

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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February 13, 2018
Start: 10:19 p.m.
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: MARGARET S. CHIN
Acting Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Justin L. Brannan
Margaret S. Chin
Mathieu Eugene
Andy L. King

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

Bill Chong, Commissioner
Department of Youth and Community Development

Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner
Youth Services
Department of Youth and Community Development

Randy Scott, Assistant Commissioner
Vulnerable and Special Needs
Department of Youth and Community Development

Lew Fidler, Former NYC Council Member

Eugene Resnick, LGBT Liaison & Deputy
Communications Director, NYC Borough Hall

Alexander Ray Perez, Homeless 24-year-old

Charles Whitewolf, Homeless 24-year-old

Arthur Sullivan, Community Organizing Student
Ali Forney Center

Alexander Jacobs, Ali Forney Center Resident

Beth Hofmeister, Attorney
Legal Aid Society, Homeless Rights Project

Giselle Routhier, Policy Director
Coalition for the Homeless

Jamie Powlovich, Executive Director
Coalition for Homeless Youth a/k/a Empire State
Coalition for Youth and Family Services

Carl Siciliano, Founder & Executive Director
Ali Forney Center

John Sentigar, Communications Director
Covenant House New York

Michael Polenberg, Vice President
Government Affairs, Safe Horizon

Larissa Lozada, Assistant Director of Outreach
Street Work Project, Safe Horizon Street

Kate Barnhart, Director of Homeless Youth
New Alternatives

Ramon McClintic, Homeless Person

Craig Hughes, Social Worker

Jody Fernandez, Chelsea Foyer Program

Norma Feliciano

2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Good morning. I'm
4 Council Member Margaret Chin. I will be chairing
5 this committee today due to an unforeseen
6 circumstance with the Chair Debbie Rose. This
7 morning we will be hearing three bills all related to
8 Runaway and Homeless Youth. The bills address one,
9 extending time limits for youth to remain in runaway
10 and homeless youth shelters. Second, requiring the
11 Department of Youth and Community Development, DYCD
12 to report information about the runaway and homeless
13 youth population, and to develop a plan to provide
14 shelter to all runaway and homeless youth who request
15 it. And third, requiring DYCD to provide runaway and
16 homeless youth services to homeless youth adults—
17 young adults, which are age 21 to 24. I would first
18 like to thank our Speaker Corey Johnson for his
19 strong commitment to this issue. He has shown great
20 support and has worked tirelessly to address problems
21 related to runaway and homeless youth throughout the
22 city. I would also like to thank all the young
23 people, advocates and providers who are here today to
24 testify on behalf of these bills as well as
25 acknowledge my colleagues who have joined us this

2 morning. We have our Speaker Corey Johnson here and
3 also Council Member Justin Brannan. In recent years,
4 homelessness in general within New York City has
5 reached the highest level since the Great Depression
6 of the 1930s. Of those homeless runaway and homeless
7 youth are an increasingly vulnerable population that
8 require a vast array of services. According to the
9 Mayor's Management Report in Fiscal Year 2017, DYCD
10 funded programs for runaway and homeless youth,
11 served 25,993 youth with that number likely to be
12 even greater with those who have not received
13 services. Runaway and homeless youth are typically
14 defined as youth with unstable or inadequate housing,
15 youth who stay at least one night in a place that is
16 not their home, youth who have run away from their
17 home or youth who have stayed in a shelter, outdoors
18 or in an unstable living environment. Some youth may
19 find themselves homeless due to family conflict, a
20 lack of available affordable housing and/or family
21 poverty. In addition, youth run away from home due
22 to reasons which commonly include violence, abuse or
23 neglect at their home, mental illness or substance
24 abuse among their family members and/or challenges at
25 school. Due to the—despite the increase in the

2 number of runaway and homeless youth beds over the
3 past several years, New York City currently lacks the
4 capacity to fully serve this population. Runaway and
5 homeless youth experience a high rate of physical,
6 emotional and sexual abuse that compounded with
7 poverty and unstable housing result in higher level
8 of trauma, higher rates of mental illness and higher
9 rates of substance abuse. This makes it much harder
10 for this population to rise up out of their
11 circumstance and become—becoming fully housed,
12 employed and assimilated into the general population.
13 Currently, shelters and other services for runaway
14 and homeless youth are under the jurisdiction of the
15 Department of Youth and Community Development, DYCD,
16 which provides services including transitional,
17 independent living facilities, crisis centers and
18 drop-in centers with specialized programming for
19 runaway and homeless youth who are pregnant,
20 parenting, sexually exploited and/or LGBTQ. These
21 services greatly help this vulnerable population.
22 However, there are still major gaps in services that
23 let many runaway and homeless youth fall through the
24 cracks and remain homeless. The three bills being
25 heard today will help redo these gaps in runaway and

2 homeless youth servicers while also working towards a
3 reduction in the homeless population. In addition,
4 these bills will better identify just how many
5 runaway and homeless youth are in the city as well as
6 identify areas in which runaway and homeless youth
7 desperately need services. I would like to thank the
8 committee Council staff for their work today to
9 prepare for today's hearing our Counsel Paul Senegal,
10 Policy Analyst Kevin Kotowski (sp?) and Finance
11 Analyst Jessica Ackerman. I also would like to thank
12 my Deputy Chief of Staff Vincent Fang for their work
13 on preparing this hearing, and right now I will ask
14 our Speaker Corey Johnson to provide some opening
15 remarks. Thank you.

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Good morning. [coughs]
17 I am Council Member Corey Johnson, Speaker of the New
18 York City Council, and I'd like to thank the
19 Committee on Youth Services for holding today's
20 hearing on the three bills that we are hearing to
21 improve services provided to runaway and homeless
22 youth. I would like to thank Council Member Margaret
23 Chin, a member of the Youth Services Committee for
24 being able to chair this hearing in the Chair's
25 absence who unfortunately is unable to attend today.

2 I'd also like to start today's hearing by thanking
3 all of those who are going to testify in support of
4 these bills, including the service providers. I see
5 Carl Siciliano out there, who on the front lines are
6 providing RHY Youth with essential services, and most
7 importantly, the young people themselves who are here
8 to speak about their experiences with homelessness.
9 I'm proud to be a sponsor of a bill that we are
10 considering today to develop a plan to provide
11 shelter to every single youth who needs it. I'm also
12 the co-sponsor of a bill that Council Member Vanessa
13 Gibson is--has introduced to extend the amount of time
14 youth are permitted to remain shelter--[coughs]--and a
15 bill by Council Member Ritchie Torres to extend the
16 age of young people who can access RHY shelters from
17 21 up to 24 years old. No person should ever have to
18 sleep on the streets. Yet, runaway and homeless
19 youth continue to account for the most vulnerable
20 populations in our city. As I have said publicly
21 before, the word 'vulnerable' doesn't even come close
22 to fully describing the gruesome reality of physical,
23 mental, emotional and sexual abuse that can occur to
24 youth who are forced to live out on our streets. So
25 much more has to be done to help them, and these

2 three bills are a vital step to providing the
3 information and services that these young people
4 need. For years there has been trouble identifying
5 and pinpointing the runaway and homeless youth
6 population throughout the city, and that is why
7 requiring DYCD to report information about the RHY
8 population will not only help us develop, but deliver
9 programs that uplift these young people including
10 creating a plan to provide shelter to all runaway and
11 homeless youth who request it. Similarly, DYCD would
12 be required to provide RHY shelter services to
13 homeless young adults, those age 21 to 24, and that
14 will help address the daunting challenges experienced
15 by those who age out of our current system under
16 antiquated age restrictions that halt the specialized
17 support provided by RHY programs up to the age of 21.
18 And finally, requiring DYCD to extend the time youth
19 may remain in shelters to conform with the maximum
20 times permitted under state law will ensure that our
21 youth are not kicked back out onto the streets
22 prematurely. I look forward to working with everyone
23 in this room, the administration, the providers, the
24 advocates and the youth who work together and help
25 give other folks and young adults some semblance of

2 what a supportive home is really like. I want to
3 recognize that we are joined today by former Council
4 member Lew Fidler, who has been a tremendous champion
5 on this issue for years and years and years. My
6 first day that I was voted in as Speaker, I had an
7 inordinate number of texts from him saying when are
8 you having a hearing on RHY? And then, three phone
9 calls and emails and a carrier pigeon to-to make sure
10 that we got this done quickly. So, he was a champion
11 for years on this issue in the Council. Even though
12 he is no longer in the Council, he remains a
13 champion, and someone who still continues to do this
14 work for runaway and homeless youth, and with the
15 providers that do this work throughout the city. And
16 I'm really—I want to reiterate I'm really grateful
17 for the young people here today who are here to talk
18 about their experiences, and to be here on behalf of
19 other young people who can't be here today for
20 whatever reason. Of course, we're going to hear from
21 the administration, and what they have to say is
22 important, but the most important testimony that we
23 will hear today, and I'm going to do my best to be
24 here for it; it's a bit of a crazy day, is the young
25 people who are here to-to talk about why these bills

2 are important, and look forward to working with all
3 of you. And then lastly, I mentioned it before, but
4 I want to say it again, Carl Siciliano has been a
5 champion on these issues for years if not decades,
6 though he doesn't look that old. So, I don't know.
7 It could be decades, and before I was elected to the
8 City Council, I was on the Board of Ali Forney
9 Center, and I'm really grateful and proud of all the
10 work that he does. So, I want to turn it over to
11 Council Member Vanessa Gibson who is going to provide
12 an opening statement on her bill that is being heard
13 today, and again, I want to thank Chair Margaret Chin
14 for filling in on short notice for this hearing, for
15 Council Member Rose who can't be here. Thank you
16 very much.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very
18 much Speaker Corey Johnson. Good morning to each and
19 every one of you. I thank you all for joining us
20 today for a very important hearing. I also want to
21 join our Speaker in thanking Chair Margaret Chin for
22 sitting in for Chair Debbie Rose, and certainly want
23 to continue to keep her and her family in our
24 thoughts and prayers, and I'm grateful to be here
25 with all of you and all of my colleagues, and I want

2 to say thank you very much to our Commissioner of
3 DYCD, and his team at DYCD. I am very proud to have
4 one of the preconsidered intros on today's agenda
5 that relates to runaway and homeless youth. Many of
6 you may know that I'm serving in my second term of
7 the City Council, but certainly no stranger to the
8 pressing needs of many of our vulnerable youth. I
9 served as a member of the New York State Assembly,
10 and a member of the Children and Families Committee
11 that was led by the late great Assembly Member
12 Barbara Clark. And this was one of our issues that
13 we always champion every single year, every single
14 budget to make sure that the State Legislature
15 provided its support in making sure that runaway and
16 homeless youth have opportunities for growth. We
17 know that our runaway and homeless youth need our
18 protection. Many of them are alone, abandoned and
19 often fleeing a very unhealthy and abusive situation
20 at home. These students, these kids deserve every
21 opportunity to get on their feet, and lead healthy
22 and productive lives. Thanks to a recent state
23 ruling, the city of New York now has an opportunity
24 and the ability to extend the amount of time that
25 these young people can safely stay in our shelters,

2 and it's imperative that we allow them to do so.

3 Under this legislation that's proposed, the young

4 people would be able to stay in a shelter up to 60

5 days or up to 120 days with written permission from a

6 guardian or beyond that time limit if the Office of

7 Children and Family Services is properly notified in

8 writing. Young people in transitional independent

9 living programs would be able to stay in these

10 programs for 24 months or beyond that time limit if

11 the Office of Children and Family Services is

12 properly notified in writing. By extending the

13 shelter time limits, we are giving many young people

14 much needed opportunity at stability, and providing

15 them a chance to make good healthy choices that will

16 keep them on a pathway to success. This is a common

17 sense and reasonable measure that protects many of

18 our vulnerable young people, and I'm very proud to

19 join Speaker Johnson, and certainly Council Member

20 Torres, who is the other sponsor of the other

21 legislation, in making sure that today's conversation

22 is happening. And certainly, I want to join Speaker

23 Johnson in commending all of the young people and

24 youth advocates, and service providers who are here.

25 Your voices are very critical to this overall

2 conversation. I'm grateful that we're starting the
3 new year focusing on a topic that is very, very
4 important. Our children deserve to lead healthy
5 productive lives, to not be a statistic, but be a
6 success story, and it is our fundamental
7 responsibility to remove every barrier to their
8 success, and, I applaud all of you for the work that
9 you're doing. You are changing lives, you are saving
10 lives, and you are giving our young people the first
11 chance that they always deserved. Not a second
12 chance, but a first chance that they deserve at
13 having a successful future. So, I thank you. I look
14 forward to today's hearing and once again I want to
15 thank Speaker Johnson for his leadership, and
16 recognize our Chair Margaret Chin for her leadership
17 as well. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, Council
19 Member Gibson. We're going to invite up the first
20 panel, Commissioner Bill Chong, Deputy Commissioner
21 Susan Haskell, and then Assistant Commissioner Randy
22 Scott, and our Counsel will swear you in.

23 LEGAL COUNSEL: In accordance with the
24 rules of the Council, I will administer the
25 affirmation to the witnesses from the Mayoral

2 Administration. Please raise your right hands. Do
3 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
4 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
5 committee?

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] I do.

