is can we
25 please pass, because those beds are important to LG--

2 LGBTQIA+, because we-- I'm not going to say that we
3 are the-- what is that, is the word, the word I'm
4 missing? But-- we are the marginalized people. I'm
5 sorry to say it, because there's other people who are
6 marginalized, because we have been more-- we are the
7 ones who keep getting everything, who keep getting
8 abused, who keep doing, because we identify
9 differently. And the fact that Ali Forney does not
10 have any more beds, I watched somebody die in the
11 street six months ago, my best friend, 23 years of
12 age, who could not get a bed just because Ali Forney
13 did not have a bed. I've watched people die just
14 because they didn't have a bed. People who go into
15 prostitution, I've watched it. I'm just wondering
16 where all these beds are at. After,-- like I said, I
17 did have one, but it's just the fact of like where
18 are these beds? I don't see them. I want to see
19 them. I may not be homeless, but my friends are.
20 That's what matters to me. My safety is ensured. If
21 I happen to go homeless the next day, I know what to
22 do. I know how to play the system, but the rest of
23 these guys, they probably don't, and I have to teach
24 them, but where are these beds? How can I help them
25 get new resources? How can I help them get resources

2 that I already have and may lose in the future
3 because of how I identify? So, I'm wondering what is
4 going to happen next? What's going to happen to the
5 youth? Are we just going to die out by being on the
6 streets, or are we actually going to get housed? So,
7 I ask one more time, can you please pass this law so
8 we can be safe? We-- we're still children until the
9 age of 25. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much for
11 that testimony.

12 LEWIS FIDLER: With your indulgence I'm
13 going to read what I think is brief testimony on
14 behalf of Borough President Eric Adams of Brooklyn,
15 and then take a moment to channel my inner Steve
16 Levin about what I heard here this morning as for
17 myself as a citizen. I'll skip the formalities, you
18 know, the good morning because it's good morning and
19 all that stuff. Get right to the substance. While
20 this Administration has made important efforts to
21 address homelessness in New York City, there are
22 still far too many young people without a place to
23 call home due to abuse, neglect and violence, and
24 that is an unacceptable situation. One area where
25 the City can make significant impact is by fulfilling

2 its requirement to raise the age of who qualifies as
3 homeless youth. Intro 1706 raises the age to 24--
4 25, actually. Earlier this year the State
5 Legislature passed the Raise the Age provision which
6 is the subject of legislation that was introduced at
7 my urging by Assembly Member Helene Weinstein and
8 State Senator Diane Savino, raising the age for youth
9 shelter to 25. I am pleased to see that last week New
10 York City Department of Youth and Community
11 Development issued a concept paper anticipating a new
12 RFP for youth shelter that contemplates permitting
13 access to youth up to age 25. However, I remain
14 concerned by the caveats and conditions that are
15 noted in the concept paper. Specifically, and
16 concern that the bureaucracy might find an excuse in
17 a soon-to-be promulgated state regulations rather
18 than a way to get this done. RHY are often homeless
19 due to abuse, sexual assault, disproportionately
20 affect LGBTQ+ youth. How much longer should these
21 young people have to wait while the City wraps itself
22 in red tape? The state has met this challenge by
23 raising the age so that RHY can get assistance in a
24 safe, age-appropriate facility. Intro 1706 will take
25 away any question of where New York City stands and

2 require DYCD to make the change. There are
3 vulnerable young-- these are vulnerable young people
4 in need of refuge. We cannot with good conscience
5 continue to use technicalities to deny them the
6 resources and services they need. The concept paper
7 also indicates that Raise the Age is contingent upon
8 the availability of additional resources. Additional
9 resources that target youth homelessness, directing
10 young people to age in resource-appropriate
11 facilities are needed even without raising the age.
12 This should not be permitted to stand in the way of
13 implementing Raise the Age. We must find both the
14 will and the way. I fully support Intro 1699, RHYR
15 by definition in crisis when the City has an
16 opportunity to positively interact with young people
17 in crisis, we should not be limited in our response
18 by time. Many RHY do not seek services. The ones
19 who do should be given the full slate of resources
20 the City has available for as long as those services
21 are needed. To expect that RHY can fully address the
22 very causes of their personal crises within a
23 prescribed timeframe is short-sided. Our response to
24 RHY who do manage to connect with our services should
25 be one of compassion. Finally, tracking data must be

2 important, an important part of the City's approach
3 to addressing the RHY crisis. Intro 1700 will
4 require the tracking of RHY as the interact of city
5 services. This data can help us increase
6 sufficiencies and serve more youth in need. We must
7 understand the outcomes of the services provided if
8 we have to thoroughly address the causes of
9 homelessness and the effectiveness of our assistance.
10 Specifically, this bill also creates a right to
11 shelter for all who need it. Frankly, this is a
12 debate we should be passed, but let us remove any
13 ambiguity regarding the City's obligation to provide
14 shelter to all. In the city with the most
15 billionaires in the world, certainly we can ensure
16 that no young person is relegated to live on the
17 street, sleep on a subway grating, couch surf, or
18 compromise their bodies, health or self-respect in
19 exchange for a place to sleep safely at night. That-
20 - those are the word of Borough President Adams. So,
21 I do hope you do enact these bills. No, on behalf of
22 me, myself and I as a citizen, I have to tell you, I-
23 - there were points this morning where I wanted-- my
24 head was going to explode. I have the highest
25 respect for Commissioner Chong. I know him for 15

2 years now. He was Deputy Commissioner at DYCD when I
3 first became Chair of Youth Services, and I know
4 beyond a shadow of a doubt, and I hope no one out
5 there has any doubt about this, his heart is 100
6 percent in the right place, no question. But when I
7 hear the numbers, you know, 43, I have to tell you,
8 you know, we should all go home, because problem's
9 been solved. I mean, you know, I think we should be
10 really proud of everything we've done in the last 15
11 years. I don't know why we're here, but I don't see
12 anyone leaving, alright? Because it's just no way,
13 right? I'm sure you're going to hear a lot of
14 testimony that there's just no way. In 2005 or 06
15 with Council funding, a study was done of the numbers
16 and characteristics of homeless youth in the City of
17 New York. It was run with the coalition under the
18 supervision and direction of a professor at Columbia
19 University. They found 38,000 runaway and homeless
20 youth in one of the categories that you, Mr.
21 Chairman, mentioned that apparently are not included
22 in the number 43. At a time when homelessness has
23 expanded unfortunately in our city to believe that
24 the number 38,000 has reduced itself by even half,
25 which would be 19,000 amongst runaway and homeless

2 youth, that's mind boggling to me. I'd like to think
3 we made progress. I don't think we've solved the
4 problem, and I could hear the words, you know,
5 there's more to do. I just think that the question
6 is that there's a lot more to do, not you know--
7 there are 43 beds and we're putting 300 on line, I
8 mean, Councilman Johnson asked, you know, very
9 pertinent, like, "Why are we doing that?" Alright?
10 Why are we doing that? And you know, to cite the
11 number of transports from street outreach is also a
12 little simplistic, okay? We had hearings, and I'm
13 really glad that you're having another one. It's
14 been a while. They talked about disconnected youth.
15 I know the jargon changes every couple of years. I
16 may be old-school here, you know? Youth who are just
17 not connected to society in any way, they're
18 disconnected youth, and my response during those
19 hearings was that they're a militantly disconnected
20 youth, people who aren't connected to society and
21 damn well don't want to be. Well, they're not
22 getting counted, okay? If you sleep in, you know, in
23 an all-night McDonald's, you're not being counted,
24 right? If you're riding the subway all night you're
25 not being counted, okay? And as much as it's great

2 that we have groups like Safe Horizons doing street
3 outreach, they're clearly not able to reach those
4 people. Maybe the question should be how do we reach
5 those people. Let them know that there are services,
6 there are ways to break the cycle, get out of
7 homelessness. That's, you know, that's the first
8 thing that makes me nuts. The second is a lot of the
9 conversation here about cost, which you know, I've
10 said this so many times. I said it outside on the
11 steps this morning. I must mutter it in my sleep.
12 Every one of these young people who's out on the
13 street at night is more likely to get physically--
14 develop physical or mental health issues, have a
15 brush with the law, become HIV positive. The cost of
16 dealing with any one of those things is more than
17 shelter bed program. So you can be the most fiscally
18 conservative person in the world, the budget is a
19 zero-sum game. I'd rather it come out of prevention
20 than have to come out of cure. To me, a shelter bed
21 program is that. And then when you talk about 700
22 some odd, you know, young people in the DHS system,
23 and I love to talk to those, you know, people, find
24 out why they're in the DHS system as opposed to DYCD
25 and whether they'd be more comfortable in a DYCD

2 facility. I'm not advocating for robbing Peter to
3 pay Paul, but if they're not going to be in the DHS
4 system, they're going to be in the DYCD system,
5 that's kind of cost-neutral, right? So, there is no
6 cost to that. So, you know, all of this stuff makes
7 me a little nuts, and just the final overriding
8 thought is again with all respect to DYCD, to the
9 Commissioner, to Deputy Commissioner, I know their
10 heart's in the right place, but what I listened to
11 this morning was too many reasons why not, not enough
12 reasons why. It's obvious why. You need to find a
13 way to make it work as opposed to talking about
14 agency prerogative, discretion that, you know, may or
15 may not belong to them, and inadequate funding. This
16 Administration's done a great job, alright. You
17 know, I think my last hearing on this subject I
18 promised all of you that I'd come back and haunt you
19 if it was necessary, alright? Hasn't really been
20 necessary until this morning apparently. So, I'm
21 really glad. Whatever quivels [sic] I might have with
22 the Administration, this isn't one of them. They're
23 doing great. We're not fighting for the same turf,
24 shedding blood for the same turf, you know, every
25 year at budget time. You know, I commend them for

2 taking shelter beds out of the budget dance. I think
3 that's magnificently compassionate. Now, we need to
4 move on to address the issues. I mean, even the
5 Federal Government has raised the age. The State of
6 New York has raised the age. How could the most
7 progressive city in this country not raise the age?
8 I don't get it.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
10 former Chairman, Lew Fidler. I want to thank this
11 entire panel. You know, I think that there needs to
12 continue to be advocacy. It's one of the challenges
13 over the last couple of years is how do you-- you
14 know, when you're working either in the advocacy
15 world or here at the Council with an Administration
16 that you generally like and generally agree with and
17 appreciate the things that they're doing, how do you
18 light a fire under them when it needs to happen? So,
19 I think continuing to advocate for raising the age
20 here, for bringing these beds on line more quickly,
21 for enhancing the level of services and the scope of
22 accommodation is incredibly important. And as you
23 said, Lew, confronting the reality and not hiding
24 behind, you know, convenient methodologies, you know,
25 counting the 43 people on the coldest night of the

2 year that you find, right? Let's be real here, and
3 not delude ourselves, and so I think that that's
4 going to continue to take advocacy. And so, you
5 know, Lew's been an advocate for a long time, but the
6 other two panelists, you are, you know, you're young
7 people and we need advocates. We need you to be out
8 there continuing to make this case and make sure that
9 even when you, you know, agree with the
10 Administration, you like the Mayor, you also got to
11 push him as well. It's really important. So, I'll
12 ask you to keep up with it, and this isn't going to
13 be the last time we're going to need to have a
14 hearing on this issue. So, we'll ask you to, you
15 know, come back and keep beating the drum. Thank
16 you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman,
18 may I say something?

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes, Council Member
20 Johnson.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you. I
22 was-- sorry, I was watching the testimony on the
23 television downstairs while I had to take care of
24 something, so I did hear the great testimony of this
25 panel, and I wanted to run up before you guys left

2 the table to just thank you, to thank you all for
3 being here today to advocate on behalf of the folks
4 that can't be here, you know, for really being
5 incredible advocates for folks that have been left
6 behind historically and oppressed in a big way. So,
7 I just wanted to thank the young folks here and the
8 other folks that are here as well. And I want to say
9 about Lew Fidler, you know, not-- I don't want to
10 sound like a broken record, but he really deserves
11 it. He started championing this issue long before
12 anyone else. He was further out there. He was on
13 top of it. He was screaming at hearings in an
14 effective way. He was going to the mat every year
15 standing on the steps of City Hall. When I first
16 came to the Council and when I was elected in 2013,
17 in the first, I believe, six months of my being in
18 office and Lew was out of office, he knew that I had
19 a relationship with the Ali Forney Center. I used to
20 be on the board of the Ali Forney Center before I was
21 elected to the Council. He knew that I had Covenant
22 House in my district, and he asked me to come out to
23 Brooklyn to meet with him to talk about these issues
24 even after he had left office. And he said, "Here
25 are the things that we need to do. Here are the

2 things you need to work on. Here are the tricks that
3 are played. Here are the things that people aren't
4 going to tell you about this issue and the way the
5 bureaucracy kind of slows the wheels in city
6 government on this." So, he did that. He's here
7 today. I was just looking at a text message that I
8 got from him in I believe it was April or May about
9 the state regulations, him texting me saying, "Have
10 you reached out to the Governor's Office to make sure
11 they're handling these regulations properly?" out of
12 nowhere. That talks to his commitment, not just
13 through his 12 years in the Council, but him being
14 here today, him being recognized by the Ali Forney
15 Center and by other organizations for his fierce
16 tenacity and advocacy. I'm sure there are many
17 things that he's proud of throughout his time and
18 career in public service, not just the 12 years in
19 the Council, but the service to his neighborhoods and
20 communities in South Brooklyn before he was elected.
21 I really believe-- I don't want his obituary written,
22 but the day that it's written, but the day that it's
23 written I think one of the top things that will be in
24 there is that Lew Fidler, a straight guy from South
25 Brooklyn, became one of the fiercest, loudest, most-

2 dedicated, committed advocates and champions for
3 runaway homeless youth. That is a big deal. He's
4 made a tremendous impact in young people's lives
5 across the City, and I think that it really tells us
6 a story of just because you may look a certain way or
7 come from a certain area or are categorized as a
8 certain person, that doesn't mean that you can't be
9 an advocate for all people. And that's the story of
10 Lew Fidler, and I wanted to come back up here today
11 to thank him for the work that he's done. He has
12 saved countless lives through his years of advocacy,
13 and I want to recognize him for that. So, thank you,
14 Lew, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 [applause]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
17 Council Member Johnson. So, next up at the Lew
18 Fidler fan club hearing 2017 we're going to have-- we
19 want to thank this panel. We do have a lot of
20 panelists, so we'll call them up, and I think from
21 this point forward we'll have to keep folks on the
22 clock if that's alright. We'll still have three
23 minutes for testimony. Next panel, Craig Hughes, we
24 have Nadia Swanson from Ali Forney, Loraine Williams
25 [sp?] from Bronx Defenders, and Jeremy Kohomban from

2 Children's Village. Jeremy, sorry for mangling your
3 last name.

4 CRAIG HUGHES: Hello, thanks for this
5 long-awaited hearing, desperately needed. I will try
6 to be brief. I handed a little bit of a history
7 dissertation in for testimony, so I won't go through
8 all details. So, thank you again for having the
9 hearing. My name is Craig Hughes. I'm with the
10 Urban Justice Center's Mental Health Project, and you
11 know, we go through some of the history of UJC. I
12 think you guys know. I'm here presenting on behalf
13 of the Mental Health Project, the Peter Cicchino
14 Youth Project and the Safety Net Projects for Urban
15 Justice Center. Just to give a little context of the
16 historic magnitude of these bills, and I make no
17 exaggeration in this. I'll just put forward that
18 runaway and homeless youth have never been given
19 sufficient resources in New York City, and since the
20 current homeless crisis began in the late 1970s,
21 they've been the last attended to typically. Their
22 marginalization within the Safety Net can be seen in
23 the City's doubt of their very existence, some of
24 which we saw today. No one in their right minds
25 believes there's 44 street homeless young people in

2 this city. Going back to the early 80s, city
3 officials butted heads with advocates on how many
4 homeless young people walked are streets, and
5 officials tended to say that the numbers were unknown
6 or small. Advocates tended to say they were much
7 higher. I would lean to the fact that there's much
8 higher; 3,800 is a reasonable estimate. That's
9 before the current homeless crisis. That was 2008.
10 During the 90s the Giuliani Administration
11 commissioned an estimate of the size of the RHY
12 population, then suppressed a study that said there
13 were 20,000 RHY. Of note, that study found that, and
14 I quote, "In 1990's system, the system of 191 beds in
15 emergency settings and 317 in transitional settings
16 provided only a fraction of the number." That was
17 under the Giuliani Administration. We saw less in
18 the Bloomberg Administration, but going back from
19 1990s, we're talking 500+ beds. Just to go into some
20 of the current gaps, while we're appreciative that
21 the current mayor has put some resources to this
22 population, the tendency to pat ourselves on the back
23 is a little too much, and we have some tempering for
24 that. Just for clarity, for homeless youth under 21
25 youth-specific crisis beds are a lifeline. They help