7 LEGAL COUNSEL: --and to respond honestly
8 to Council Members' questions?

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

10 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Alright, good
12 morning Speaker Johnson, and members of the Committee
13 on Youth Services. I am Bill Chong, the Commissioner
14 of the Department of Youth and Community Development.
15 I'm joined by Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner of
16 Youth Services and Randy Scott, Assistant
17 Commissioner for Vulnerable and Special Needs Youth.
18 At the start of the new term we look forward to
19 working with you to build on the progress we have
20 made under Mayor de Blasio's leadership in serving
21 young people in the communities across the city.
22 Thank you for the chance to testify today on the
23 three preconsidered bills that focus on runaway and
24 homeless youth. We appreciate the Council-City
25 Council's longstanding interest and support of DYCD's

2 runaway and homeless youth programs. For the benefit
3 of the new committee members, I will start my
4 testimony today with a brief overview of our
5 programs. DYCD's runaway and homeless youth programs
6 are—are designed to serve youth holistically enabling
7 them to obtain the services needed to place
8 themselves on the path to independent living and
9 stability. We are committed to helping young people—
10 young New Yorkers build new skills and flourish.
11 DYCD funds an integrated portfolio of runaway and
12 homeless youth services that are delivered by
13 community based providers who are doing the
14 contracts. There are three types of services. The—
15 the three types of services include residential
16 services, drop-in centers and street outreach.
17 Residential services are comprised of crisis
18 shelters' programs, previously called crisis
19 shelters, and transitional independent living
20 programs currently serving young—youth ages 16 to 20.
21 The New York State Office of Children and Family
22 Services regulates all residential services provide
23 by youth bureaus across New York State. DYCD is a
24 designated youth bureau for New York City. Crisis
25 shelter service programs provide emergency shelter

2 and crisis intervention services. Youth can have
3 their basic needs met while developing a service plan
4 with short-term and long-term goals. In cases where
5 family unification is not possible, provider staff
6 work with youth to identify appropriate transitional
7 and long-term housing placements. Transitional
8 independent living programs are a longer term housing
9 option that provides support as youth establish and
10 independent life through educational and career
11 development services, health services and mental
12 health service, counseling and basic life training.
13 Drop-in centers serve young people through the-
14 through ages 24 are in each borough. At seven drop-
15 in centers, youth are provided with basic services-
16 basic needs such as food and clothing and supportive
17 services such as recreational activities, health and
18 educational workshops, counseling and referrals to
19 additional services including shelter as needed.
20 Street outreach focusing on locations in the city
21 where runaway and homeless youth tend to congregate
22 offering on-the-spot information and referrals. The
23 goal is to develop a rapport with youth, and connect
24 them to services including shelter. When I testified
25 on September 28th, I highlighted some of the major

2 achievements of this administration, which has made
3 unprecedented investments, over \$20 million to keep
4 young people safe and sheltered. By 2019, we will
5 have tripled the number of beds available to runaway
6 and homeless youth in this city. We remain deeply
7 committed to supporting runaway and homeless youth,
8 and appreciate the ongoing conversations with the
9 Council about how to best support this population.
10 Since my last testimony, we have even more good news
11 to report. There are now 545 beds open and available
12 to young people. Since September a new 20-bed crisis
13 service program opened in Harlem. In addition, 20-
14 206 beds are contracted, and have been awarded for a
15 total of 751. We anticipate another 100 of those
16 beds to be certified and open by June 30th and we are
17 on target to have all 753 beds open in FY 2019. The
18 First-First Lady Shirlane McCray's leadership on the
19 New York City Unity Project, DYCD expanded its reach
20 across all seven drop-in centers to serve 2,400 more
21 youth. The Unity Project is the city's first ever
22 multi-agency strategy to deliver services to address
23 the unique challenges, amendment needs of LGBTQ
24 youth. A high portion of the overall runaway and
25 homeless youth population identifies themselves as

2 LGBTQ. New resources from the Unity Project also-
3 also funded the second drop-in-drop-in center to
4 operate 24 hours, seven days a week located in Queens
5 and operated by Sheltering Arms. That builds on Ali
6 Forney's 24/7 drop-in center in Harlem. We are
7 pleased that through expanded hours more young people
8 can access services at any time when they need it.
9 The First Lady and I visited the Queens drop-in
10 center last month. It was a wonderful visit and we
11 appreciated hearing from young people about their
12 experiences and needs. With the support of Thrive
13 NYC, runaway and homeless youth to access high
14 quality mental health services. In the current
15 fiscal year, nearly 1,400 youth have accessed mental
16 health services. Since the launch of Thrive NYC's
17 support, nearly 6,000 youth have benefitted from this
18 investment. In partnership with the Department of
19 Homeless Services we have launched a direct referral
20 process to allow youth from DYCD fund residential
21 programs to more easily transition to the adult
22 shelter system. The expedited intake and assessment
23 process saves youth time and energy and streamlines
24 the administrative process of moving to an adult bed.
25 This practice was codified in December by the passage

2 of a bill sponsored by Speaker Johnson and Council
3 Member Salamanca. Finally, DYCD is supporting the
4 applications of runaway and homeless youth for
5 supportive housing including one of the first New
6 York City 15/15 Supportive Housing Program operated
7 by the Jericho Project. I will now address the three
8 preconsidered bills on today's hearing agenda. We
9 really appreciate the productive conversations we
10 have had recently on these bills and we welcome the
11 opportunity to meet with the Council sponsors after
12 today's hearing to further discuss the bills, and
13 other ways to—to partner to better provide services
14 to this population. As I stated at the September
15 hearing, while the state law amendments to the
16 runaway and homeless youth authorize municipalities'
17 youth bureaus the option to expand services for 21 to
18 24-year-olds, the state has not provided funding to
19 support the program expansion. I want to emphasize
20 that while we wholeheartedly support the intent of
21 these bills, the administration cannot implement
22 these measures before identifying adequate funding
23 resources. I also want to restate a fundamental
24 concern about the Council's proposal that we have
25 shared at the last hearing. Under state law, DYCD and

2 other youth bureaus throughout the state have been
3 given the authority to create a comprehensive plan
4 for providing services for runaway and homeless
5 youth. This discretion with the state is limited in-
6 is limited in that we must obtain State OCFS approval
7 for our plan, and service providers must comply with
8 OCFS regulations. The state law gives DYCD more
9 discretion than these bill would allow, and thus we
10 remain concerned that it does not align with the
11 State legis-legislative and regulatory framework of
12 that entrusts responsibility for these programs with
13 localities of the youth bureaus. I will now offer
14 comments on each of the preconsidered bills on
15 today's agenda. Preconsidered 39, formerly Intro
16 1706 sponsored by-sponsored by Council Member Torres
17 relates to the runaway and homeless youth services
18 for homeless young adults. We acknowledge that
19 homeless youth-young adults are a vulnerable
20 population in need of the highest quality of services
21 available. DYCD is working in partnership with DHS
22 and HRA to improve services for homeless young adults
23 including a more streamlined process to access adult
24 shelter programs, and that I mentioned earlier in my
25 testimony. The city is also increasing the number of

2 supportive housing units for young adults. In order
3 to expand runaway and homeless youth residential
4 programs to homeless home young adults, there are
5 various factors to consider. First, provider
6 capacity. Expanding residential programs to serve
7 homeless young adults would be a substantial new
8 effort for existing runaway and homeless youth
9 providers. DYCD would need to identify which current
10 providers and/or new providers could potentially
11 serve homeless young adults. Such providers would
12 need to assess not only for their willingness to
13 expand programs, but also their expertise and
14 experience to support a new population. Critical in
15 this process is an assessment of whether providers
16 would be able to find and gain site control of an
17 affordable location to open a residential program
18 site and, of course, a contract would need to be to
19 procured through the city's procurement rules.
20 Currently, on any given day DHS serves approximately
21 2,200 young people ages 21 to 24 including
22 approximately 800 single adults and approximately
23 1,400 single female heads of households with
24 children. We project that this population seeking
25 services would likely be even larger as there are

2 young adults not currently known to DYCD. DHS or
3 other city agencies who would be newly eligible. To
4 even serve a portion of this eligible youth
5 population ages 21 to 24, it is our preliminary
6 estimate that we would need to more than double the
7 existing number of DYCD funded shelter beds.

8 Fiscal Impact: The total cost need to be
9 finalized due to a few reasons. For example we have
10 not yet fully developed a model specific to these
11 populations, singles 21 to 24 and pregnant and
12 parenting women. As a point of comparison, the cost
13 of recent expansion of beds for 16 to 20-year-olds
14 was approximately \$5 million per 100 beds along with
15 identifying five new and certifiable sites.

16 Programmatic Issues: DYCD is committed
17 to maintaining the coordinated system we have
18 developed over the past three years, and ensured that
19 new services would not negatively impact the progress
20 we have made for 16 to 20-year-olds. Expanding our
21 service as young adults would therefore require we
22 considered the appropriate mix of sites serving
23 different age groups, and what those age ranges
24 should be. It is our position that services for 21
25 to 23-year-olds-24-year-olds should be separate and

2 additional to current resident services. They must
3 also consider what modifications to the program would
4 be made for the homeless young adults. For example,
5 additional employment or educational services,
6 specialized medical and mental health care and
7 support services for pregnant and parenting young
8 adults will be needed. Finally, we have only started
9 to monitor the new maximum length of stay, and don't
10 know how to it will impact that availability. While
11 this administration will triple the number of beds
12 available by 2019, we must ensure that younger more
13 vulnerable youth have access to these beds.

14 We also recommend that the effective date
15 of Preconsidered 39 be modified to January 1, 2019.
16 For any expansion to occur, we would need time to
17 identify providers and procure new contracts. The
18 modified date also aligns with the FY19-2019 city
19 budget process.

20 Preconsidered 1288 formerly Intro 1700,
21 sponsored by Speaker Johnson, requires DYCD to
22 develop a capacity plan to provide shelter to all
23 runaway and homeless youth who request shelter, and
24 provide data regarding the demographics of runaway
25 and homeless youth. Any plan that we develop would

2 need to address the various factors on how to best
3 expand services, provide a capacity, fiscal impact,
4 and program design. The plan would also need to
5 detail how we work with any city agency and with many
6 city agency partners to serve runaway and homeless
7 youth, and incorporate findings in the—the access to
8 use that report that the Council passed in late
9 December. We support the idea of a summary data to
10 assess youth needs. To produce a report in
11 compliance with this bill, DYCD would rely on
12 providers to enter this substantive data into a new
13 data collection system. As such, we would like a
14 chance to review the specific categories of the
15 required report with the City Council and providers.
16 Together, we can finalize the categories that should
17 be collected.

18 Preconsidered 116, formerly 1699,
19 sponsored by Councilman—Member Gibson, relates to the
20 maximum length of stay for the runaway and homeless
21 youth in residential services. We agree with the
22 goals of this bill. I advocated for this change to
23 the Office of Children and Family Services
24 Commissioner beginning in 2014. Soon after, I began
25 as DYCD Commissioner. On January 2, 2018, DYCD

2 issued guidance to providers indicating that he
3 length of stay has increased to a maximum of 120 days
4 for crisis shelters and 24 months for transition-
5 transitional independent living programs. That said,
6 we are concerned that the preconsidered 116-11-1116
7 offers less discretion than state law, and would
8 limit DYCD's ability as New York City youth grow to
9 implement future changes to length of stay
10 requirements. If that should ever be in the best
11 interests of serving youth. Moving forward, Mayor de
12 Blasio and DYCD will continue to build on the
13 tremendous progress we have made over the past four
14 years to better meet the needs of runaway and
15 homeless youth. We greatly appreciate the Council's-
16 City Council's support and interest in ensuring that
17 runaway and homeless youth have quality services that
18 meet their needs. We look forward to continuing to
19 engage with the Council on these well intentioned
20 bills, and to working together to improve the lives
21 of our city's most vulnerable young people. Thank
22 you again for this chance to testify, and we welcome
23 your questions.

2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you,
3 Commissioner. Our Speaker, would you start with some
4 questions?

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: [coughs] Thank you,
6 Chair Chin. Thank you Commissioner Chong. Good to
7 see you, Deputy Commissioner. It's nice to have you
8 here. So, the bill that I'm sponsoring today, as you
9 mentioned in your testimony would require DYCD to
10 develop a plan to provide shelter to all homeless
11 youth, and this will involve developing an accurate
12 estimate of the size of the RHY population including
13 youth who have not even touched the system or have
14 been identified through touching the system in any
15 way. And during this committee's September 2017
16 hearing, you testified that the youth count for his
17 past year only identified 44 unsheltered homeless
18 youth. Is that correct? Is that what--?

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I believe so, and I
20 think we have an updated number for the count in
21 January, right? Is that the same number?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: [off mic]
23 We don't have the 2018.

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We don't have the
25 2018 yet, but we will--

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: [interposing] Did we—
3 did we swear them in?

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We did, yes. Yeah.

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Okay. So, what's the
6 new number?

7 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, it's—it's—the
8 number we gave was the most current ever. We don't—
9 we just did the youth count for 2018. That number we
10 don't have yet.

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Okay, but the—last year
12 it was 44.

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

14 SPEAKER JOHNSON: There's a lot more than
15 44 homeless youth.

16 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, that—well—

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: [off mic]
18 It's a HUD definition.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's a HUD
20 definition. So, do you want to—well, I think the
21 number that we feel most reliable, most confident is
22 the number that the Department of Homeless Service
23 provides, which is the 2,400. These are people who
24 have actually entered the system, are homeless and
25 that's the number that is for planning purposes gives

2 us a sense. There is an undetermined number. The
3 number we know is the 43, 44 based on a youth count.
4 We, you know, we—we try to improve that process every
5 year. This past year in 2018, we added more sites.
6 Um, tried—because we want to make sure we capture the
7 most accurate data. So, do you want to talk a little
8 bit of what we did this year to—to—for outreach?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah, as
10 the Commissioner said, we're learning more each year,
11 and we're being able to target. I think what we did—
12 —and you might have something to add to this—target
13 the sites where we're getting the most information in
14 terms of—in terms of homeless youth. The—the youth
15 count that we do does provide the number—feed a
16 number into the DHS count information that's provided
17 to HUD. As I think we all agree, it's a very narrow
18 limited definition, but the youth count captures
19 additional youth, and we're taking that—those young
20 people into consideration in our analysis.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, what's that number?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Unstably
23 housed in the—it would be another couple hundred
24 young people.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, we're up to about
3 250?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah, that
5 sounds about right.

6 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And do we think that
7 that is an accurate count of unstably housed young
8 people, RHY population? What do we think the number
9 is? What do we think that most accurate number is?
10 We model and we look at the folks who we are
11 touching, who we are touching. We talk to providers?
12 What do we think that number really is?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I think
14 that's our best guess for the people—we have—we know
15 the young the young people who are accessing DYCD
16 services now. We have a really good sense of the
17 under 21 who are accessing shelter. We know as the
18 Commissioner pointed out the young people who will
19 access DHS shelter. We know there are young people
20 who are not in either one of those systems, and
21 during the youth count we connect with the people who
22 are most connected with those young people, and say
23 please report to us everyone you know whose couch
24 surfing for example, staying with a friend unstably,

2 and that number is a couple hundred. So, that's our
3 best estimate right now.

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, that's your best
5 estimate when you model it. Do you think that's the
6 real number or do you think it's higher than that?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I think
8 that--

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] I--

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I mean, I--

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I think
13 that's our best guess.

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah, that's base on
15 the outreach we've done. We can always--I mean I
16 think we're always looking to improve the youth
17 count. It's something that we started three or four
18 years ago. So--

19 SPEAKER JOHNSON: [interposing] Sorry.
20 I'm not trying to be difficult.

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No, no.

22 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Do--do you think that
23 244 or 250 is an accurate number?