2 our clients get off the streets. However, we saw
3 [inaudible] that a 30-day stay is not only anxiety-
4 provoking, it's also far too short. Four week stents
5 in homeless shelters are not going to help anyone get
6 off the streets. It's just reality. At four weeks
7 in one of the most gentrifying cities is not going to
8 happen. We need to raise the length of time. Just
9 in terms of the discharge data, and this will be my
10 last point, while the crisis beds tends to be a
11 revolving door, some young people do go from crisis
12 beds into the City's long-term TIL beds. However,
13 just in terms of discharge data, approximately in
14 three-quarters through FY 17, approximately 50
15 percent of the nearly 3,000 discharges from crisis
16 beds resulted in youth going straight back into a
17 crisis bed. Approximately, 50 percent were consisted
18 of youth disappearing from service provision
19 entirely. Many others went into really precarious
20 living situations like living with an unrelated
21 adult, incarceration, hospitalization-- I'll be very
22 brief. Approximately 12 percent of discharges went
23 into very residential living or supportive housing.
24 And to get to your question about permanent housing,
25 I appreciate the bureaucrat tendency to want to have

2 the answer of what is permanent housing-- I don't
3 know if you would ask that of ourselves, but okay.
4 Only 0.06 percent, so less one percent of discharges
5 moved into their own apartment, 0.06 percent. They
6 do track that data, in fact. What DYCD puts out
7 publicly is a different question, but they do track
8 the data. Unfortunately, DYCD doesn't always make
9 that data very easily available. You can FOIA and
10 get some of it through an arduous process, but some
11 of these bills do address the fact that there is
12 almost no data on youth using the DYCD system and
13 less data on the larger homeless youth population,
14 speaking to the desperate need of it being passed.
15 My testimony-- or the bills being passed. My
16 testimony goes through the details of that, and you
17 may find some interesting figures. I did include
18 discharge data from three-quarters through FY 17 in
19 the last page of it, and happy to follow up with more
20 data, but they do track more than they were putting
21 forward. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Thanks.

23 So, just to reiterate, 0.06 percent of youth
24 discharged from the DYCD--

2 CRAIG HUGHES: [interposing] From crisis
3 shelters, it's a little bit higher in TIL beds.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

5 CRAIG HUGHES: But from crisis shelters,
6 0.06 percent that is duplicated discharges. So, when
7 they provide the data to us they give large aggregate
8 numbers. So that could be some of the same youth.
9 It is some of the same youth.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

11 CRAIG HUGHES: But 0.06 percent is what
12 is a duplicated number.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: From crisis. What
14 about TIL, do you know?

15 CRAIG HUGHES: Yeah, I do. The number of
16 TIL going into their own housing, let's see. Okay,
17 18 percent of crisis discharges consisted of youth
18 going to TIL beds. Of the 377 TIL discharges that we
19 have three-quarters through FY 17, approximately 17
20 percent were discharged back into DYCD crisis
21 shelters. So just for clarity, what-- to a
22 transitional bed and then went right into a crisis
23 bed.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

25 CRAIG HUGHES: Right? One step back.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

3 CRAIG HUGHES: Another nine percent went
4 into TIL shelters.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: A big step back.

6 CRAIG HUGHES: Right into that four-week
7 stent in a shelter. Another nine percent went into
8 the adult shelters. More than 20 percent of
9 discharges from TILs were moved into housing with
10 friends or relatives, which if you've worked with
11 young people is very precarious. Approximately 11
12 percent were discharges were youth accessing their
13 own apartment, which is about the same percentage
14 that simply disappeared from services. If we add all
15 discharges-- if we add discharges of all made into a
16 crisis or transitional shelter into-- discharges from
17 a crisis or transitional shelter into incarceration
18 or hospitalization into another type of shelter, we
19 find that approximately 37 percent of TIL discharges
20 are into hyper-precarious situations. Those numbers
21 show a few things. First, they show the TIL system
22 has better outcomes than the crisis system. It's
23 less likely to discharge youth into more precarious
24 situations. Secondly, youth tend not to access
25 permanent housing through the TIL system, where two

2 years, plus years, into housing subsidies in this
3 city-- I appreciate that every time that DYCD comes
4 up in front of the City Council they say we'll get to
5 it. They still haven't gotten to it. We're almost
6 through a full Mayoral Administration with no access
7 out of youth shelters.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Can I ask is it--
9 would you-- is it accurate to say that you're much
10 more likely to go into incarceration or
11 hospitalization than into permanent housing out of
12 the DYCD system?

13 CRAIG HUGHES: I can tell you that pretty
14 quickly. So, just by the numbers, for young people
15 who went into-- I want to give you a yes, but I don't
16 know if that's quickly, that's easy. So, it looks
17 like there was about four that went into correctional
18 from a TIL bed and that went into their own
19 apartment, it was-- sorry. Own apartment was looks
20 like if I'm reading this correctly, 22.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

22 CRAIG HUGHES: So, it's significantly
23 higher, but again, we're talking 22. Those you can
24 guess are unduplicated individuals. Those are
25 probably, you know, individual youth, and to 22 to go

2 into their own apartment from New York City, as
3 someone mentioned the most progressive city in the
4 country, to go into their own apartment, the number
5 being 22 is ridiculous.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In a year.

7 CRAIG HUGHES: That's three-quarters
8 through FY 17. We didn't get the full FY 17 data
9 yet.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

11 CRAIG HUGHES: But yeah, you're more
12 likely to end up homeless than housed. That's true.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, you're more
14 likely to be homeless than housed. Okay. Thank you.
15 Jeremy?

16 JEREMY KOHOMBAN: Thank you, Chair Levin,
17 members. I'll go through this very quickly. We are a
18 DYCD provider. We provide shelter here in New York
19 City and other jurisdictions. Let me start by
20 stating the obvious. Disproportionality by place and
21 race is the big problem. Most of our kids are of
22 color. They come from poor segregated neighborhoods,
23 and that's a crisis in New York City, and we see
24 pockets of this, and most of our kids tend to
25 graduate. While you can't attribute causation by

2 what we see, but we see many of our kids in deed
3 going into prison and going into the adult homeless
4 shelters, and that's been a real problem for many
5 years. We support Intro. 1699. We think children
6 should be permitted to remain in shelters for longer
7 periods of time. They need the treatment. They need
8 the help. The key here would be to make sure that we
9 have the services to give them the help so that it's
10 not just another extended period of time with no
11 outcomes than can be measured. With Intro. 1705, we
12 agree. We do this in our Westchester shelters. It
13 works, and even in a situation where the child is
14 actually a DSS child and comes to us, we still do the
15 paperwork. We process the child, sometimes hold a
16 child overnight, and then hand over to DSS. It
17 prevents that child from walking the streets while we
18 try to figure out what to do. With Intro. 1706, we
19 agree, but with two cautions. And so ACS predicts
20 that about 750 children will age out this year in New
21 York City. Nationally that number is about 2,500
22 that will age out. We know from experience that many
23 of them will find their ways into our shelters, as
24 the young person from Florida mentioned earlier. So,
25 two cautions: First, again, we need services so that

2 they don't languish in there and then simply graduate
3 into the only two other options that are available
4 which are government-funded, which is prison and an
5 adult homeless shelter. We don't want that. And
6 two, we need to make sure that we connect these
7 children to someone, because the only solution that
8 we find is one adult relationship that gives them
9 permanent and unconditional belonging. Governments
10 and charities do a poor job of being there for
11 children as they turn into adulthood, and it would be
12 a lie to claim that we do. Second, we should not be
13 mixing children with 21 and 24-year-olds. There is a
14 big difference there, not siblings. There's a big
15 difference between a 16-year-old and a 23-year-old.
16 So, as we would do with our own children, let's
17 create two systems and serve them well.

18 URRINE WILLIAMS: Good afternoon,
19 Chairperson Levin and members of the Committee on
20 Youth Services and the Committee on General Welfare.
21 Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you
22 today. My name is Urraine Williams and I'm a social
23 work intern at the Bronx Defenders. The Bronx
24 Defenders represent 10's of thousands of clients each
25 year, including youth and young adult, many of who

2 are homeless. We support the reforms included in the
3 bills before you today, and to help explain why I
4 would like to share some of my story. I never had
5 the luxury of living a stable life. I moved from
6 Jamaica to the United States from shelter to shelter
7 and from school to school. Adapting to these
8 different environments was very difficult and caused
9 much emotional distress. I remember washing one
10 underwear repeatedly each night and placing it on the
11 radiator for it to dry by morning so I could go to
12 school. How can I forget the sleepless night dense
13 [sic] in fear and choked by the feeling of being
14 unwanted and unloved? I believe that the true affect
15 that homelessness has on the population it plagues is
16 often overlooked and misunderstood. Homelessness is
17 not just the obvious idea of being without a physical
18 home. It also encompasses aspects such as breaking
19 up family which silently dehumanizes a person's
20 psyche. I know this is true because I once was
21 homeless. In 2009, my mother and I were forced to
22 move in a family shelter in Bed-Stuy after the police
23 raided the home that we lived in due to residents
24 selling drugs. I remember riding the six train to
25 PATH at 2:00 a.m. in the morning. I sat across from

2 my mother who was holding my sister in her hand. I
3 watched as they both slept, my tears carved my face,
4 because I too wanted to sleep, but then I thought who
5 would protect us if I did. After living in the
6 family shelter for eight years with my mother she
7 asked me to leave. I was now homeless and without
8 family support. It was two weeks before my 18th
9 birthday and it was cold and snowing outside. I
10 walked through the shelter door and down the slushy
11 street trying not to drag my bag on the ground. I did
12 not once look back. I only had one hour to get to
13 Covenant House. I began to run, not stopping to pick
14 up my clothes that fell out of the bag. I made it in
15 time and I was able to stay at a Covenant House for
16 two months. Though it was not family and though the
17 food was not the best, and my things were not safe
18 from being stolen, I felt safe and I had a bed to
19 sleep on. I remember struggling to finish my college
20 application, because having to sign in before curfew
21 and not having complete access at the "Cov," but I
22 also remember the staff accommodating my needs, and I
23 felt supported and believed in. After the "Cov" I
24 was placed at SCO Independence N1 [sic] a
25 transitional living program where I lived for eight

2 months before moving into college. The staff there
3 was supportive and they supported me even two years
4 after leaving the program. I mentioned earlier that
5 homelessness has the ability to erode hope and to
6 dehumanize a person's psyche. Therefore, I strongly
7 believe that providing shelter with empathetic staff
8 to New York City homeless youth is giving them
9 another chance to feel loved and wanted. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much for
11 that testimony. Thank you for telling your story.
12 Thank you.

13 NADIA SWANSON: Hi. Thank you, Council
14 Members, for letting me speak today. My name is
15 Nadia Swanson. I'm a social worker and advocate at
16 the Ali Forney Center. I was prepared just to read a
17 testimony from one of the young people who was
18 prepared today but couldn't make it, and I will do
19 that. But I just wanted to say that part of my job
20 at Ali Forney Center is I'm a case manager at our
21 over 21-year-old's emergency housing site that we
22 fight to keep open, this 20-bed shelter, and I sit
23 with them every day, and I'm honored to sit with
24 these like creative and amazing young people while
25 they struggle to reach their goals, and they just

2 want to be working and in school, and they're
3 struggling to keep their mental health straight and
4 to keep their physical health and just strive in this
5 awful like system that's just not helping them, and
6 it breaks my heart, and it's awful, and we need to be
7 doing everything that we can do to help them because
8 the options are so limited for them. And I sit there
9 and it's hard, and we need to make sure that we're
10 helping them because they sit there for months and
11 months waiting for these beds, especially waiting if
12 they are approved for supportive housing. It can
13 take months if they are approved for supportive
14 housing. It can take months to even get that
15 placement, and the amount of trauma that can happen
16 during that time period is huge and is not okay. So,
17 I say all that to say that I'm going to read a
18 testimony by one of our clients, Joe Hayne [sp?], who
19 couldn't make it here today. He wrote: "Thank you,
20 Council Members and New York City Council for
21 allowing not only myself but all of us to testify in
22 support of these four bills today. I am Joe Hayne,
23 18 years old, gender-fluid, and my personal gender
24 pronouns are they, them, theirs. I'm here today
25 homeless since May testifying to all of you because I

2 have gone halfway across the country despite being
3 from Ohio only to come here to now see every birthday
4 with dread, knowing that my housing chances will dry
5 up once I turn 21. It may seem silly. I have three
6 years ahead of myself, and I've stayed in New York
7 City for almost three months, yet, I cannot predict
8 the future, including how many of you will vote on
9 this matter. What I can say is that every single
10 bed, 1700, 1699, 1705, and 1706 must pass, especially
11 1706, and if these pass you're giving so many people
12 the one thing we never have enough of while homeless,
13 time. You're giving so many youth I know within the
14 age range more funding, more housing, more living,
15 quite literally. None of us can control the passage
16 of time regarding our age, but by increasing the age
17 you're not increasing solely our vitality, you're
18 increasing our hope, our chances of finding our own
19 houses, apartments, condos, all places that we may
20 one day call our home." Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much
22 for the testimony. I greatly appreciate the young
23 person that you're testifying on behalf of targeted
24 advocacy, making sure that we, you know, we're

2 looking at all the bills but specifically the most
3 important ones. Please pass along our appreciation.

4 NADIA SWANSON: I will. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
6 to this panel. As I said to the last panel, it's,
7 you know, it's incredibly important even when we, you
8 know, are largely in agreement with this
9 Administration that we continue to advocate and
10 continue to hold their feet to the fire, because
11 that's what needs to happen, and also, you know, it's
12 good to see Jeremy, the providers out there as well
13 advocating, knowing that, you know, they're also
14 having to apply for, you know, programs and
15 contracts, but it's important that they advocate as
16 well, and make sure that-- it's very helpful for us
17 to hear from all of you as we're looking at doing our
18 oversight that we need to do. So, thank you. Okay,
19 Jenn Strashnick from Covenant House, Jamie Powlovich
20 from Coalition for Homeless Youth, Kate Des-- sorry?
21 And Giselle Routhier of Coalition for the Homeless.
22 Sorry, Kate, Legal Aid Society. Hi, okay. Whoever
23 wants to begin, thanks.

24 JENN STRASHNICK: Good afternoon. My
25 name is Jenn Strashnick and I'm a Senior Staff

2 Attorney at Covenant House New York. I would like to
3 thank the Committees on General Welfare and Youth
4 Services for the opportunity to testify today.

5 Covenant House New York is the nation's largest
6 nonprofit agency serving runaway homeless and
7 trafficked youth, and we strongly support these
8 important bills that are being discussed today that
9 address long-standing barriers that have prevented
10 youth from fully accessing the help that they
11 desperately need. First, we support extending the
12 length of stay for runaway and homeless youth. The
13 current time limit of 30 days with a possible 30-day
14 extension is simply not enough time to work with a
15 young person and address the needs that they have
16 when they're in crisis. It's difficult to focus on
17 healing from trauma, finding a job or addressing
18 mental health issues when a young person's primary
19 focus becomes where is he or she going to live after
20 just 30 days. The result of the RHY shelters are
21 forced to discharge youth before they are ready to
22 leave. When no other youth shelter beds are
23 available, youth are plunged back into homelessness.
24 They couch surf, live on the streets, engage in
25 survival sex, and some become victims of human

2 trafficking. So, extending the length of stay to a
3 possible 120 days in crisis would greatly help
4 stabilize our young people. Second, we support
5 extending the age of runaway and homeless youth
6 programs to include youth up to age 25, because it's
7 heartbreaking when we are forced to tell a young
8 person on their 21st birthday they have to leave, or
9 to tell young people over the age of 21 that we
10 can't help them. Science has taught us that a young
11 person's brain continues to develop until they're
12 approximately 25-years-old, and we know that young
13 adults have different needs from older adults.
14 Twenty-one to 25-year-olds often fear entering the
15 adult shelter system, so the result is that these
16 youth are particularly vulnerable. They couch surf
17 when they can, but otherwise may turn to the streets
18 or survival sex to survive. Therefore, we support
19 allowing homeless young adults to remain in RHY
20 shelters until their 25th birthday. However, we do
21 want to emphasize the need that to provide for all of
22 these youth, more funding will need to be made
23 available. Third, we support streamlining intake and
24 assessment for DHS shelter. When a young person runs
25 out of time at an RHY shelter or turns 21, they

2 sometimes must turn to DHS as we know. However, many
3 youth fear going to DHS, partially due to the intake
4 and assessment process. For example, it can be very
5 intimidating for an 18-year-old who is experiencing
6 homelessness for the first time to be placed in an
7 assessment shelter with a chronically homeless 50-
8 year-old with severe mental health issues who may
9 just be coming in off the street. Currently, no
10 information is shared between DYCD and DHS when a
11 young person transitions. So, a young person
12 essentially must start over when they enter DHS, and
13 they must once again describe their stories of abuse,
14 exploitation, and other forms of trauma. Therefore,
15 we support creating a smooth transition process for
16 youth exiting RHY shelters, can bypass DHS and take
17 an assessment and information can be shared so a
18 young person can continue to progress. To conclude,
19 the passage of these bills would really provide
20 incredible support to our young people, and we
21 appreciate that advocates, City Council members and
22 DYCD all agree that every young person in need
23 deserves a youth shelter bed. Again, we want to make
24 sure that there is sufficient funding in order to be
25 able to help all of the young people in need.