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's accurate based
25 on the outreach we've done.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I'm not saying based on
3 the outreach you've done. When you look at all the
4 factors, and I want—I want us to understand what we
5 really think an accurate number is because until we
6 have an accurate number, we cannot really figure out
7 how to solve the problem.

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, part of the
9 challenge. I think I—I talked about this in
10 September is that when it's hard to measure a young
11 person, to count if a young person is couch surfing
12 and staying with friends. It's not something that is
13 easily captured. That's why we came up with the
14 youth count to work with our—the network of non-
15 profit providers who worked with these young people
16 to really identify those that are in our system, not
17 in the DHS system so we can get as accurate a count
18 as possible. And so I think it's also our best
19 effort to get to an accurate number, and we're always
20 looking to improve that. Every year we add more
21 sites because with more sites we can reach more young
22 people and hopefully get a more accurate count, but
23 that's the best estimate we have based on the—the
24 efforts of the youth count last year, and we'll have
25 updated numbers some time this fall for I guess 2018.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Do we think that there
3 are additional steps that DYCD could be taking to
4 make the count more accurate?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We work
6 really closely with our providers on this. We're
7 always interested for additional ideas on how to make
8 the youth count more accurate. COMMISSIONER CHONG:

9 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Okay. So, the fiscal
10 2018 budget included funding for 753 RHY beds. I
11 believe you testified to that.

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: As of the September
14 hearing that we had 525 of those bed were online. I
15 saw that an additional 28 beds came online in a
16 service that opened up in-in Harlem. So, that brings
17 us up to 545. Of these beds, how many are crisis
18 program bed versus transitional independent living
19 program beds?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes, 309
21 are TIL beds and 236 are crisis shelter beds.

22 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And the additional 228
23 beds that were budgeted for, what's the status of
24 getting those beds online?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We're—we're
3 in great shape, and I thin Randy had some good news
4 to report today. There's a lot of lag time when you
5 fund additional beds because there-- [coughs] We
6 have to do procurement, providers have to find a
7 site. We have to get OCFS certification. We've been
8 able to do a lot of that groundwork over the course
9 of the past year. So, now I think we're at the point
10 where we're going to see very quickly these beds
11 coming online, and that's why we're anticipating that
12 we'll be on target. Do we have some additional news
13 to report today?

14 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Now, we
15 have of the 545 that we announced is a possibility
16 that 12 will be coming on within possibly this week
17 or early next week, and then we have another 20 that
18 will probably come on within a week after that. So,
19 we're—I'm working with our OCFS partners in order to
20 get some of these programs on faster, but we have
21 June 30th as our deadline to get all of those beds
22 online, but the goal is hopefully to get them online
23 before then.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, June 30th is the
3 deadline to—is your target to get the additional 200
4 plus beds online?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL:
6 Technically, we're funded for 653 this year up to
7 June 30th and 753 the funding becomes available in
8 '19. It was a three-year plan.

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah, so that—I
10 mentioned in my testimony that we expect to get
11 another hundred beds online by June 30th, and then
12 the money for the final round of 100 beds kicks in
13 July 1st. We expect to make the awards for that
14 money before June 30th, and that gives us a good year
15 to have providers located sites, get them cleared and
16 up and running by the end of fiscal—no later than the
17 ending of the fiscal 2019. It takes us less time to
18 get money at the door, quite frankly, and more time
19 for our providers to find a suitable location that
20 meets the space requirements of the state and, you
21 know, can maximize the funding that they can receive.
22 So, we're confident that we can by—by June 30th
23 they'll award money for 753 beds. Then we have a
24 year to find about another 100 beds to bring them
25 online during Fiscal Year 19.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, what have some of
3 the challenges been in actually getting the beds
4 online? Does it have to do with service provider
5 capacity, given their budgets and that they're
6 filling a gap for the city or the city can't provide
7 these services who rely on our non-profit providers
8 and partners to fill this gap for us? Does it have
9 to do with our relationship with the state, OCFS and
10 how they administer these things? What are the
11 challenges related to time lines in us being able to
12 ramp up when we do get budget dollars for these beds,
13 and to actually execute it so that the beds come
14 online more quickly?

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, I think—I'll
16 start and then Randy and Susan can—I think we're
17 always looking to grow the system because I think
18 there's a finite number of non-profit agencies that
19 are willing to provide these services. And so, we've
20 really reached out to wherever we could. I know
21 we've reached out and presented to the AIDS Housing
22 Coalition because we recognize these are people who
23 have provided housing services, and that funding for
24 AIDS housing is starting to dry up. So, we've
25 brought on four new providers in the last few years.

2 Not everyone—every time I meet with an executive
3 director who I think has an interest or even capacity
4 to provide the service, I encourage them to consider
5 applying. Because there's a finite number of groups
6 now. There's only so many that will do this. I
7 think the—the bigger challenge on space I'll have
8 Susan or Randy talk about typically getting money at
9 the door is not the challenge. We've accelerated the
10 procurement process. It's really the location of
11 sites.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The sites
13 have definitely been one of the challenges. With
14 respect to New York City, the landscape that we have
15 here is a little bit outdated in terms of what OCFS
16 needs in regards to certification. So, a lot of the
17 buildings that—or the apartments that the providers
18 are looking at getting may not have a second means of
19 egress. It may not have a certain number of footage
20 for beds. So, those are things that we have been
21 working with OCFS in regards to understanding New
22 York's landscape and making sure that we see what we
23 can do with what we have to make sure that it's safe
24 and, you know, suitable for youth to live in. So,
25 we've been working with the Department of Buildings.

2 We've been working with the FDNY in order to provide
3 us with, you now, approvals for us to go ahead with
4 these particular sites, and that has been working.
5 So, we've been moving along. However, we still have
6 to wait on OCFS to do their part of the requirement
7 and certification and getting things done. But once
8 we know that the paperwork has gone through, and
9 things have been in place, we work with the providers
10 to make sure that they get the sites up as quickly as
11 possible. And that's one the things that we've been
12 working with, you know, one of our providers
13 Sheltering Arms in terms of getting their new site up
14 and going. So, those are the things that we have to
15 work with, with the landscape.

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, once the full
17 implementation is in place, when we go into the next
18 fiscal year, the extra 100 beds are in the budget to
19 get funded. We're then up to over 750 DYCD beds
20 through providers that are funded. Do you believe
21 that there will still be an increased need for more
22 beds going forward, or we've hit the number that's
23 necessary?

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think the thing
25 that we haven't determined yet, and this is the

2 extended length of stay, has kicked in six weeks ago.
3 So, we don't know what impact that will have.
4 Typically to this point before the length of stay was
5 increased, the vacancy rate fluctuates between 8 and
6 12% meaning that's the number of beds that might be
7 available on any given night. Now, that young people
8 will be staying longer, will there--will that impact
9 the vacancy rate? So, the answer is we don't know.
10 We'll have to assess that in maybe four to five
11 months to see where we stand. Is it--is--because young
12 people are staying 120 days in a crisis shelter.
13 Does that meant there are fewer crisis shelter beds?
14 Does that mean we need to then go back to OMB and ask
15 for more money? That we don't know yet. I think
16 it's kind of unchartered territory for us. So, we're
17 monitoring it closely because we don't want a
18 situation where, you know, we don't have enough beds.
19 I mean Susan and I and I guess Randy we lived through
20 that in the last administration where we had to turn
21 young--we were at 100% capacity, and young people had
22 to be turned away. So, we don't want to relive that
23 situation.

24 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, what happens when a
25 homeless youth turns 21 living in an RHY facility? Is

2 there an immediate separation from services or an
3 exit interview with counseling, or referrals? What
4 happens?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Our
6 providers start the discharge planning well before
7 the young person's previous time limitation or their-
8 [coughs]-or their birth date, and they are-every
9 young person who turns 21 will get a referral to a
10 service. It's very possible it will be the adult
11 shelter system, but there will be a resource provided
12 to every young person who is aging out.

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: How long-how long
14 before the 21st birthday?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I think
16 that varies by-by the young person how long they've
17 been there, how much time there's been for planning.
18 Maybe they come in, you know, a few days before
19 they're turning 21. Maybe they've been there for 18
20 months. I think it varies based on the individual.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And do you track these
22 young people as they move into the DHS system, and
23 how they move into the DHS system? Do we keep track
24 of that?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We haven't
3 tracked that, and we--

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: [interposing] Should
5 we?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Well, we're
7 really excited about this new policy that we've put
8 into place that will allow a young person who's
9 turning 21 to take a direct referral to the adult
10 homeless system. We just started this. We have just
11 a handful of young people who started to take
12 advantage. I think it's going to take a lot of
13 communication and coordination because we know.
14 We've heard from our providers. We've heard from
15 young people. They're not excited about going to
16 intake in the adult system, and even like a week ago
17 we were out at a site, and I was talking to one of
18 the like youth counselors, and it was hard for her to
19 believe what we were saying. Like if you bring this
20 process to the attention of DYCD and DHS, the young
21 person doesn't have to go to intake, and they don't
22 need to go through the assessment process and repeat
23 all their personal details and ideally they would be
24 referred directly to a youth shelter within the DHS

2 system. So, we will be tracking that now more in a
3 way that we hadn't in the past.

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, [coughs] I really
5 appreciate all that you all have done, and I really
6 mean this what I'm about to say. I mean I was not in
7 the Council during the previous administration, but
8 Commissioner, you just referenced the fact that you
9 and Deputy Commissioner Haskell had to live through
10 very probably painful moments as the providers in
11 this room had to where there was a significant need
12 for an increased number of beds, and the money was
13 not being provided by the previous administration.
14 And so, I am really grateful to Mayor de Blasio, and
15 to his team and to you for tripling the number of
16 beds since the first term began. So, that we're up
17 and going into 2019 almost three times the amount of
18 beds. That is a significant achievement. I believe
19 you testified that the amount of money that has been
20 put in in that time is I think an additional 20
21 million in investments. That is huge. Really,
22 really, really, really important, and so the Mayor
23 deserves credit. I think the Council deserves credit
24 as well for pushing you all and being a partner with
25 you all, and holding you all accountable when it

2 comes to these measures, and we'll continue to do
3 that. So, I am very grateful and—and my line of
4 questioning is not one to in any way diminish or not
5 recognize those very significant achievements, and
6 the importance of that. But I also want to say that
7 the bills that we have before us today I appreciate
8 your thoughtful testimony on the three bills. I
9 appreciated that Council Member Torres' bill you
10 talked about the fiscal impact that's needed for
11 these populations that would be covered in expanding
12 the number of folks who could then access services by
13 DYCD. I don't say this in a—in a sort of a willy-
14 nilly irresponsible way. I don't really care what
15 the amount of money is. I know you have to care, and
16 you have an agency to run, and we have, you know,
17 some difficult fiscal times on the horizon, but when
18 it comes to getting the requisite number of beds to
19 homeless young people, we need to come up with money.
20 I really—if it's \$4 million, if it's \$7 million, if
21 it's \$8 million, we have to come up with the money.
22 So, this Council will continue to push for whatever
23 that amount of money is to expand those services, and
24 this is not to take away again from the important
25 investments we already made and the credit that you,

2 your administration at DYCD and the Mayor's
3 administration deserves in this process. Whatever
4 the amount of money is that we need to reach the
5 population that is unreached, to ensure we continue
6 to support the young people who get aged out of the
7 system, I don't care what the amount of money is. We
8 have to come up with the money. So, I know there's a
9 fiscal impact. I know we have to be careful. I know
10 that in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget address, he
11 talked about \$900 million in savings from city
12 agencies, and that our city's budget is growing \$2
13 billion this year from \$86 billion to \$88 billion.
14 So, there's a lot of context at play. There are many
15 priorities that our city has. The budget for HRA and
16 Homeless Services has grown tremendously in the
17 Preliminary Budget. It's not your agency, but in the
18 Preliminary Budget additional funding for DHS I
19 believe grew \$150 million. Now, it probably should
20 because we still have a homeless crisis in New York
21 City with 61,000 in the adult shelter system every
22 single night. That doesn't count DV shelters. That
23 doesn't count DYCD shelters. So, the homeless number
24 is probably over 70,000 people who are sleeping in a
25 shelter sometime tonight, and an additional 5,000

2 people who are unsheltered on the streets of New York
3 City, 75,000 people. Out of that number over 25,000
4 of them are children under the age of 16 years old,
5 and that probably doesn't even account the DYCD
6 numbers of DYCD specific shelters. The most
7 vulnerable population in that entire population of
8 75,000 are youth that have been rejected by their
9 parents and their families and who are living on the
10 streets of New York City in shelters. Having to
11 engage in survival sex because of what's going on,
12 and being emotionally abused, physically abused,
13 sexually abused, and have an enormous amount of
14 trauma because of what's happened to them. So,
15 whatever the amount of money is that we have to come
16 up with to reach every single one of those young
17 people and expanding it from 21 to 234 years old,
18 this Council is going to put that amount of money in
19 our budget response. We will continue to lead the
20 way in getting these young people the services and
21 support and beds and procurement rules waived and
22 expedited that we need to do. Have you see the movie
23 *Saturday Church*?

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No.

25 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Do you have iTunes?

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No.

3 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Commissioner Chong,
4 you're killing me here. Okay, I want to ask the
5 three of you please, Assistant Commissioner, Deputy
6 Commissioner, Commissioner there is this amazing
7 movie out that's not, you know, I'm sure there's some
8 inaccurate parts of the movie, but there's an amazing
9 movie out called *Saturday Church*.

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Okay.

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And it's about a young
12 LGBT man who is I believe 16 or 17 years old in New
13 York City, shot here in New York City, who in the
14 movie they don't say, but I believe he first
15 identifies as gay, and then he starts to realize that
16 he may be transgender--

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Uh-hm.

18 SPEAKER JOHNSON: --and he gets rejected
19 by his family, and he accesses services from a
20 provider at a church that has youth programming on
21 Saturday nights. And it as very, very moving movie
22 that you can get on iTunes and it's also in the
23 theaters, and it's about the plight of young runaway
24 homeless LGBT folks here New York City. I wept the
25 whole movie. I was crying the whole movie. I was so

2 moved by the movie and being able to tell the story
3 of one young person, and what that one young person
4 had to face when it came to being rejected by his
5 family, and having to navigate the streets of New
6 York City. And they didn't identify the provider,
7 but you know, Ali Forney is in the room today. I'm
8 sure there are other amazing providers in the room
9 today. I see Beth here who we have done amazing work
10 with and many others that please see this movie.
11 Please make a commitment to me that you'll see this
12 movie because you will be—I think it will really
13 touch you all because of the work that you do on a
14 day-to-day basis. The point of all this is to say I
15 want you all to have the resources you need to have
16 to reach every young person who needs to be reached,
17 and we will advocate for that money to be included
18 regardless of what the fiscal impact is so that
19 vulnerable young people get the services they provide
20 that they need.