2 Finally, I would like to thank Council Member Eugene
3 and Council Member Levin for holding today's hearing,
4 and a special thank you to Council Member Johnson for
5 continuing to be a champion for our youth. We thank
6 the entire New York City Council for their support in
7 the fight against youth homelessness. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much.
9 Thank you.

10 JAMIE POWLOVICH: Good afternoon. My
11 name is Jamie Powlovich, and I am the Executive
12 Director of the Coalition for Homeless Youth. The
13 Coalition is comprised of 67 providers of services to
14 homeless youth across New York State; 29 of our
15 members are here in New York City. I'd like to start
16 off by thanking Chair Levin and Eugene and the
17 members of the General Welfare and Youth Services
18 Committees for holding today's hearing regarding safe
19 and accessible shelter for homeless youth. I would
20 also like to thank specifically the General Welfare
21 Committee for their diligent efforts to support the
22 needs of homeless youth and for introducing the five
23 pieces of legislation being discussed today. These
24 five bills are the most comprehensive set of reforms
25 to services for homeless youth that we have seen in

2 decades. The Council is truly showing what a city
3 that cares for its most vulnerable youth can look
4 like. CHY is in full support of all five of these
5 bills, and we are eager to see the life-changing
6 impact that they will have on many young people once
7 they are passed. Before I start my testimony, I
8 would like to clarify two things that DYCD testified
9 to. The first is they mentioned that they don't
10 track data around young people's mental health needs
11 as well as whether or not they've been victims of
12 sexual abuse or commercial sexual exploitation. That
13 is not true. New York City contracted providers have
14 to fill out monthly reports to DYCD with no
15 identifying data that-- and the reports asks all of
16 those questions. And so they do have unduplicated
17 numbers that are reported to them directly by
18 providers every single month. And the second thing
19 is the Commissioner referenced the OCFS regulations
20 as a barrier to establishing how much additional
21 funding they would need to bring bed on line.
22 Although the OCFS regulations are being revised to
23 reflect the law changes so that the law can go into
24 effect January 1st, the first set of revisions to the
25 regulations will only include the changes as

2 reflected in the law. There will then be a much more
3 extensive revision of the regulations that will
4 include a lot of the things that the Commissioner
5 spoke of regarding the square footage requirements
6 and the other physical structure, requirements that
7 programs need to meet. However, that is anticipated
8 to not even be available for public comment until the
9 end of 2018, and so DYCD will need to move forward
10 under the guidelines in the current regulations
11 regarding the things that they mentioned. In regards
12 to the five bills that are up for discussion, as I
13 said, we support them wholeheartedly, and I
14 definitely echo everything that the providers have
15 said in support of them and will say in support of
16 them. I would like to use my remaining 18 seconds to
17 just give a few other recommendations for the
18 Council's consideration. One, funding for older
19 youth. It has been mentioned that DYCD is in support
20 of extending the age and length of stay as long as
21 there's additional and separate resources. However,
22 we ask that DYCD allow providers to access the
23 current RFP to serve older youth. And then just
24 really quickly, also it was mentioned we also suggest
25 that DYCD explore funding for capital costs. Our

2 providers report that it's the number one barrier for
3 them being able to bring new beds on line is having
4 the start-up money to do so. Also, as already
5 mentioned, balancing the system, that DYCD needs to
6 assess how many crisis and TIL beds they are bringing
7 on line and make sure that they are not tipping to
8 one side or the other. Also, regarding housing
9 resources, as you mentioned, the City made a
10 commitment to give DYCD residents access to housing
11 subsidies. However, that still has not happened. It
12 needs to. And number five, that DYCD also needs to
13 fund specialized housing specialists in the runaway
14 homeless youth programs. DHS shelters as well as the
15 foster care system have specialized staff to assist
16 their residents with transition into permanency.
17 DYCD does not. So, in conclusion, I just want to
18 thank you for the opportunity to testify before you
19 today.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. They
21 don't always work out all that well, but they need to
22 be in every shelter, absolutely.

23 JAMIE POWLOVICH: Right. I'm not
24 speaking, yeah, to the quality. That isn't ACS and
25 DHS, but the funding is there--

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] They
3 need to, and many of them are good, but abs-- point
4 well taken. They need to be funded throughout the
5 system.

6 JAMIE POWLOVICH: Right, and it's just--
7 it's a different skillset than case management, and--

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Oh yeah,
9 I think that they should recruit from real estate
10 offices. Because you need people to be able to find
11 apartments, not case managers. So, I agree.

12 KATE DE ZENGOTITA: Hello, my name is
13 Kate de Zengotita, and this is Theresa Moser, and
14 we're staff attorneys at the Juvenile Rights Practice
15 of the Legal Aid Society's Special Litigation and Law
16 Reform Unit. We'd like to thank the Committees on
17 General Welfare and Youth Services and Committee
18 Chairs Steve Levin and Mathieu Eugene for providing
19 us with the opportunity to be here and applaud the
20 Committee's dedication to this important issue. In
21 particular, we would like to thank Council Member
22 Corey Johnson and his staff whose hard work and
23 commitment to this population are steadfast. Each
24 and every one of the bills at issue today would, if
25 passed, have a meaningful and positive impact on the

2 lives of New York City's runaway and homeless youth.

3 As the Committees are aware, the Legal Aid Society is

4 class counsel for New York City's runaway and

5 homeless youth in the aforementioned litigation that

6 2013 lawsuit in collaboration with Patterson,

7 Belknap, Webb, and Tyler, C.W. Versus the City of New

8 York, and through the course of this now almost four-

9 year representation, we've seen how urgently this

10 system needs precisely the kind of reform that these

11 bills would legislate. We strongly urge the Council

12 to pass them all in order to ensure that RHY will

13 truly have access to the life-saving services

14 available to those lucky enough to enter the youth

15 shelter system. Coalition for the Homeless will

16 speak on Intros number 1700 and 1705, and we join in

17 their testimony on those bills, and I will quickly

18 address the others. Under Intro Number 1619 it would

19 finally be possible to assess how many youth are

20 being turned away from DYCD-funded shelter, clearly a

21 controversial issue in question. The current system

22 for assessing these numbers is rarely if ever used,

23 because it is impractical, and we believe that Intro

24 Number 1619 will allow for meaningful data collection

25 and allow the City to have a better grasp on whom it

2 is unable to currently serve. Intro. Number 1699
3 with respect to the time limits: The current shelter
4 time limits create an untenable cycle in which
5 runaway and homeless youth are often unable to work
6 quickly enough to make suitable living arrangements
7 and are regularly discharged from shelters to the
8 streets. The proposed extended time limits in Intro
9 1699 are an important step toward allowing the
10 shelter system to genuinely support our young people
11 as they work to emerge from the system no longer
12 homeless rather than to perpetuate that cycle. And
13 finally, the Raise the Age bill. New York City
14 should opt in to serve 21 to 24-year-olds as homeless
15 young adults separate and apart from the DHS system.
16 it is at this point well established by scientific
17 research that while 21 to 24-year-olds are not
18 children or even teens, in many important respects
19 they are not yet adults, and the system should treat
20 them accordingly. These young people, much like their
21 younger homeless counterparts are not like older
22 homeless people. They're homeless for different
23 reasons. They cope with and experience homelessness
24 differently, and they need different services and
25 supports in order to emerge from homelessness as

2 healthy, self-sufficient people. Thank you again to
3 the Committee for looking so closely at this, and we
4 encourage you to pass all the bills before you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much.

6 GISELLE ROUTHIER: Thank you. My name is
7 Giselle Routhier with the Coalition for the Homeless.
8 We've submitted joint testimony with Legal Aid, so
9 I'll echo everything that was just said, but also add
10 a few points on Bill 1700 and 1705. So, 1700 would
11 propose a simple, yet critical change. That's been
12 the subject of much discussion today. The bill
13 requires DYCD to report demographic information as
14 well as service needs of the RHY population. In
15 addition, the bill calls for data about where RHY go
16 when they leave the youth shelter system, which is
17 very critical as we've heard. These requirements not
18 only foster transparency and accountability, but they
19 are the means by which New York City will understand
20 who its runaway and homeless young people are and
21 what they need. The knowledge will enable our city
22 to continuously improve services for RHY which will
23 ensure that more of our young people will be able to
24 achieve self-sufficiently. And crucially, the bill
25 will also ensure that youth who are trying to access

2 youth-specific shelter will be able to do so. For
3 1705, the intake and assessment bill, even with the
4 substantial improvements that these other bills would
5 yield, some RHY will inevitably need to transition
6 from the DYCD system to DHS. So, as it stands,
7 there's a relatively complex and cumbersome process
8 for young people to transition from DYCD to DHS
9 intake to an assessment shelter to a long-term
10 program shelter. Intro. Number 1705, if passed,
11 would streamline that transition while youth are
12 still in the DYCD system, allowing them to bypass
13 standard DHS intake and assessment which is often
14 very onerous and traumatic and a major deterrent, in
15 fact, for young people. Although we know that DYCD
16 and DHS have already been working towards these
17 goals, it's important to ensure that these agencies
18 continue to work together to support young people and
19 a long-term particularly on this coordination. Thank
20 you very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I want to thank you
22 very much to this entire panel. I know that there's
23 a lot more in your testimony, your written testimony,
24 than you're able to get on the record here. So, all
25 of that will be going into the record and we'll be

2 compiling that. You know, moving forward, I think we
3 need to continue to keep in very close contact in
4 monitoring all this, you know, very strenuously, and
5 so I think maybe it's the right thing to do that
6 within a year's time or so we should have a follow-up
7 hearing to track all the things that came out of
8 today's testimony from DYCD, but then also the
9 recommendations that you are all making. Thank you
10 so much. Next panel, Carolyn Strudwick-- I should
11 preface all this by saying I really apologize
12 beforehand for messing up anybody's last name.
13 Catherine Trapani-- or first name. Elia Johnson?
14 Sorry, Catherine Trapani, Homeless Services United,
15 and Carolyn Strudwick from Safe Horizon, Elia
16 Johnson, Brooklyn Defenders, and Jeff Foreman, Care
17 for the Homeless.

18 CAROLYN STRUDWICK: Good afternoon. My
19 name is Carolyn Strudwick. I want to thank you for
20 allowing me to testify. I'm the Associate Vice
21 President for Streetwork Project of Safe Horizon.
22 Since 1984 Safe Horizon has operated Streetwork
23 Project that serves homeless youth until age 24, and
24 I just-- since we are the holder of the City's
25 outreach, I just want to clarify the number that the

2 Commissioner gave. He said 100, but yes, we do see
3 100 from November to February, the coldest months.
4 That's not counting the rest of the transports that
5 we do. So I just want to clarify, that's only into
6 our frigid winter months since we were put on line.
7 I'm here to be in support of Intro. 1700 and 1705,
8 and of course, this is what happens when most of my
9 colleagues come ahead and really give all the hard
10 facts. So, I just want to point out the federal data
11 which includes street level counts and shelter head
12 counts estimate that on a single night in January
13 2016 there were 35,686 [sic] unaccompanied homeless
14 youth. The vast majority of those youths are between
15 the ages of 18 to 24 years old. Individuals in New
16 York City which host the largest shelter of the
17 homeless population made up nearly 5.6 of the
18 national total unaccompanied youth 18 to 24. Within
19 our own Streetwork Project, our data shows that the
20 majority of the young people we see are between the
21 ages of 18 to 24, which means that there's critical
22 need to address these young people. And so one of
23 the things that we want to reiterate and emphasize is
24 the cut-off age at 21 in our crisis shelter is not
25 really helpful for young people. Streetwork actually

2 has a funding to do benefits and housing, and while
3 we're very successful at that, we do find that the
4 complexities in navigating the system, both for the
5 young person and the adult, which is a comp-- and
6 advocate which is an combination of lack of
7 supporting housing and subsidies for young people,
8 and also them dealing with their mental health issues
9 create barriers. So, young people do need extra time
10 beyond 30 days in a shelter and over 21. Housing can
11 take up to over a year at times just given the system
12 barriers. The second piece that I wanted to address
13 as well is the right to shelter. While the Mayor
14 has-- I commend the Mayor for putting out the beds,
15 however, in the last 300 beds that were put out, I
16 think only 52 were filled, and it was mostly TILs.
17 There are crisis beds that are still not out, and
18 while we recognize there are variables attributed to
19 that, I also want to reiterate that the cost factor
20 should not be something that prevents young people
21 the right to shelter, and I want to reiterate what
22 Jamie said, that I hope that they look into capital
23 cost in helping us to be able to put more of those
24 beds on line. Thank you.

2 ELIA JOHNSON: Good afternoon. My name
3 is Elia Johnson, and I'm a Criminal Defense Social
4 Worker at Brooklyn Defender Services in our
5 Specialized Adolescent Unit. Our team represents over
6 2,000 youth ages 13 to 21 annually. We are grateful
7 for the opportunity to speak today about the ways in
8 which the Department of Youth and Community
9 Development can better serve runaway and homeless
10 youth. Public Defenders in Brooklyn serve around 500
11 homeless 16 and 17 year olds every year. The numbers
12 are higher for older teens. In my experience, the
13 vast majority of these teenagers are not currently
14 served by RHY providers because there are no RHY
15 shelter beds in Brooklyn for young men and women who
16 do not identify as LGBTQ. About half of these 500
17 teenagers are made homeless by the criminal legal
18 system when the court issues an order of protection
19 after the young person has a fight or dispute with a
20 family member. The court's order of protection makes
21 it illegal for the young person to return home. In
22 contrast, in New Jersey when the police respond to a
23 domestic disturbance involving a young person in
24 their family, the police take the young person to a
25 hospital and not to jail. Eric's story is typical of

2 the youth who are made homeless by the criminal legal
3 system. So, Eric was arrested after an incident in
4 his home where he kicked his mother's door frame.
5 Eric was arrested and arraigned in King's County
6 Criminal Court at night. The judge issued a full
7 Order of Protection. He was released from
8 arraignment at midnight with a metro card and nowhere
9 to go. Because of the Order of Protection Eric
10 cannot return home. We need better options for young
11 people who are made homeless because of an arrest.
12 We already have a functioning RHY shelter system, but
13 the system is underfunded and does not have enough
14 beds, despite what DYCD's testimony to the contrary.
15 Every time I go to arraignments for a homeless young
16 person I call Covenant House, and they tell me they
17 have no beds. Eric's story highlights the need for
18 RHY crisis shelters in all five boroughs. I've
19 written more about the logistical barriers to RHY
20 shelters in all five boroughs in my written
21 testimony. But in short, we believe that we need 300
22 beds at least in Brooklyn alone just to meet the
23 needs of young people who go through Brooklyn
24 Criminal Court every year. We applaud the City
25 Council for taking these important steps by passing

2 the legislation before today's committee. Yet, we
3 encourage the City Council to go further to ensure
4 that the youth in all boroughs have access to a safe
5 place to sleep every night. Thank you.