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We appreciate your
22 support. I mean I can bring that historical
23 perspective to this, and since you mentioned Lew
24 Fidler that, you know, I really truly believe that if
25 it wasn't for Lew's advocacy during the budget cut

2 era, we wouldn't have a runaway and homeless system
3 at all. You know, it wasn't that long ago, 4-1/2
4 years ago where half our budget for the homeless
5 youth programs depended on Council restorations. And
6 I remember testifying at some hearing why is it that
7 a lot of the beds were emptied in early June, and
8 that was because many programs relied on Council
9 funding didn't know whether the money would be there
10 July 1st to continue those services. So, we've—we
11 are light years away from that situation. I think
12 money is a big part of it, but I think I want to go
13 back to the other issue of provider capacity and—and
14 the known numbers we have, I'm looking at the DHS
15 system where it's 2,200 young people between the ages
16 of 21 to 24. 1,400 more than two—almost two-thirds
17 are young women with—with children. So, you know,
18 part of the conversation we're having with DHS is
19 what's the best way to serve all these young people?
20 If a young woman is in a Tier II family shelter at
21 DHS, maybe it's a better place for them. I visited a
22 number of the Tier II family shelters. We have SONYC
23 after school programs there. I've—I've visited the
24 one that women in need operates in Brownsville and—
25 and their, you know, it's a shelter. So, it—you

2 know, but I think given the situation, they have a
3 lot of robust services on site. So, we want to be
4 thoughtful as we develop this plan with our agency
5 partners. It's what makes the most sense for a young
6 person between the ages of 21 to 24 because the
7 nature of our programs they're small. So, if you
8 look at 2,200 young people in the DH—excuse me. If—
9 if in the—if in the perfect world, if you wanted DYCD
10 to serve all 2,200, that's a 110 new programs we
11 would have to add.

12 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Commissioner, I totally
13 am with you on being thoughtful.

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] But we
15 welcome the money.

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I am totally with you
17 on being thoughtful.

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's not the lack of
19 money. It's the other challenges.

20 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I understand. I'm
21 totally with you on being thoughtful. I'm with you
22 on taking the money.

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

24 SPEAKER JOHNSON: But I did the hope
25 count a month ago in Penn Station. Most of the

2 homeless individuals who I had the opportunity to
3 speak with that night, were not young people. They
4 were mostly—not exclusively, they're mostly adult
5 men, but there were some adult women as well. And
6 when I engaged them, as I was coached to engage them
7 by DHS and the questions I was supposed to ask them,
8 and we asked them if they wanted the opportunity to
9 go to a shelter that night, and take a shower and get
10 connected to services and have a roof over their
11 head. It wasn't a very cold night the night of the
12 Hope Count. They said the shelters are too
13 dangerous. We're not going into the shelters.
14 They're too dangerous. So, if a 50-year-old man is
15 telling me that the shelters are too dangerous, when
16 the system requires a 21-year-old who has been
17 severely traumatized to leave a DYCD provider
18 facility, and then be transitioned into a DHS
19 shelter, I'm sorry, it doesn't give me much
20 confidence that we can— Of course, we can be
21 thoughtful, and I'm happy there may be certain
22 instances where you have mothers with children or a
23 specialized DHS facility is a better route depending
24 on the individual facility, the individual provider,
25 the individual location, of course. But, the bigger

2 narrative here is that it was likely better when we
3 have great providers like Jamie Palovich (sp?) from
4 the Coalition for Homeless Youth and others who do
5 this important work who know the specialized youth
6 they're working with to not have to make the
7 heartbreaking decision to tell a 21-year-old they
8 have to leave and go to a DHS facility because of
9 what the law says right now. We need to fix that
10 because the DHS facilities right now many of them are
11 not safe, which is why homeless adults don't want to
12 go to them. So, if homeless adults don't want to go
13 to them, homeless young people are not going to want
14 to go to them. So, I hear you. When is the plan
15 that you're talking about, is going to be finished?

16 COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, when the law
17 took effect in January, we reached out to OCFS, and
18 we're meeting with them to—to iron out final guidance
19 because there's a host of questions we want answered
20 that will drive the cost.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: When?

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: When what, the
23 meeting?

24 SPEAKER JOHNSON: When will the plan be
25 developed?

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Oh. So, as-as soon
3 as we have final guidance from the state. We've
4 started conversations with OMB and that's-as I said
5 in my testimony, we-we're-we're recommending that the
6 effective date of the leg-proposed legislation be
7 January 2019 because that aligns with the city's
8 budget process. So, that, you know, no-you know, we
9 expect to have certainty obviously in-in the near
10 future. I mean there's a host of questions we want
11 to have answered by the state, things-mundane things,
12 but that they drive cost. Like what is the square
13 footage requirement? What is the staff ratio?

14 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Did you send a letter
15 to the state outlining all these?

16 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We-we-we sent an
17 email, and we're meeting with them.

18 SPEAKER JOHNSON: [interposing] Can you
19 share that email with those questions with us so that
20 we can chime in with the state as well? I want to
21 get these answers as quickly as possible.

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We may get-we may
23 get an answer sooner than that. We're actually
24 meeting with them this afternoon. So, we asked for
25 this meeting in early January, and so, we're hopeful

2 we'll get clarity sooner, and then we can begin to
3 develop an informed proposal to OMB for
4 consideration. Because what we're working off of now
5 is what the model is for young people under 20. It
6 may be—it probably might be more. So, once we have
7 that information, we can at least share with OMB and
8 then we could have a dialogue with them, and then
9 obviously the Council can sort of weigh in based on
10 the information we have from the state. So that is
11 where we're at.

12 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Okay, so depending when
13 you get the information from the state, when will the
14 plan be done?

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, it's tied to
16 the budget process. So, you know, obviously--

17 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, before the
18 Executive Budget released?

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I can't—that's—I
20 think I can speak to my end of it once we have
21 clarity and then when whether it makes it to the
22 Executive Budget or not is not a decision that I can
23 make at this point.

24

25

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: No, no, I'm not asking
3 for that. I mean when will your part of the plan be
4 done?

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: As soon as we get an
6 answer from OCFS.

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, if you get that
8 answer today, how long will it take for you to have
9 that plan?

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Not that long. It
11 will, you know--

12 SPEAKER JOHNSON: [interposing] How long
13 is not that long?

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It depends on what
15 the--they tell us.

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: 30 days, 60 days, 90
17 day, 6 months?

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I'd rather not give
19 you a specific date, but as soon as we have something
20 that we can share that we feel confident with that
21 OMB feels confident I'm sure we can engage the
22 Council during the budget process.

23 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Okay, when is your
24 preliminary budget hearing?

25 COMMISSIONER CHONG: March 16th.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, I hope you get good
3 answers today because we will ask these questions
4 again on March 16th.

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Okay.

6 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, I hope that you
7 have been able to bake your plan a little bit, and
8 come forward with some more specifics on March 16th
9 so that we can continue to ask these questions going
10 through the Preliminary Budget process.

11 Commissioner, you're fabulous. It's great to work
12 with you. You've done a great job at DYCD. I am
13 really grateful not just for your tenure as
14 Commissioner, but the work you've done for years as
15 Deputy Commissioner and serving young people in our
16 city. You've had a great career doing it, and I
17 think you have been a great ally and friend to the
18 RHY community, and providers in ramping up and
19 advocating for young people. And so, my direct
20 questions are in no way hostile. I have the utmost
21 respect for you in the work that you've done, and I
22 get great reviews, of course, from the providers who
23 work with you and with Susan and with Randy. So, I
24 am grateful to all three of you, but we're going to
25 continue push, prod, cajole and make even more

2 fabulous so that we can continue to reach every young
3 person who needs it, and will the three of you make a
4 commitment to see the movie *Saturday Church*?

5 COMMISSIONER CHONG: We will.

6 SPEAKER JOHNSON: March 16th I'm going to
7 ask you did you see the *Saturday Church*.

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Okay. [background
9 comments]

10 SPEAKER JOHNSON: There's voguing, there
11 is--there is, you know, it's a great movie.

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, let me just
13 say that having testified more times than I can
14 remember before Lew Fidler, I never take it
15 personally. [laughter]

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Lew's a teddy bear.
17 [laughs] Okay, thank you. I'm going to turn it back
18 over to Council Member Chin or Council Member Brannan
19 whoever wants to speak, and I really appreciate the
20 work we get to do together, and thank you for your
21 testimony, and we look forward to passing these
22 bills, getting you the money you need, and
23 implementing them to help as many young people as we
24 can throughout the city.

2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Speaker for
3 your leadership on this. I think Council Member
4 Brannan has some questions. [pause]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Sorry, Chair.
6 We heard from a number of young people who have faced
7 the experience of arriving on the steps of a
8 particular shelter only to find that there are no
9 beds available. Can you walk me through the process
10 of what happens at that point or, you know, what
11 steps DYCD has taken to identify a bed that's
12 available if—if a young person is looking for it?

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Sure. Susan or Randy
14 can go into the protocol.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: There's—
16 there's many different steps that the provider is
17 able to do. One of the things that we've allowed is
18 for all of our providers to have access to our
19 database system, which gives them live vacancies at
20 any given time. So, they can review our system and
21 make sure that they see what is vacant. Once they've
22 seen the vacancies then they can communicate with
23 that particular provider whether it's via email,
24 whether it's via phone call to find out about that
25 availability of that bed, and possibly referring a

2 youth to that particular bed. If for some reason the
3 bed is still not available, then they have the
4 ability to contact myself or my team to help in
5 assisting with placing that youth. Once we've placed
6 a youth, then things go—go normally. So, those are
7 the three steps that they have in terms of
8 identifying a bed, making sure that a youth is
9 referred for a bed, and then the placement of that
10 youth in that bed. So, those are the three options.
11 Did you want to say something?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah, I
13 just want to say over the course of the last—this is
14 not a small achievement over the course of the last
15 couple of months with respect to young people under
16 the age o f 21. We've been able to place virtually
17 every young person in a bed. We have approximately
18 50 beds vacant on any given night and we have—this is
19 really I think an historic achievement based on the
20 work that was just discussed that we—we are able to
21 place virtually every young person under 21 with some
22 very rare exceptions.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, the
24 situation where a runaway and homeless youth is
25

2 looking for a bed and there—there isn't one
3 available, you'll say is rare?

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I don't know if
6 it's been spoken about the Youth Connect line. I
7 know that in the past it was open only during
8 business hours. Is there a plan to make that 24
9 hours?

10 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It—it was 24 hours I
11 think 15 years ago. It was restored, as you may
12 know, by Richard Murphy, the Commissioner of Youth
13 Services under Mayor Dinkins in the early '90s, and
14 it was called Youth Line, and this was before people,
15 young people used the Internet. So, there was a need
16 back then to provide that service 24/7. Over the
17 years because of budget cuts it's become more a
18 referral service for certain services like Summer
19 Youth Employment. People are able to call 311, which
20 is a 24/6 system, and if they need access to a
21 homeless shelter, they can do that through 311 now.
22 So rather than duplicate 311, we've kind of moved the
23 design of the Youth Connect to much more a customer
24 referral program mostly for young people in the
25 Summer Youth Employment Program. In my grade there's

2 a lot of the information that used to be on the phone
3 to the Internet because that's where young people
4 are.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, can someone
6 get the same access from 311 that they can get from
7 Youth Connect during business hours.

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah, I-I-I
10 haven't—if 311 goes directly to a line 24/7 where
11 somebody can pick up and make a referral to the
12 youth, honestly I haven't checked on that in a little
13 while to confirm, but it was always going directly
14 to--24/7 going directly to a shelter. At that time
15 it was Covenant House. I'll have to double check but
16 that's still how it's being routed.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Because the—the
18 crisis shelters are 24/7. So, no matter when a young
19 person calls 311, there's someone at Covenant House
20 or the other shelters that can then help them access
21 a bed.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: And I was
23 also going to add that, you know, with the additional
24 two 24-hour drop-in centers, 311 is able to direct
25 them to those drop-in centers who can assist them in

2 terms of any referrals or placements that are needed.
3 We also have on our website our drop-in centers
4 information so that youth as well as, you know,
5 providers have access to numbers to contacting
6 people. Plus with Street Outreach, they have palm
7 cards that they give out to individuals or youth that
8 they come in contact with that provides them with the
9 various numbers as well. And when we do
10 presentations, we also give out our information,
11 which provides them with both my information and my
12 staff's information as well as all of the contractors
13 that we have so that they are available to have any
14 person's name and number so that they can call them
15 and find out if there's any availability in terms of
16 beds and/or services.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I guess that
18 just leads me to ask what is the difference then
19 between Youth—the Youth Connect line and what's
20 available form 311 after hours?

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think Youth
22 Connect is kind of a specialized service. It really
23 just doesn't do homeless youth or it's become more—if
24 you look at the volume of calls we get from Youth
25 Connect, most of them are related to the Summer Youth

2 Employment Program, which is why we made it during
3 business hours. I think 311 and the street outreach
4 and the two 24-hour drop-in centers provide much more
5 content specific access to these services. Whereas,
6 311-Youth Connect in its hay day 25 years ago was
7 sort of generalist. It kind of—any kind of issue you
8 would have young people taking calls 24/7. It's
9 become specialized, and the content specifics that
10 are related to homeless youth, is my migrated to all
11 these other avenues that are more accessible. I mean
12 I think the 24-24/7 drop-in centers have made a huge
13 difference. When I visited the Jamaica drop-in
14 center operated by Sheltering Arms, I think they said
15 they doubled the number of cases—cases it doubled?
16 Is that the number?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Tripled.

18 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Tripled the number
19 of young people they saw because, you know, before
20 the way a drop-in center would operate would be 10:00
21 to 6:00, 11:00 to 7:00 something like that and, you
22 know, that's not the life of a young person. So, to
23 go to a 24/7 drop-in center made it more accessible
24 for a lot of young people who show up at 8 o'clock.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Just two more.