6 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Good afternoon. My
7 name is Catherine Trapani, and I'm the Executive
8 Director of Homeless Services United. HSU is a
9 coalition of approximately 50 non-profit agencies
10 serving homeless and at-risk adults and families in
11 New York City. HSU advocates for expansion of
12 affordable housing and prevention services and for
13 immediate access to safe, decent, emergency and
14 transitional housing, outreach and drop-in services
15 for homeless New Yorkers. As the organization that
16 represents the non-profit DHS homeless shelter
17 organizations, HSU has an interest in policy changes
18 that impact homeless services delivery to our clients
19 and to ensuring that our missions, staff, and
20 programs are providing the most compassionate,
21 effective, and efficient services to transform lives
22 from homelessness to being stably housed. It is our
23 belief that every person experiencing a housing
24 crisis deserves access to high quality care and
25 receives the support they need to overcome

2 homelessness. Homeless young people are no
3 exception. In fact, it is imperative that programs
4 with specialized services to meet the unique needs of
5 our youth such as DYCD supported drop-ins, outreach
6 and shelter programs are appropriately resourced so
7 that the young people they serve can achieve
8 stability and not simply "graduate" to an adult
9 homeless system not explicitly designed to meet their
10 needs. And I do want to point out that there was a
11 lot of talk today about Marsha's Place which we're
12 really, really proud of as well as the two other
13 programs, one run by Create and by Turning Point, and
14 they are phenomenal adult programs to bridge the gap
15 between DYCD and DHS, but just their-- they simply
16 can't meet the need, and so I want to take the win
17 and say like really good work on my members who I'm
18 proud of, but acknowledge that we have a ton of work
19 to do which is why we fully support the package of
20 bills before the committee today. In order for them
21 to have their intended impact, as has been stated
22 over and over, we certainly need the funding to make
23 sure that we can increase the length of stay for
24 young people as well as raise the age, because it's
25 been pointed out that as you do that, certainly the

2 vacancy rate will decrease if people are staying
3 longer, and so you need even more beds to come
4 online. So, I really want to applaud the committee
5 for doing the hard work for getting this hearing
6 together, and for holding DYCD's feet to the fire to
7 really step up to the plate and do their part,
8 because specialized shelter services that are offered
9 by their shelters are really unique and important to
10 prevent adult homelessness, and while we stand ready
11 to serve those folks in the adult shelter system, we
12 really believe in the specialized services that can
13 really prevent that being necessary. However, when
14 it does become necessary, we absolutely support the
15 idea of a transition from DYCD directly into DHS to
16 avoid the trauma and dislocation of having to go
17 through those assessment sites simply to qualify for
18 a service that we know that these young people are
19 eligible for. So, it doesn't make any sense to us to
20 not support that bill. So, while we support the
21 whole package, that one in particular is of interest
22 to us. and then lastly, I just want to say that
23 while it's true that this Administration, the de
24 Blasio Administration, has been really pro-active and
25 good on homelessness, we still believe passage of the

2 legislation is necessary because no matter which way
3 the political winds blow in the future, we want to
4 make sure that this is ensconced in law so that we
5 don't lose the progress that we've made in the
6 future. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes, thank you very
8 much, and I appreciate that point which hasn't been
9 raised yet today. And to the prior point about
10 assessment centers is I have one down the street from
11 my house. You know, it's a big-- you know, it's well-
12 run, but it's kind of big imposing place that I would
13 think would be quite traumatic to go through. Thank
14 you very much to this entire panel. You raised some
15 excellent points, issues that I think we really need
16 to delve into and follow-up on. So, and for
17 providing these different perspectives is extremely
18 important. And you know, just for the first two
19 panelists, you know, it's really important the work
20 that both of your organizations do within the greater
21 picture of runaway homeless youth services is, you
22 know,-- everybody does their important part in this
23 system, and so the system does not work without the
24 work that your organizations do. So, I want you to
25 know that we appreciate that. Thank you very much.

2 Okay, final panel: Cole Giannone, Rahmen LeClerk
3 [sp?], Jawanza James Williams, Towak Komatsu [sp?],
4 and Reed Vreeland. Okay, and whoever wants to
5 commence.

6 TOWAK KOMATSU: Hi. I'm Towak Komatsu.
7 I've testified previously at City Council meetings
8 before Mr. Levin and others. One of the reasons why
9 I'm here today is really my conscience more than
10 anything else. I live in supportive housing and
11 that's subsidized by HRA. I was assaulted in my own
12 apartment on July 2nd of last year. As a result of
13 that assault I sustained a concussion. It was
14 internally foreseeable. I had a mentally unstable
15 roommate that tried assaulting me on May 12th. I put
16 HRA partners on notice of that fact; however, they
17 refused to do anything. So, because of that I took
18 15 punches to my left temple on July 2nd, and then I
19 preformed extraordinarily badly during a job
20 interview on August 18th, about three weeks after I
21 was diagnosed with a concussion. So, if the roles
22 were reversed, if you took 15 punches to your head,
23 how well do you think you would perform when you're
24 being considered for a seat on the City Council? And
25 if the legislation that is being discussed today is

2 essentially to put teenager in the hands of HRA at
3 the same time that they have all these systemic
4 problems with existing shelters with their existing
5 partners that are committing "bait and fraud"--
6 sorry, "bait and switch frauds" with tenants in their
7 supportive housing, then shouldn't those existing
8 problems be addressed before a new group of people
9 are thrust into the hands of HRA that is already
10 negligent and whose commissioner repeatedly makes
11 fraudulent statements while testifying under oath?
12 That's pretty much all I have to say.

13 REED VREELAND: Thank you, Chairman Levin
14 and members of the Committees on Youth Services and
15 General Welfare for hearing my testimony today. My
16 name is Reed Vreeland. I'm here representing Housing
17 Works, a healing community of people living with and
18 affected by HIV/AIDS. Founded in 1990 we are the
19 largest community-based HIV service organization in
20 the United States and provide a range of integrated
21 services for low-income New Yorkers living with and
22 at-risk for HIV. From housing to medical and
23 behavioral healthcare to job training, our mission is
24 to end the dual crisis of AIDS and homelessness. On
25 behalf of Housing Works and the young people we

2 serve, I thank Mayor de Blasio and DYCD for taking
3 significant initial steps to expand housing and
4 services for homeless youth in New York City. Yet, I
5 urge the Council to enact legislation that would more
6 aggressively and systematically combat youth
7 homelessness. The Council must help to close the
8 large gap between the youth housing and services that
9 NYC provides and what is needed. The most recent New
10 York City homeless youth count, a point-in-time count
11 of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness youth
12 identified 1,805 unaccompanied homeless youth age 24
13 and younger in New York City, and found that around
14 1,600 were sheltered and 152 were unsheltered on the
15 night of February 8th. So, that's just for one
16 single night. When responding to the youth count
17 survey, 20.5 percent, so a fifth of the unsheltered
18 youth, indicated that they had stayed in 10 or more
19 places over the past month. Yet, according to DYCD's
20 annual report, 753 runaway and homeless youth beds
21 will be in place by 2019, and we know that those are
22 not in place yet. At Housing Works we have long
23 demonstrated that housing is healthcare. This is
24 especially true for young people. homeless youth
25 often face multiple risk factors for HIV and

2 infection. Research studies show that the longer
3 duration of time spent homeless and unsheltered is
4 associated with more frequent engagement in HIV at-
5 risk behaviors. The CDC reports that young people
6 age 13 to 24 counted for 22 percent of all new HIV
7 diagnoses nationally, and youth with HIV are the
8 least likely out of any group to be linked to care
9 and have suppressed viral load which helps the person
10 stay healthy and makes them unable to transmit HIV
11 sexually. In New York State, HIV-positive young
12 people ages 19 to 24 have significantly lower rates
13 of viral load suppression when compared with older
14 HIV-positive persons and part of that is lack of
15 support. Providing stable housing and wrap-around
16 services for homeless youth does more than combat the
17 homelessness crisis. It can also greatly improve
18 public health and even help end New York's HIV/AIDS
19 epidemic. In fact, the New York City and State
20 blueprint for ending the epidemic specifically
21 recommends reducing new HIV incidents among homeless
22 youth through stable housing and supportive services,
23 and Housing Works supports the full implementation of
24 this recommendation. I'm going to keep it brief
25 because I know I'm already over time, so I'm just

2 going to go say that Housing Works supports Intro.
3 1706, Intro. 1799, Intro. 1700, Intro. 1619, and
4 Intro. 1705, and much of the testimony from Coalition
5 for Homeless Youth, Ali Forney, and others that I
6 heard today. Time and time again the City Council
7 has demonstrated leadership by passing legislation
8 that will help vulnerable New Yorkers. The City
9 Council now has an opportunity to improve and expand
10 runaway homeless youth services and put New York City
11 on a pathway to end youth homelessness. Your
12 leadership is needed. Thank you.

13 JAWANZA WILLIAMS: Yeah, my name is
14 Jawanza, and I'm an organizer with Vocal New York. I
15 organize Queerocracy and LGBTQ Youth Organizing
16 Project where we're trying to build leadership
17 advocacy skills of young people that are experiencing
18 homelessness, just because we're organizing LGBTQ
19 people and we all know that 40 percent of all runaway
20 and homeless youth in the U.S. identify as LGBTQ.
21 So, that just there demonstrates, you know, a
22 disproportionate impact of homelessness among queer
23 folks and gender non-conforming folks, and non-binary
24 folks. And I think also, because I'm a lot more
25 political than a lot of the folks that have been on

2 the, you know, panels here, and I'd like to think
3 that-- or I don't like to think, but I like to
4 acknowledge that we have to remember that who's
5 homeless, and we're saying things-- whenever DYCD is
6 taking positions and using like statistics or
7 methodologies to demonstrate why they're not doing
8 something, we have to call them out on that because
9 that is not okay, because the people that I see when
10 I go and do Social Justice Power Hour at the Ali
11 Forney Center, they're black and brown, they're low-
12 income, they're gender non-conforming, they're non-
13 binary, and they're trans people. So, like, these
14 are the people-- and I think that folks talked about
15 this when they were on the panel, that we have to
16 remember to uplift those folks. With that said, I
17 also wanted to just thank Council Member Levin and
18 Eugene for this hearing which was really intense, and
19 I really appreciated it, and Council Member Johnson
20 for the legislation. Ali Forney Center, the Campaign
21 for Youth Shelter Safety and Coalition for Runaway
22 and Homeless Youth with Jamie really did a lot of
23 work to make sure that we could have this. I want to
24 take us back a couple years ago. Ali Forney Center,
25 Vocal New York, and Act Up New York, [inaudible]

2 Coalition [inaudible], we organized a town hall about
3 HIV impacts for-- and among LGBTQ youth, and this
4 issue about DYCD and extending the age came up which
5 is what I really want to talk about, why we should
6 raise the age from just 16 to 21 to 21 and 24 is
7 because DYCD actually was in the space. Staff that
8 was here today were there, uh-huh, and overwhelmingly
9 we were like, "Well, we need this-- we need 21 to 24
10 to be able to access, you know, safe and affirming
11 shelter that we find with DYCD shelters like Ali
12 Forney Center." And they basically argued that
13 well, "We can't do anything because the state
14 legislation won't allow us. You have to change a
15 state law," and they just wanted to move on. So, we
16 organized for the next two years and we got that
17 state law changed, and now there's more excuses. So,
18 the last thing I'll say really is-- or the last two
19 things I'll say. They kept saying that there was
20 only, you know, very minimal amount of folks that are
21 experiencing homelessness right now who are young,
22 and I'm thinking but at the same time they're arguing
23 that they're concerned about the exponential cost
24 that it's going to house 21 and 24-year-olds. If
25 there's so few people and your beds are not at

2 maximum capacity, then why are you so concerned? And
3 I think Jamie mentioned that where we could use
4 existing RFPs to house 21 to 24-year-olds, and the
5 last thing I'll say, and I'll echo Reed here, is that
6 these are the folks that are at risk of HIV
7 infection, and if you're concerned about cost, you
8 want to reduce cost, then you need to reduce folks
9 contracting HIV, because those are the same folks
10 that are going to be in our state Medicaid, and yeah,
11 we need to save money that way. So, thanks.

12 NICOLE GIANNONE: Alright, Jawanza,
13 thanks. Thank you Council Member Levin and Eugene
14 for hosting this hearing today. My name is Cole
15 Giannone. I'm from the Ali Forney Center. I've been
16 there like almost seven years, but I've been working
17 on this issue with many people in this room and
18 outside this room for the past three years who are
19 really excited to see that there's a bill on the
20 table that will help 21 to 24 year olds. I want to
21 respond to the numbers that were given to you to say
22 to the DYCD, that last night the seven young people
23 over 21 and 12 people under 21 that stayed at the
24 drop-in may have self-selected to stay at the drop-in
25 over other open-bed facilities. I think when we

2 frame the issue of young people not really-- they
3 don't deserve to choose where they go because they
4 should be happy to have an open bed where they go,
5 that's the underlying message that I receive when
6 people say, "Well, there were open beds and they
7 didn't go," and I just wanted to vocalize that on
8 record. Okay, so at AFC for the past years that I've
9 been there, we continue to see our numbers grow. All
10 of the clients that come to us identify as lesbian,
11 gay, bisexual, and trans, and every year also we see
12 more folks over the age of 21 come in through our
13 doors. I want to echo what Jawanza said, 20 percent
14 of our clients identify as transgender or gender non-
15 binary, which is far higher than the general
16 population as far as we know, and 90 percent of them
17 are youth of color. So, I really do think it's
18 important to say that when we talk about the bills
19 that are possibly going to be passed, that we are
20 talking about the protection of black and brown queer
21 youth of color. That's implied. So, I also like to
22 talk about the human element of this, and I said this
23 earlier outside, but we like DYCD housing. It
24 provides and opportunity in small home-like
25 environments for young people to rebuild the lives

2 that I think they're destined for, and to be able to
3 do that for 21 to 24-year-olds in the same way we
4 have for 16 and 20-year-olds would be really
5 remarkable. We would not move folks from youth
6 shelter to adult shelter, kind of furthering or
7 increasing the numbers of adults becoming chronically
8 homeless. I think it makes financial sense to serve
9 them in these smaller home-like environments so that
10 we can get them out of the system at a younger age.
11 So, I ask that City Council does pass Intro. 1699 and
12 Intro. 1706 to give young people more time in our
13 programs and to be able to provide services to older
14 youth. Thanks.

15 RAMONE LACLERK: Good afternoon. My name
16 is Ramone LaClerk [sp?]. I represent Queerocracy,
17 New Alternatives, and Act Up Youth Council-- Youth
18 Caucus, excuse me. I'm sorry. This is-- I'm 30
19 years old. I've been homeless since I aged out of
20 foster care at 21. I went into the Streetworks
21 Project after staying a little while with my mother,
22 and they provided me, you know, a place to stay for
23 three months. They-- it was a 90-day stay at that
24 time on my first day in a drop-in. One of our other
25 committee members, Craig, was a staff member while I

2 was there, and that experience helped me
3 exponentially because I was petrified of going to a
4 DHS shelter. I am a sis-gender, heterosexual male,
5 but I have very mild cerebral palsy, and the horror
6 stories I heard about DHS had me fearing for my life.
7 I was so afraid, and I expressed these fears at
8 Streetworks, and when my 90 days was up my case
9 worker made a suggestion to me to do something that
10 you could say was impractical, but he knew Kate
11 Barnheart [sp?] who is the director at New
12 Alternatives, but she was working at Sylvia's Place
13 at the time, and he made the suggestion that I go
14 there, because I was so petrified. Even though I do
15 not identify-- I identify as LGBT, he wrote a letter
16 explaining my situation, and Kate willingly accepted
17 me saying that she got to put that I'm bisexual on
18 the paperwork, which I had no problem with. But you
19 know, I-- in those stays really helped deflate the
20 fears a little bit and made me also grow for when
21 time came to go to DHS, but it's hard. It's really
22 hard. I'm still in DHS, but you know, our young
23 people deserve the opportunities that I had, because
24 I turned 21 in 2008. So, those young people today
25 deserve the opportunities between 21 and 24 to have a

2 safe shelter because honestly DHS isn't right for
3 anybody no matter your age, because they are so
4 unsympathetical [sic], unempathetic [sic] to clients'
5 needs. It's all profit. Get out. Get out. Go do
6 this. Not recognizing that there are limits and our
7 economy is so bad that it's hard to find a job and be
8 able to save money to move into your own, you know.
9 It's just really difficult, and I hope that we pass
10 all proposed bills.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Thank you
12 everyone for telling your story, and I think that's
13 an important-- it's important to hear the impact of
14 these programs on people's lives, that not, you know,
15 not everybody fits into easily categorized or, you
16 know, but that throughout the system there are people
17 in the programs that-- and working, it's great that
18 you also mentioned Craig as, you know, his
19 partnership. It's a partnership in moving forward
20 and establishing, you know, the road to permanency.
21 And so I think it's a good testimony to end on for
22 the day, but I want to thank this entire panel for
23 your testimony, for your patience for being here all
24 afternoon, all morning, actually, and you know,
25 again, it's so important that we keep advocating,

2 calling out where it's needed, not being satisfied
3 with the status quo and making sure that we're held
4 accountable here in doing our job and making sure
5 that the Administration is being held accountable as
6 well. And so I want to thank you all very much for
7 your time and your testimony and your insight. Thank
8 you. Are there any other people that wish to testify
9 this afternoon? Okay, seeing none at 2:53 p.m., this
10 hearing-- oh, that's wrong, excuse me, 2:59 p.m.--
11 oh, sorry, 3:00 p.m., let's round it off, 3:00 p.m.
12 this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

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1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE WITH COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES 221

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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 October 17, 2017