3 So, going back to—to before, if—if—if a homeless or
4 runaway youth shows up at shelter, they're told there
5 are no beds available, is that—is that person then
6 given, you know, an idea go to this shelter. That
7 one might have a bed or like what—what's the protocol
8 there?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Well, one
10 it also depends on the age of the youth because—

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Just the age?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yeah, the
13 age because if the youth is 16 or 17 they get
14 priority in that bed. So, then there's a system that
15 needs to be discussed in order to allow for that
16 youth to be placed, and then for another youth to be
17 put in the next bed. But with regards to what you're
18 asking, if a youth should come to a site, right
19 there—that can't happen because there's vacancies
20 within the system. So, if for some reason that
21 particular site does not have a bed where that youth
22 has gone, the provider has the opportunity call one
23 of the other sites, one of the other crisis shelters
24 and/or TILs to make a placement in one of the beds
25 that is vacant. If there should be some discussion

2 around what—the person not being able to be placed,
3 then that's when DYCD comes into play. Where we get
4 into the picture where they contact us, and then we
5 make the necessary decisions to place a particular
6 youth. But for right now the—the providers, the
7 contractors are discussing between themselves between
8 themselves of how to make a—a placement. Any time my
9 staff receives a call that youth is placed within
10 that, that night, and we have no youth who are not
11 able to access any bed at this given time.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I guess, I mean
13 do you feel that in the past—I guess my question is
14 because there are beds available does that just mean
15 that we're not, you know, accessing or engaging with
16 folks who need beds? I mean it should be—I guess it
17 should be a good problem to have that we don't have
18 enough beds. I don't think that there's—do we have
19 the need obviously. So, if there are beds available
20 does that mean that there are more kids who are just
21 not entering into the system?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: As the
23 Commissioner said, we tripled the number, or
24 ultimately we all tripled the number of beds
25 available. So, definitely more young people have

2 been accessing those beds. That number has grown,
3 and I think it's still to be determined what impact
4 the length of stay will have, but yeah I do think
5 that as the—as we continue to communicate that there
6 is a bed available, it's possible more young people
7 will get out that instead of the message of old like
8 I could try, but there might not be a bed available.
9 That's a waste of my time. We want to communicate to
10 young people that there are beds available. We want—
11 if there are young people who haven't sought
12 services, we want them to come and seek services.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay, the last
14 question for me. I know the last hearing I wasn't
15 around for, but I do remember DYCD saying that you
16 were going to issue some new RFPs for your service
17 providers. Where—could you tell me where in the
18 process we are with that?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We issued
20 an RFP late at the end of last year, and we've
21 recently made awards on that. We issued another RFP
22 early this year, and those proposals have been
23 submitted, and are currently being evaluated. We
24 anticipate making awards in the next six to eight
25 weeks I would say.

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: And we have an open-
3 ended RFP because we know that, you know, there's an
4 additional, you know, that give us the flexibility.
5 If we get more money that we can add more services.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: How many--just
7 how many or ballpark or off the top of your head or
8 if you know, hopefully how many or what the
9 percentage is or the dollar amount of services that
10 are through RFPs through contracts?

11 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah, I mean, the--
12 one of the--the things that makes DYCD uniqu--and I
13 always say this in budget hearings--than other city
14 agencies. Ninety-four percent of the agency's budget
15 goes out the door, 94%. So, when in the previous
16 administration where there were cuts it wasn't like a
17 cut of--of staff. It was more a cut of services.
18 Either it's a summer job, it's a homeless bed, it's
19 an after school program because we're a very
20 efficient agency. You know, we have a small staff of
21 500 people, but our budget is \$840 million. So, I
22 always like to say with a small agency with a huge
23 footprint in a lot of neighborhoods. And so we're
24 very efficient in getting money out the door, and
25 have become even more so in this administration.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I mean there's a
3 lot of rock star providers. So, I wouldn't and-and
4 I-I guess it sounds to me like you see that as a good
5 thing that 94% goes out the door, but to me it's a
6 little concerning.

7 COMMISSIONER CHONG: It means it's-it
8 goes to services in contracts and wages for Summer
9 Youth Employment Program. So, in other words, we're
10 not a very top heavy bureaucracy. We're very small
11 focused on getting money out the door to our network
12 of non-profit partners.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Alright, thank you.
15 Commissioner, do you know how many youth age 21 are
16 aging out in each year?

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Do you know that?
18 [background comments, pause]

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: You know,
20 we'll have to look at that. Some people leave service
21 before they're-

22 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Twenty-one.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: --21st
24 birthday. So, how many are in service at age 21, and
25 then get a referral we can get back to you on that.

2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and also how
3 many youth age out?

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I guess also including
6 the other one that are not at 21 that left.

7 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, the—the ones
8 that are 21 and older and not in the—our current
9 programs, we know the DHS number. It's 2,200. 1,400
10 are young women with children, and the other 800 are
11 single adults. So, that's a known number. The
12 number that age out at 21 in, you know, because a
13 young person can show up at 16 and 17. Typically the
14 age—the largest population is 18 to 20. So, if a
15 young person comes at 20 and, you know, maybe was
16 able to find an apartment and leaves before 21, they
17 haven't aged out. But then we can look at the number
18 that actually have exited at 21. We have that data.
19 We can just share it with you.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. The other
21 question is that HRA LINC Voucher was suppose to be—
22 was supposed to be available for youth in the runaway
23 and homeless youth system by the end of last year,
24 December 2017. Has that goal been met?

2 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah. I don't think
3 we set a date, but we can tell you where it's at at
4 this point.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Two-two
6 things are happening concurrently. DHS-HRA has
7 revamped—is revamping the LINC voucher system. There
8 used be many different eligibility categories, and
9 they're streamlining that system. As part of that
10 streamlining they've incorporated the needs of
11 runaway and homeless youth for the first time into
12 that plan. They have submitted that plan to the
13 state, and they're—that has to work through its
14 process. It might take a couple of months.
15 Simultaneously, DYCD is upgrading our data system for
16 young people, for runaway and homeless youth
17 participants. We would have to in order to access
18 the LINC Vouchers, we have to take the information
19 from our providers that—that would outline
20 eligibility, and share that information with HRA so
21 that they can issue an eligibility letter. Those two
22 things are still a work in progress, and we'll
23 outline that over the course of the next—the rest of
24 the calendar year probably.

2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, you don't see it
3 up and running until next year?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Maybe fall
5 ideally.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Because that would
7 really help the young people be able to access--

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We agree.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --their own home.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah, we
11 agree.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, is there any way
13 to speed up that process?

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, HRA has told
15 us they're working with the state to get final
16 approval. So, it's not just the homeless youth
17 piece, but this--this whole plan to consolidate all
18 the different voucher programs into one centralized
19 process. So, that's--that--that needs to happen, and
20 then I think we're--we're working quickly on the data
21 piece. That's probably the easier piece that we have
22 more control over. So that once HRA is ready to go
23 live with this new voucher program, we can have young
24 people--the data that they need. Like frankly, it
25 could be automated, and so, our piece--DYCD's piece is

2 probably within our control more than the state
3 working with HRA to finalize this new model.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, how soon are you
5 going to be able to complete your piece in terms of--

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: The data system?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --the data
8 information.

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: By the fall, yeah.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Fall 2018.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh, but I'm just
12 saying that can't you speed it up?

13 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: [interposing]
15 Because they might, you know, and they might come
16 back sooner. I mean you got to be prepared because
17 we want the young people to be able to get those LINC
18 Vouchers.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, we're
20 revamping our entire data system not just homeless
21 youth, but after school and summer jobs. So, it's
22 part of a whole data overhaul of all our systems. So,
23 that's why it's not just--if it's just one small thing
24 it would be one thing, but we're launching a new data
25 system called DYCD Connects that links all our

2 different data systems because in the past we had six
3 different data systems. So, it's part of the bigger
4 fix that we're trying to do just like I think HRA is
5 doing this bigger fix on mental vouchers. So, it's,
6 you know, we want to make sure it's done right for
7 everyone. So, if we could do it sooner, obviously we
8 will.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Uh-hm. Well, I'm
10 glad you're working on it because now it seems like
11 there's a lot of agencies with many different--

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No, you're
13 absolutely right.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --IT system.

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: And they couldn't
16 talk to each other.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yes. So, let's--
18 let's straighten that out. The final question I have
19 is the--the drop-in center. So, now you have seven
20 drop-in centers that are open 24/7?

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No, two are 24/7.
22 The one in Upper Manhattan in Harlem and the
23 Sheltering Arms one in Jamaica, Queens. That's all
24 we have funding for so--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So are—are there
3 like statistics to show—are the 24/7 ones more
4 effective in terms of really reaching out and—and
5 helping youth that they can drop by any time?

6 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well,
7 I think, you know, the—the example I shared about my
8 visit a few weeks ago with the First Lady to the
9 Sheltering Arms that their caseload tripled by longer
10 hours because, you know, young people don't live a
11 9:00 to 5:00 existence. And so, by keeping it open
12 24/7, it has allowed them to access services at a
13 time when it fits—fits into their—their schedules.
14 So, at least the—the Sheltering Arms one it's medium
15 impact. I don't know enough about the Ali Forney
16 one, but we can certainly give you statistics to see
17 what impact. They've been open for three years, two
18 years?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes.

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Three years now as a
21 24-hour. So, they might have, you know, their peak
22 might have happened three years ago. So, they're
23 kind of, it's a new normal for them to see more young
24 people, but definitely in the Jamaica one within--
25 It opened what two or three months ago?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER CHONG: To--to say that
4 their caseload tripled was truly amazing.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Are there any plans to
6 expand all--all of them to be 24/7, and what is the--I
7 guess the budget impact? Because if you see one that
8 was able to triple their services.

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: There's nothing in
10 the works yet, but certainly, you know, we're having
11 conversations about, you know, how we can improve
12 services to our vulnerable youth, and certainly, you
13 know, this is always something to look at. You know,
14 is it--is it reaching young people who historically
15 have available access to these services:

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Do you also have
17 some data for the--the one that is operated 24/7 that
18 are there some people that do stay overnight like if
19 they come in--

20 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --in the middle of the
22 night, right, they don't--they can't go to a shelter,
23 but they are able to stay in the--?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes. For
25 the 24-hour drop-ins, there, they're not shelters,

2 and they're—we don't consider them residential
3 programs, but 24-hour drop-ins do have the capability
4 of housing a youth overnight in terms of providing
5 them with services, and then as soon as morning
6 breaks, they can make a referral to a particular
7 crisis or a TIL to, you know, get that residential
8 services, but it's a place where they can go to not
9 be on the street. They do not have enough—high
10 numbers of youth that stay there, but they are
11 capable of housing or providing some type of shelter
12 to them. Well, not shelter, but some type of care to
13 youth while the overnight hours are happening.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I—I really
15 encourage you to take a look at how effective, you
16 know, the 24/7 shelter-drop-in centers are, and
17 really see how to expand that service and to really
18 let the young people know that this is available to
19 them instead of staying on the street. There's a
20 place where they can be safe, and also access
21 services, and it might be a good way of helping you
22 identify youth that are in need of shelter that would
23 come into a drop-in center. So, I look forward to
24 hearing more about your thought about how to expand
25 that program. Do you have any other questions? No.

2 Alright, we want to thank you for being here today
3 and really-- [background comments] Oh, you've got one
4 more question?

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I'm sorry, Margaret,
6 yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Alright.

8 SPEAKER JOHNSON: The last question. If--
9 if a homeless youth can't find a bed, and he--
10 suggested he or she goes to a 24-hour drop-in center,
11 do you guys check that off as a placement?

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I don't think so.
13 No, no I don't think so. You know, because we have
14 on any given night to an 8 and 12% vacancies in--on
15 beds, the challenge is not so much there's no bed,
16 it's making sure the young person comes in and is
17 directed as soon as possible to the available bed.
18 So, it's rare that a young person has to stay at a--at
19 a drop-in center, but if they fill that position and
20 as Randy said, that if a young person comes in at
21 3:00 in the morning, it may be safer for them to stay
22 there and then when the morning comes, they can then--
23 the drop-ins then can find a shelter bed that's
24 available.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Can I
3 clarify something.

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Yes.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Just we—
6 City Council passed a bill recently that's going to
7 require us to report on young people who aren't able
8 to access a shelter bed, and that first report will
9 come out this summer based on the period we're in
10 right now. We've just been issuing like the
11 reporting documents for that. So, showing the
12 providers what they need to put in, and this question
13 just came up this week. It may be why it's coming to
14 your attention, and we have—we are—we clarified there
15 was—are we going to count that, aren't we going to
16 count that. The young person is not on the street.
17 We decided no we're not going to count that as a
18 placement, but there may be some confusion because
19 we're still just working out the communication on
20 that, and how we're going to track it.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: But had you been
22 counting it before?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: No.

24

25

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Okay, but now for the
3 reporting-reporting bill, you will not be counting
4 it?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That's
6 correct.

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Thank you

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you very much
10 for being here today, Commissioner and thank you for
11 your hard work on this. We're going to invite up the
12 next panel. We're going to invite up Lew Fidler, and
13 the Borough President Eric Adams, Alexander Ray
14 Perez. [background comments, pause] Terry (sic)
15 Bonilla, Arthur Sullivan, and Charles White-
16 Whitewolf. [background comments, pause] Lew, you
17 want to start? Welcome and I hope that you are happy
18 with the progress that's being made on this runaway
19 and homeless youth.

20 LEW FIDLER: No-yeah, mostly. [laughs]
21 Actually, I would be happy. I'm sorry. I'm going to
22 read the remarks of the Borough President and then
23 add a couple of my own person comments after, if
24 that's okay. I want to introduce you to Eugene
25 Resnick who's here with me for Borough President

2 Adams as well. He's the Deputy Communications
3 Director at Borough Hall, and their LGBTQ Liaison as
4 well.

5 EUGENE RESNICK: Thank you. Nice to meet
6 you all.

7 LEW FIDLER: Okay. Good morning Acting
8 Chair Chin, Council Member Brannan, Council staff and
9 the Committee on Youth Services. Let me begin by
10 congratulating all of you for holding this hearing to
11 day on this important issue. I want to thank you for
12 the opportunity to testify today on these three bills
13 that can have a major impact on the lives of runaway
14 and homeless youth in our city. While the
15 administration has made important efforts to address
16 homelessness—homelessness in New York City, there are
17 still far too many young people without a place to
18 call home due to abuse, neglect and violence, and
19 that is not an acceptable situation. I want to lend
20 my strong support to all three bills on today's
21 agenda. However, I want to emphasize Council Member
22 Torres' bill, Preconsidered Intro 39. In 2016, the
23 State Legislature passed the statewide Raise the Age
24 bill I sponsored with Assembly Member Helene
25 Weinstein and State Senator Diane Savino, raising the

2 age that youth may remain in youth shelters to age
3 25. This change will have groundbreak-groundbreaking
4 impact on youth access to services, but the city has
5 yet to implement this change. In fact, earlier this
6 year, the New York City Department of Youth and
7 Community Development wrote providers to indicate
8 that our great city would not be allowing our
9 homeless youth to remain in shelters past their 21st
10 birthday. There is no legitimate reason for failing
11 to raise the age here in New York City. Runaway and
12 homeless youth are often homeless due to abuse,
13 sexual assault and those who are affected are
14 disproportionately lesbian, gay, bisexual,
15 transgender and queer youth. The state has met this
16 challenge by raising the age so that RHY can access
17 assistance in a safe age-appropriate facility.
18 Presconsidered Intro 39 will require DYCD to make
19 this change. These are vulnerable young people in
20 need of refuge. We cannot with good conscience
21 continue to delay—or continue to delay protecting 21
22 to 24-year-olds. The fact is with every passing day,
23 21-year-olds age out of our youth shelters. Nothing
24 could be crueler than having our city wish a happy
25 birthday to them by returning them to homelessness

2 and street life for the adult shelter system. That
3 is why we have been working with Speaker Corey
4 Johnson to demand that that city immediately
5 implements a moratorium on these discharges allowing
6 youth in DYCD shelters to remain in those shelters
7 upon their 21st Birthday while we resolve these
8 discrepancies. Preconsidered Intro 39 would do that
9 and I urge its immediate passage. I also support
10 Preconsidered Intro 1288 sponsored by Speaker
11 Johnson, which will require the proper collection and
12 reporting of data regarding our homeless youth
13 population. Understanding the issues faced by these
14 at-risk young people, and the extent to which the
15 issues are being properly addressed is vital to
16 understanding how we best assist RHY. In addition,
17 extending the permissible time of stay for youth in
18 both emergency and transitional living programs so
19 that young people can—can receive all necessary
20 services is imperative. I support Council Member
21 Gibson's Preconsidered Intro 1116. The effort to
22 assist young people who have—who have been left on
23 our streets often driven from their homes, aged out
24 of foster care, and left to fend for themselves has
25 to be a priority not only for our government, but for

2 our society. Proper shelter programs with proper
3 services save lives, money and is simply the right
4 thing to do. I would be remiss if I did not also
5 thank all of the youth advocates and providers, in
6 particular the New York Coalition for Home-Homeless
7 Youth, the Campaign for Youth Shelter, Carl, Jamie,
8 Cole and the rest of them, all of you for all the
9 help and assistance they have given to my office, and
10 to the people of our city, and to the Council staff
11 as well, and Speaker Johnson thinks that I've been a-
12 a pest. He should talk to Andrea Velazquez, and
13 Louis Cholden-Brown, and I want to certainly
14 acknowledge and thank all of the young people who are
15 here today to testify in support of these bills. On
16 my personal note, I-I have to say that there are a
17 lot of providers in this room who could speak better
18 than I to the state of affairs today as to their
19 ability to provide for 21 to 24-year-olds in terms of
20 capacity, in terms of modeling. That was the first
21 time I heard that. I mean we have youth programs I-I
22 know in our city. We have youth programs that deal
23 with pregnant teens and mothering teens. I'm pretty
24 sure that there are people in the room here who are
25 familiar with them, and all of those things. I

2 recognize that there are legal challenges with OCFS
3 going forward and making sure that the state
4 regulations conform to the city regulations. I
5 recognize those things. I also have to point out the
6 never ending conflict between the chicken and the
7 egg. You come for the money, and they tell you that
8 the law doesn't permit you to spend it that way. You
9 come for the law, and they tell you there's no money
10 for it. Don't make us do this. There's no money for
11 it. Can't give you money for it. There's no law
12 permitting it. We have the same situation with the
13 state, and I'm sure advocates are going to be in
14 Albany this budget season pressing for the state to
15 fulfill its responsibility for the 21 to 24-year-old
16 category as well. I am more than—I—I can't even find
17 the—the words that I'd like to express at the
18 attitude expressed by Speaker Johnson this morning.
19 We have come so far in so many ways. It is just—it's
20 joyful. The fact of the matter is that where there's
21 a will, there is a way, and no matter how many
22 challenges we are facing here, let's just get this
23 done. Thank you.

24 ALEXANDER RAY PEREZ: I want to give my
25 testimony. Hello. My name is Alexander Ray Perez,

2 and I—I put together a poem to kind of put together
3 how I feel, and what I'm going through right now, and
4 thank you for allowing me to speak here today.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Can you put the mic
6 closer to you--

7 ALEXANDER RAY PEREZ: [interposing] Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --so we can all hear?

9 ALEXANDER RAY PEREZ: Yeah. Could you
10 hear me better now? Okay. As I'm shifting from mad
11 to sad I'm realizing that the idea of having and to
12 have had puts people in a peculiar place. It allows
13 youth to put on this mask of class. You'll never
14 really meet me where I'm at if you can't understand
15 where I'm from. I've called soft spots on park lawns
16 safe for sleeping. While you complain about the AC
17 or heat in your house or home, I question what those
18 things are like. I wonder about the idea of home as
19 I schlep everything I've ever owned from subway to
20 bus to the street and all over again for two months
21 and a half awaiting emergency housing placement.
22 This 24-year-old didn't know if he was going to make
23 it. Days that I couldn't let my hunger, weakness or
24 mental illness get the better part of me. I'll be 25
25 in 85 days. Every day is a sense of panic that not

2 even my bravest metaphor could chip at in comparison.
3 This cannot be the example we set for youth in 2018
4 that profit is greater than the people that provide
5 it. I'll tell you something the Ali Forney Center
6 has given me that is security in a community that I
7 would have otherwise not known existed. They are my
8 personalized family because you can bet your behind
9 that if I was hungry someone had my back. In a world
10 where my LGBT plus body has been marginalized, where
11 many others like me fight day in and day out either
12 to be who they really are or cover it all up just for
13 survival, I ask again is this where we leave off in
14 2018? My name is Alexander Ray Perez, and after
15 today, I have 84 days until my 25th birthday. I'm
16 not excited. I don't have plans to celebrate to be
17 very transparent. I'm terrified. Please consider
18 raising the age if not for my story, but maybe for
19 those about 700 21 to 24-year-olds that received
20 service at the Ali Forney Center last year. Thank
21 you for allowing me to speak.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you very much
23 for your poem.

24 TERRY BONILLA: Well, it's four minutes
25 'til 12:00. So, it's still good morning. Hello

2 everyone, my name is Terry (sic) Bonilla. I'm 21.
3 I'll be 22 in April, and I'm here today to testify on
4 behalf of myself and others facing similar
5 tribulations of experiencing homelessness. There are
6 not many things that I fear in this world. However,
7 for a long time turning 21 in age would be finding
8 myself figuring out my career or furthering my
9 education was a very real fear of mine. I'm not sure
10 if any of you have gone through this situation, but I
11 urge you to be empathetic of what myself and my peers
12 are fighting for. We live I a world already fueled
13 by cruelty, hate, greed and selfishness. Having a
14 place to stay and access the services for young folks
15 is quite frankly a matter of life and death. The
16 non-profit Institute for Children in poverty and
17 homelessness released research, which relied on data
18 of high schoolers in New York City collected by the
19 Center for Disease Control in its 2015 Youth Risky
20 Behavior Survey. Homeless teens are three times more
21 likely to attempt suicide than housed teens, at 20%
22 versus 6%, the report found. This is crucial in
23 realizing that young folks in this pivotal time of
24 their lives who don't have access to services will
25 grow into young adults 21 to 25 where their trauma is

2 not treated and a lack of understanding in regards to
3 how to prosper in life. We are the future of this
4 city and our nation. The city is always talking
5 about its homeless population, but is it not logical
6 to recognize that if we curb the amount of youth
7 experiencing homelessness, they'll be a direct impact
8 of the—on the future amount of adults experiencing
9 homelessness. We are young folks with our entire
10 lives ahead of us. We just need some support and
11 assistance in our time of need. I pose this question
12 to you all: Think back on an issue you may have
13 faced in your youth. Could you have gotten through
14 that time without the help of someone? I thank you
15 for allowing me this platform, and I again urge you
16 to do the right thing. Everyone deserves a warm
17 place to lay their head at night, and a place to grow
18 and prosper to their full potential. Thank you.

19 [pause]

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Next. Oh. [background
21 comments, pause]

22 CHARLES WHITEWOLF: Hi, my name is
23 Charles Whitewolf. I'm 24 years old. I am
24 representing Theater of the Oppressed and AFC along
25 with every other organ—organizers here. Please

2 excuse that because I just brought—I haven't slept
3 yet. So, being that I'm 24, I am not allowed to go to
4 certain organizations because of my age. I—I don't
5 think I've officially grown up to the point of
6 adulthood because I am one of those faces who have
7 experienced—who was traumatized at a very young age,
8 and who was force to growing up-- I'm sorry. Excuse
9 me. Who was forced to grow up either—just a very
10 young age. That's that fact of like people don't
11 realize if you're facing traumas and if you're facing
12 these—these little abuse, you're—well, you're age
13 kind of stops because you don't know what to do. You
14 don't have family to teach you anything. You won't
15 have somebody to have your back. You don't have much
16 of a support system. So when you're going to like—
17 like [coughs]. Excuse me. When you're going to a
18 center or a drop-in center, you don't know what to
19 do, and there are some people now who well, they're
20 coming out at out a very—at an older age, and they
21 need resources. So, the fact of the matter of
22 raising the age and getting more resources for these—
23 these youth that actually need it. Actually, I've
24 been homeless since the age of 16, and that was a
25 very hard for me. When I went to Covenant House,

2 that was actually very—that was very scary for me
3 because Covenant House is not favorable to youth.
4 It's for youth, but it's definitely not for LGBT
5 youth at all. It's very scary. I was terrified just
6 to be there. I didn't sleep there. I should be
7 terrified to even go and ask for resources that I
8 actually need. So, I do urge everybody here—I do
9 urge you to do what's right. I'm not trying to give
10 you a sob story. I'm trying to look for empathy, but
11 I'm trying—I want you to see what an actual face
12 looks like. I am a human. I don't want to be
13 dehumanized just because of my sexuality or my
14 identity. At DHS it feels like I'm being
15 dehumanized. Am I not a human of my own rights? So,
16 I urge you please raise the age. Thank you.

17 ARTHUR SULLIVAN: Good afternoon. First,
18 I'd like to thank Council Members for allowing me to
19 speak here today. My name is Arthur Sullivan, and I
20 have been a Community Organizing student with Ali
21 Forney Center since September 2017. In my time there
22 I've been privileged to work with engaging thoughtful
23 creative and inspiring youth every single day who
24 have been and ought to be the voice and the heart of
25 this movement some of who have spoken today. At the

2 end of the day, what we're asking for is simple, but
3 it has a much larger impact than folks like me who
4 have ever experienced homelessness can truly imagine.
5 I can't speak—speak to that experience, but I can
6 talk about what 21 felt like for me. At 21 I came out
7 as transgender. Even with my family's expressed
8 support, I struggled to accept myself and be publicly
9 transparent with my identify. At 21 I had just
10 finished my undergraduate degree, and all throughout
11 my life I had been told that my primary focus should
12 be on my education and was supported through that. I
13 didn't have to think about where I was going to be
14 housed. I didn't have to think about where I was
15 going to eat. I did not have to thank about where I
16 was going to find a quiet place to study, which is
17 often a concern of the folks that I work with. So,
18 according to our 2017 data, 47% of our youth who came
19 to AFC last year, were age 21 and older. As
20 Alexander spoke about, that's approximately 700
21 clients trying to access 20 privately funded
22 emergency beds for a stay of 30 to 90 days. Our
23 waiting list for those beds is approximately six
24 months long. It's important and—that we say—when we
25 say all these numbers for considering that we're

2 talking about people. A lot of our youth that come
3 to AFC for the—for them this is the first time that
4 they're allowed to be their full self and explore
5 that self. I want you to imagine trying to access
6 affirming services in a community of people who will
7 love and support you for who you are, and not in
8 spite of it, and I want you to imagine being told
9 that because of your age, you are ineligible for the
10 majority of our housing services, and you will have
11 to wait six months to access a temporary bed. You
12 can imagine being asked to plan for a sustainable
13 future out of homelessness when your tomorrow is
14 profoundly unstable. It's impossible. At 21 I know
15 I had a lot of growing to do, and at 23 I know I
16 still have a lot to learn. We're asking four youth
17 to have the opportunity to learn and grow in
18 affirming spaces and allow them to focus their
19 engaging, thoughtful, creative inspiring minds on
20 something other than where they're going to sleep
21 after they turn 21. Thank you again for your time.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you very much to
23 this pane for taking the time and come and testify.
24 We are going to work very hard to get the legislation
25 passed. As you heard from our Speaker, the Council

2 we are going to fight to make sure that the money is
3 there. The Council has always taken the lead to make
4 sure that we support our homeless and runaway youth,
5 and we will continue to do that, and thank you for
6 sharing your stories, and we hope that the providers
7 can expand their capacity. So, like at the—the sites
8 at Ali Forney you say that you talk about, there
9 should not be a waiting list, and here we hear from
10 DYCD that there is beds available, and then on the
11 other hand, you were telling me there's a waiting
12 list. So, something is not matching up, and we
13 really have to fix that, but thank you for being
14 here. Thank you, Lew, for your continued support.
15 We're going to call up the next panel. [background
16 comments, pause] Have a set and we'll—did you fill
17 out one of the slips? Oh, okay. We also have Beth
18 Hofmeister, Legal Aid Society with Giselle—
19 [background comments] Routhier (sp?) and Jamie
20 [background comments] Powlovich from the Coalition
21 for Homeless Youth. [background comments] So, please
22 identify yourself before you testify.

23 ALEXANDER JACOBS: Council Members, my
24 name is Alexander Jacobs, and I come before you today
25 to ask that you pass this bill so people like me 21

2 and older has a chance to say in shelters after we
3 turn 21. I came up here to New York because I
4 originally lived in Houston, Texas, but when
5 Hurricane Harvey hit, I decided to come here to New
6 York because I thought it was—it would be good to
7 build my life back up. When I got here, I had the
8 help of a drop-in center called New Alternatives help
9 me, but there were no youth shelters available for
10 someone my age. So, I went to an adult shelter where
11 I felt unsafe and scared for my life. So, I did some
12 research, and then I went through the same thing,
13 thing under 21. I was upset in alone. I had no clue
14 what I was going to do. So, I called my case manager
15 Ms. Kate at New Alternatives and she told me to try
16 the Ali Forney Center. I like it. It's helpful, and
17 I'm very grateful to have them in my life, but being
18 22 is making it a lot harder than if I was under 21.
19 So, please, I beg you to pass this bill so we can
20 help save lives of homeless youth. It is hard having
21 to see homeless 21 to 25 sleeping on the streets or
22 on the subway or having to hear that someone in that
23 age group committed suicide because no shelter would
24 take them because they're too old. So, I ask you to
25 pass this bill and please help save the lives of

2 homeless youth from the ages of 21 to 25. Thank you
3 for letting me speak.

4 BETH HOFMEISTER: Hi and good afternoon.
5 My name is Beth Hofmeister. I'm an attorney at the
6 Legal Aid Society in our Homeless Rights Project, and
7 I want to thank you so much for stepping in on behalf
8 of Chair Rose, Councilwoman Chin, to chair this
9 hearing. I also have to, of course, thank the City
10 Council Speaker Corey Johnson and his staff for
11 championing this issue for some time as well as
12 Council Members Gibson and Torres for sponsoring the
13 other two bills. And actually, the first hearing I
14 ever testified at was a hearing before the Lew Fidler
15 on this issue many years ago. So, I'm always excited
16 to see him here, and I also want to thank my
17 colleagues from Legal Aid. Theresa Moser is still
18 here who—with whom I could not do any of this work.
19 In addition, obviously to Giselle and Jamie who are
20 sitting here. So, we—very briefly, we are supporting
21 all three of these bills. We spoke at length about
22 why the extended stay should be legislated during the
23 September hearing, and those reasons remain the same
24 and the bill language remains the same. I would just
25 mention in light of what DYCD testified about today,

2 but I think it is important that there be another in
3 support of it, but that there is a bill that requires
4 it because as we all know, commissioners come and go,
5 administrations come and go, and I think we all can
6 agree that making sure New York City is taking
7 advantage of the legal changes that happened at the
8 state level, which allow for this to be possible is
9 as Mr. Fidler testified to earlier, we need to take
10 advantage of that and solidify that and make a point
11 of—of making that law here in the city. As for
12 Raise the Age, I know the youth themselves have the
13 best possible voices to speak about why that's
14 important. Carl Siciliano, who has not testified
15 yet, and I'm sure will be testifying mostly about
16 that issue so I don't want to kind of take the
17 thunder away from him or from anyone else who can
18 speak to it. But, if there was any way that—that the
19 Legal Aid Society filed a lawsuit in 2013 suing the
20 city to get a right to shelter for runaway and
21 homeless youth. That case is still being litigated
22 in the Eastern District of New York. If there was
23 any way we could have included youth up to the age of
24 24, if that was legally possible we would have done
25 it. It was not possible. So, we're very happy to

2 see that this opportunity presents itself here to be
3 again—to allow for the changes made at the state
4 level that would increase the availability to these
5 incredibly life saving services to all runaway and
6 homeless youth. So we do support that as well. I
7 would be remiss to say that with the third bill that
8 it was dis—it was disappointing to see that the right
9 to shelter language had been eliminated in this
10 version of the bill, to Speaker Johnson's bill. We
11 by all means understand the need for a capacity plan
12 and how important that is, and that same lawsuit we
13 were referring to, you know, we believe there already
14 is a right to shelter that exists under the law, and
15 we're continuing to fight for that, but it would have
16 been a very powerful statement for the City Council
17 to include that language in the legislation so that
18 we could continue to really state to our youth who
19 have been neglected for a period of time under prior
20 administrations how important it is for them to have
21 access to the—to the services that they need. That
22 being said, we are still in support of the bill. It
23 is a step in the right direction. We would just ask
24 that the Council consider putting a timeframe on when
25 that bill would be implemented that or the capacity

2 plan that's mentioned the bill would be implemented
3 so that a next step can be taking going forward to
4 ensure that you have a place to stay. I want to just
5 finish off by saying one of my colleagues who cannot
6 testify today always talks about and talked about
7 earlier this morning during our rally outside that
8 for youth that are placed in-in these youth shelters
9 feels like home. And as someone who also works with
10 the adult home-shelter home-homeless shelter
11 population I can tell you that that's not always how
12 it feels, and that's a real testament to the services
13 that are being given and the support that's being
14 given by the youth providers so many of whom are here
15 today, and I have not been a lawyer all that long,
16 but for my past 11 years I will say that I am
17 consistently impressed and moved and motivated by the
18 youth and the providers that work in the system.
19 They are constantly in the face of very difficult
20 circumstances thriving and making the system and
21 their lives a better place, and frankly all of New
22 York City a better place. And I mostly feel very
23 grateful that I've had the opportunity to stand along
24 side them and fight these fights along with them, and
25 I'm not going anywhere. Even if this bill doesn't

2 pass with right to shelter, we will also be here
3 coming back time and time again asking and making
4 sure that the youth have—have what they need to be a
5 successful and supportive as possible.

6 GISELLE ROUTHIER: Hi. My name is
7 Giselle Routhier. I'm the Policy Director at the
8 Coalition for the Homeless. I want to thank you for
9 the opportunity to testify today. We've submitted
10 joint testimony with Legal Aid and then Beth covered
11 the majority of it with—with Grace. So, I just want
12 to add a few, you know, small points to that. One
13 thing I want to stress is how important it is to have
14 specialized shelter for runaway and homeless youth
15 and we do a lot of work within the regular DHS
16 shelter system, but we know for sure that homeless
17 youth have specific needs that differ from homeless
18 adults, have experienced significant traumas. They're
19 at high risk for involvement with the Criminal
20 Justice System, engaging in survival sex and
21 receiving severe mental health diagnoses or
22 experiencing substance use issues. We know runaway
23 and homeless youth are disproportionately youth of
24 color and LGBTQ. So, it's so important to have those
25 environments that—that can support the population and

2 the needs that they have. We know that research that
3 has been done shows that youth specific shelters not
4 only meet those basic requirements, but make a
5 positive impact on the usability to stabilize and
6 successfully transition from crisis to independence.
7 So, we know that that is important, and we encourage
8 the city to build out the success within DYCD for
9 youth-specific shelter programs. And I—I just want
10 to end, too, and again I think it would be remiss if
11 we did not mention the critical need for permanent
12 housing for homeless youth. I mean this is actually
13 going to get at the root of the problem, and
14 ultimately reduce the need for shelters for homeless
15 youth, and so apart from a very small number of
16 supportive housing units still right now as you—as
17 we've heard from the city, youth and the runaway and
18 homeless youth shelter system do not have access to
19 any city funded or federally funded rental subsidy
20 programs. So, we need to make that happen as quickly
21 as possible, and we—we really hope that that can
22 happen even sooner than the fall because if you're
23 living within the system, and there's no way out,
24 then it just becomes a cycle, and we need to start

2 breaking that cycle. Thank you very much for the
3 opportunity to testify.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you and thank
5 you for raising the point about permanent housing. I
6 think that's the whole question with the LINC
7 Voucher. I mean that is a means of really helping
8 families and youth to really find the permanent
9 housing, and then I know that in this year, the
10 Preliminary Budget the Mayor put some small amount of
11 funding in there for this whole idea of Home Share.
12 So, I think that's something that I hope the
13 providers will, you know, take a look at and—and give
14 us some suggestions and advice how we can really
15 utilize these programs where kids and where the youth
16 can share an apartment with another youth to be able
17 to have permanent housing. So, that is something
18 that I am very interested in, and—and hopefully the
19 providers can help us with that issue. Thank you.

20 JAMIE POWLOVICH: Good afternoon. My
21 name is Jamie Powlovich and I'm the Executive
22 Director of the Coalition for Homeless Youth, also
23 known as the Empire State Coalition for Youth and
24 Family Services that represents 60 runaway and
25 homeless youth agencies across New York State.

2 Twenty-nine of them are here in New York City. I
3 would like to thank you Councilwoman Chin for
4 stepping in and chairing today's very important
5 hearing, and I also would like to put on the record
6 that the Coalition does congratulate new Chair Rose
7 to being appointed to the Youth Services Committee,
8 and we're really looking forward to her leadership
9 and working more closely with her. I would like to
10 say that I've been in this role for about 18 months,
11 and one of the things coming into this role was I
12 think somewhere deep down inside that politics was
13 still kind of about doing the right thing. Coming-
14 now being in this role you learn very fast that
15 that's not always true, and I think that I can't say
16 how appreciative I am that the Council is definitely
17 showing in regards to runaway and homeless youth how
18 to do the right thing. Initially, last session with
19 the full five bill package that was introduced, it
20 was a huge step forward in making sure that young
21 people have—their needs were being met and that they
22 have the protections that they need to really strive
23 in the runaway and homeless youth system, and I think
24 that a lot of that has been with the leadership of
25 now Speaker Johnson, and kind of being a true

2 champion to all of the young people in this room, and
3 the young people that aren't in the room and their
4 needs. I just wanted to share a little story, and I
5 am thankful that young people did get to testify
6 before at least myself because their voices are
7 definitely the most important in this matter, and
8 it's really unfortunate that the administration did
9 leave before hearing what the young people had to
10 say. [background comments] Okay, thank you for
11 staying. After the last hearing in September, I had
12 the extreme pleasure of working with 10 amazing youth
13 advocates that helped me with a lot of the work that
14 the Coalition is doing, and we had a meeting a few
15 days after the last hearing, and it was really hard
16 to kind of debrief with young people about things
17 that they hear at these hearings, right? Things that
18 they know in their own lived experiences aren't true,
19 and to come into these rooms and hear city officials
20 testify otherwise. It's real—it's really
21 disheartening, and it's really concerning for them,
22 and as an advocate and someone that came from the
23 provider world, right to have to sit in a room with
24 them and explain to them how people come into a room
25 and testify regarding issues that they themselves are

2 not living to know are true. And so, I just kind of
3 wanted to put that out there. Regarding the three
4 bills that are being considered today, the Coalition
5 for Homeless Youth is in full support of all three
6 bills, but I would like to echo what Beth mentioned
7 around the bill that was previously the Right to
8 Shelter bill, and a little concerned that the
9 language has shifted on that to make it more of a
10 planning bill. We do agree that there is a need to
11 come up with a comprehensive plan, how to move
12 forward to make sure that all young people can access
13 the right to shelter. We believe that is a
14 responsible step, but we do hope that a timeframe is
15 implemented in regards to that to make sure that the
16 city does move forward quickly with actually granting
17 young people the right to shelter in youth
18 appropriate settings. Regarding the bill to extend
19 the age, I mean I think I definitely can't say it as
20 well as all the young people said it before, but this
21 needs to happen. Young people 21 to 25 are more
22 supported. They feel safer and they are going to see
23 better success if they're allowed to stay in small
24 homelike environments. There's a reason why the New
25 York State regulations requires that certified

2 runaway and homeless youth programs are under 20 beds
3 and, you know, understanding that there are programs
4 that are bigger than that that have approval to do
5 so, but for the most part, programs are under 20 beds
6 because they recognize that young people do better in
7 small homelike environments. I shared a story
8 outside that in my previous life working in foster
9 care, it was not abnormal when a young person turned
10 21 at the program that I worked at, to discharge them
11 literally across the street into the adult homeless
12 shelter. Since that time, ACS has changed their
13 policies, and that can no longer happen, but then for
14 a decade after that I ran a DYCD funded TIL, and we
15 time and time again discharged young people on their
16 21st birthday into the adult shelter system knowing
17 that it was not in their best interest, knowing that
18 they were not ready, and with the population that I
19 worked with knowing that more times than not it
20 probably meant that they were going back into the
21 commercial sex industry than actually the DHS shelter
22 system. And it's really disheartening to me that
23 more than a decade latter-later DYCD hasn't changed,
24 right? They are still discharging young people on
25 their 21st birthday, and this bill would really kind

2 of force their hand to kind of do the right thing.
3 Not kind of but, do the right thing, and let young
4 people stay until they're 25th birthday. In regards
5 to the bill regarding the extended length of stay,
6 what Beth—to echo what Beth said, as well, we support
7 that, and we do understand that this is something
8 that DYCD is already in the process of implementing
9 but agree that it is really important to that it gets
10 put into law to make sure that it is something that
11 young people have access to in future
12 administrations, and not something that can just be
13 changed kind of depending on people's mood that year.
14 So, thank you again for the opportunity to testify
15 today. Oh, I'm sorry. I have one more thing to add.
16 Speaker Johnson asked a few different times what the
17 actual number from the 2017 youth count was. From
18 the actual youth count, the numbers that was gathered
19 was 44. The combined was the number that was
20 gathered during the actual point in time count the
21 total number is 265 unsheltered young people in 2017.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you very much,
23 and thank you for taking the time to come to testify
24 today. We're going to call up the next panel. Carl
25 Siciliano from the Ali Forney Center; John Sentigar

2 for Covenant House; and Sarah Meeker from the Door.

3 [pause] Michael Polenberg and Lorraine Rosado from

4 Safe Horizon. [pause] Oh, I guess—Larissa Lozada.

5 [background comments] Can you please—you can begin.

6 [pause]

7 CARL SICILIANO: It's set. Okay. I'm
8 Carl Siciliano. I'm the founder and the Executive
9 Director of the Ali Forney Center. As Corey
10 mentioned, I've been working with homeless youth in
11 New York City for 24 years. The Ali Forney Center is
12 very strongly in support of all three bills, but I'm
13 going to restrict my comments to the issue of raising
14 the age, and I'm going to start by telling a personal
15 story that I think helps me understand the
16 wrongfulness of the city's position on this up 'til
17 now. When I was a child I was a step-child. My—my
18 parents were divorced and my father remarried, and my
19 brother and I were the step-children, and we would
20 sleep in the basement in an unfinished room with no
21 windows, and the other children got to sleep, you
22 know, upstairs in the nice part of the house. And
23 since 2010, DYCD has had 21 to 24-year-old in their
24 care. The drop-in centers extended their age at that
25 point so that young people could stay through until

2 their 25th birthday, and the street outreach changed.
3 But, for years you know, they have not been willing
4 to provide housing to—to 21 to 24-year-olds. So,
5 what I get to see is—is young people who are sort of
6 treated like the—like step-children by the city like
7 the unwanted, unloved step-children. I'm thrilled
8 that the administration has added some new beds, but
9 that it's done is while on the one hand it's made
10 things so much better for the young youth, for the
11 older young people, you know, they get to see the
12 younger ones treated well, and—and they sit in the
13 drop-in centers waiting for months and months and
14 months. But I don't really want to focus on—on my
15 personal story as much as on what the personal
16 stories of young people who—who sleep in the streets
17 have told me. What does it mean that young people
18 age out when they're 21 and are terrified to—to go to
19 the adult shelters? For a lot of them it means they
20 sleep on the subways, and—but sleeping is a misnomer
21 because there it's almost impossible to sleep on the
22 subways. They—they tell me how they sleep in 5 or
23 10-minute bursts. They say how, you know, scary it
24 is, how uncomfortable it is, how they're afraid of
25 the police, how they're afraid of being assaulted.

2 You know, so it's more like they're just chronically
3 exhausted. I've had young people talk to me about
4 sleeping on roofs like they'll find a building where
5 they can access the roof, and they sleep on the roof,
6 and they pray that it doesn't rain or snow that
7 night. I've listened to young people talk about
8 sleeping in abandoned buildings. I remember one
9 young man who told me about how a few of his friends
10 and—and he were sleeping in an abandoned building
11 that had been destroyed by Hurricane Sandy in Staten
12 Island, and how this floor snapped and broke one of
13 their legs, and how they—they carried the young
14 person for blocks because they didn't want the police
15 to realize where they were staying. I've listened to
16 young people talk about how they had to do survival
17 sex. I remember one young man telling me about how
18 the first time he ended up doing it because he just
19 couldn't face another night sleeping in the subways.
20 How he went to a friend's house that morning and
21 wouldn't come out of the shower for an hour because
22 he was crying, and he didn't want people to see him
23 crying because he felt so humiliated and ashamed by
24 what he had been through. For years we have been
25 watching these young people suffer. We have been

2 listening to their tears. We have been responding to
3 their suicide attempts. Enough. The state has
4 finally passed the law. We need the Council to-
5 somebody has got to do the right thing here.
6 Somebody has got to be the responsible adult.
7 Somebody has got treating these young people like
8 step-children, and I beg and I implore the Council to
9 do it. I implore you to put the money in so that
10 beds can be made immediately available. I want to
11 make clear-which I've made clear to OCFS and the DYCD
12 that we have 34 beds that we can immediately make
13 available to 21 to 24-year-olds, and we are happy to
14 negotiate to make other of our beds, you know,
15 available if-if they're willing to do that. To us
16 it's an emergency. It should be an emergency that-
17 that no young person should have to be forced to
18 sleep out on the streets because of, you know, their-
19 they hit their 21st birthday. So, you know, I thank
20 you for your leadership. I thank the Council. I
21 thank the Speaker, and I just beg you to do it and to
22 make it happen fast. Thank you.

23 JOHN SENTIGAR: Good afternoon. My name
24 is John Sentigar, and I am the Communications
25 Director at Covenant House New York. I'm going to be

2 echoing a lot of what everyone else here has said
3 today. I want to thank you for the opportunity to
4 give testimony. Covenant House New York is the
5 nation's largest non-profit agency serving homeless,
6 runaway and trafficked youth. We strong support these
7 important bills which address longstanding barriers
8 that prevent youth from fully accessing the help they
9 desperately need. We want to recognize and applaud
10 DYCD's pledge to extend the contracted length of stay
11 in shelter to 60 days with a possible 60-day
12 extension. We're concerned, however, that without a
13 current law in place in New York City, future
14 administrations could potentially roll this progress
15 back, and reinstate a 30-day limit. 30 days with a
16 30-day extension is in sufficient, simply
17 insufficient to fully address the needs of a young
18 person in crisis. It's difficult to focus on healing
19 from trauma, finding a job, or addressing mental
20 health issues when the primary focus becomes where he
21 or she is going to live after just 30 days of being
22 in our shelter. The result is that RHY shelters are
23 forced to discharge youth before they're ready to
24 leave. When no other youth shelter beds are
25 available, youth are plunged back into homelessness,

2 and they couch surf, live on the streets or engage in
3 survival sex. Some become victims of human
4 trafficking. Mandating the length of stay to a
5 possible 120 days through New York City law would
6 greatly help stabilize our young people. We also
7 really support extending the age of RHY programs to
8 include youth up to age 25. It's heartbreaking when
9 Covenant House is forced to discharge a young person
10 on their 21st birthday, or tell young people over age
11 21 we can't help them. Science has taught us that a
12 young person's brain continues to develop until they
13 are 25 years old, and that young adults have
14 different needs from older adults. 21 to 25-year-olds
15 often fear entering the DHS shelter system so the
16 result is that they couch surf when they can.
17 Otherwise turn to the streets or survival sex, as
18 we've heard today. We support allowing homeless
19 young adults remain in RHY shelters until their 25th
20 birthday. However, we also really would like to
21 emphasize the need for additional funding in order to
22 adequately serve all of these youth. The passage of
23 these bills would provide incredible supports for our
24 young people. We appreciate the advocates, City
25 Council and DYCD all agree that every young person in

2 need deserves a bed. However, it's imperative that
3 sufficient funding is available to ensure every youth
4 seeking help can be served in the youth setting. I'd
5 like to thank Council Member Gibson and Council
6 Member Torres today for holding today's hearing, and
7 a special thank you to Speaker Johnson for the
8 introduction of these bills, and for being a champion
9 for our youth. I also want to thank the entire New
10 York City Council for their support in the fight
11 against youth homelessness. Thank you.

12 MICHAEL POLENBERG: Thank you, Council
13 Member. My name is Michael Polenber. I'm Vice
14 President of Government Affairs for Safe Horizon.
15 I'm joined by my colleague Larissa Lozada, who's the
16 Assistant Director of Outreach for Safe Horizon
17 Street Work Project. Our Street Work Project is a
18 program for homeless youth. We have two drop-in
19 centers, both in Manhattan. We have an overnight
20 street outreach component, which Larissa oversees,
21 and we have an overnight shelter of 24-24 beds up in-
22 up in Harlem, and you can see I'm not going to
23 obviously going to read this testimony. You can see,
24 you know, what tis the impact of-of our work in terms
25 of the number of outreach contracts, the number of

2 clients we see at the drop-in centers and so forth.
3 It's all in the testimony. So, quickly, I, you know,
4 we obviously support these bills, echo the concerns
5 raised by Beth and others about the Right to Shelter
6 Bill. Larissa will talk more about the experience
7 of—of young people and—and the reasons they don't get
8 to DHA shelters by and larger. But I also just
9 wanted to, you know, put this in the context that
10 while we look at this homeless youth issue, City Hall
11 and others are looking at anti-trafficking efforts.
12 What can we do to address trafficking? We have this
13 issue of trafficking. Should we come at it from this
14 angle? Should we go about it from this angle? What
15 are all the factors we need to consider? And here's
16 a humble suggestion: Make shelter available for
17 kids, for older kids. I mean it is such a critical
18 piece to help address the reality that young people
19 otherwise feel they have no other choice. Carl
20 referenced it just a short time ago. It's such a
21 simple piece, and—and—and for the city and for the
22 state and others who are looking at how to address
23 trafficking issues, it seems like this is—this isn't
24 the only way to—the only thing that needs to be done,
25 but it's a critical piece. So, I'm going to turn it

2 over to Larissa and she can talk a little bit more
3 about—about the bills and—and why we would support
4 them.

5 LARISSA LOZADA: Good afternoon. It's a
6 pleasure to be here. My name is Larissa Lozada. I'm
7 Assistant Director at Street Work, and I oversee our
8 Outreach Program. I've been with Street Work for 11
9 years and in my current role for two. At Street Work
10 we utilize the harm reduction philosophy we've
11 adopted, and we work with clients. Our clients do a
12 trauma-informed lens, and we focus on being client
13 centered. So, one of the main components within this
14 work and our approach to the work is that element of
15 time. These things being able to meet a young person
16 where they are and work with them through their
17 traumas, and being sensitive to the traumas that
18 they've endured understanding that it impacts their
19 development, and the pace in which they move. So,
20 time is something that we need, and see rarely of
21 particular for those clients who are turning 21. In
22 my time at Street Work, I've been in a couple of
23 different capacities. I have experienced in our
24 residential program as well as outreach, and during
25 my time at our residential program, one of the things

2 that most stood out, and was prominent to me was that
3 our residential program should it make sense for them
4 to reflect the age of the drop-in center, and the
5 young people that we serve in our drop-in center.
6 It's conducive to fostering and nurturing and
7 seamless service of care. Another thing at the drop-
8 at the residential shelter system is that 30 days is
9 just way too short of a period of time, understanding
10 that many young people come to us feeling unsafe,
11 feeling vulnerable and having internal barriers set
12 up for themselves as survival mechanisms. It may
13 take some time before a case manager or counselor can
14 even begin to chip away with the young person some of
15 the barriers that may be in place that hinder them
16 from being able to obtain stable housing. So, it may
17 take two weeks for a young person to feel safe enough
18 to share information that a case manager may need in
19 seeking appropriate housing and the next steps after
20 their residential stay, and then 30 days is here, and
21 it's up and it's gone. It's-it's too-it's an
22 unrealistic timeframe. Out on Outreach, in our
23 testimony you'll see the Outreach Unit last year we
24 made approximately over 1,400 street engagements or
25 14,000-I'm sorry-street engagements and contacts with

2 young people who are unstably housed or street
3 homeless. Last year of those 14,000 I can testify
4 that a very small handful of young people who were
5 appropriate to be placed in DHS-DHS shelter system,
6 meaning they were 18 or above opted to do so. When
7 we engaged them, their primary thoughts and feeling
8 are that they are unsafe in the DH—in the DHS system
9 that they don't have the tools necessary to navigate
10 the adult shelter system, and that there are not
11 support systems in place that are youth specific at
12 the DHS shelter systems. So, a young person in
13 January or February in code blue weather may very
14 well opt to stay street homeless for that night as
15 opposed to navigating the adult system, and these are
16 just some of the experiences that I've come across in
17 my 11 years with Street Work and some of the things
18 that young people that I work closely with have
19 shared with me. So, again, I am in support, this
20 program is in support and the agency is in support of
21 these three bills, and I would hope that they would
22 be—come into fruition soon. Thank you for your time.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, we--

24 CARL SICILIANO: [interposing] I
25 apologize. I forgot to add, really quickly just one

2 thing. I want to say how--how strongly in support we
3 are of what Lew Fidler and Borough President Eric
4 Adams have recommended that there be an immediate
5 moratorium on young people aging out on their 21st
6 birthday. I just ask that the--the Council reach out
7 to--to the city and to the state, and say that there
8 should be like a--an ending on--on youth aging out
9 while we work out this--these new policies.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, Carl. I--
11 the question I have for you and providers is that
12 from the--the Commissioner's testimony he raised the
13 issue about capacity. So, I guess my--are the
14 providers ready? Do you think that you have the
15 capacity to provide shelters for youth who are 21 to--
16 to 24, 25?

17 CARL SICILIANO: Speaking for the Ali
18 Forney Center, which is the only thing I can do, we
19 have a new 14-bed contract with DYCD of the--we're
20 waiting for the state to certify the sites. We've
21 made it very clear to them that we want those beds to
22 be for 21 to 24-year-olds. In addition, the young
23 person who--who testified earlier with the Ali Forney
24 Center referenced that we have a privately funded
25 shelter. You know, four years ago we lost the

2 funding for our only shelter that was 21 to 24-year-
3 olds. It was funding through HOPWA, and-and they
4 changed the requirements that they had to just be for
5 people with-with HIV or AIDS, and-and, you know. So,
6 we-we have been, you know, cobbling together funding
7 to keep those 20 beds operating. We would love for
8 those to be able to be funded by DYCD. So, you know,
9 those two bed-you know, those two different programs
10 combined could immediately be housing 30 to 40 young
11 people through DYCD.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Are-are there-is it
13 very difficult to identify sites that might be
14 suitable for--?

15 CARL SICILIANO: Landlords are not
16 dropping all over themselves to rent to-to homeless
17 youth providers. Often when we have a new contract
18 it takes us many, many months before we find a
19 landlord who's-who's willing to rent to us. However,
20 we've been doing this so long, and we've got good
21 relationships with a number of-of the landlords. If
22 the city were to make, you know, funding available
23 for 21 to 24-year-olds, we would definitely go after
24 more beds, and-and seek to-to-to-- Right now, we
25 have about 180 young people on the waiting list for

2 our beds. 140 of those are 21 to 24. About 30-37 or
3 33 I think are--are--are 16 to 20, and really the
4 reason that they're on a waiting list even though
5 there's capacity is because they prefer to be in an
6 LGBT specialized shelter, which is what we--we
7 provide.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, okay. So, that's
9 why the--the date doesn't match when--

10 CARL SICILIANO: Right, but--but the 21 to
11 24-year-olds just have really nowhere to go.

12 LARISSA LOZADA: I think that's--that's
13 helpful to know and also it will be helpful to like
14 have providers to be able to kind of start
15 identifying more available sites. You know, don't
16 wait until the funding comes through, but if there
17 are possible, you know, good hearted people who might
18 be able to help, let's try to identify the sites so
19 when the funding is available, you can get started
20 and up and running quickly.

21 CARL SICILIANO: I can promise you if the
22 funding is available we will do everything we can to--
23 --to provide those beds. It's terrible for us to have
24 so many young people with nowhere to go.

25 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Right.

2 MICHAEL POLENBERG: And I would just add
3 that it would help not only for funding available in
4 terms of a bed rate, but also for any capital work
5 that needs to be convert an existing building into
6 something that meets OCFS' standards, and that is,
7 you know, the right configuration for young people.
8 So, whatever proposal the city has put out or is
9 thinking about putting out, I echo Carl. I think
10 most providers would jump at the chance, but
11 realistically give them what it is in New York. You
12 need to have a rate that's reasonable, and you need
13 to have capital funding or start-up funding to be
14 able to convert a building into something that OCFS
15 will approve of.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Great. That's—that's
17 very good suggestions that we should include capital
18 funding to be sure that that the site could be
19 suitable. Thank you. Thank you for taking the time
20 to testify today, and for all the great that you do
21 for our youth. [pause] Okay. So, this is our last
22 panel but if anyone that want to testify that haven't
23 signed up, you can still sign up. Kate Barnhart from
24 New Alternatives; Craig Hughes; Ramon McClintic,
25 right, form New Alternatives; and I think she

2 provided the testimony for Rebecca (sic). Yes.

3 [pause] Please begin. [pause]

4 KATE BARNHART: That light. Okay. I'm
5 the Director of New Alternatives for LGBT Homeless
6 Youth, and we serve young people up to age 24, and we
7 also have an after care program for folks who need
8 ongoing services after age 24, but I know we're not
9 even going to touch that problem yet. There were—I'm
10 not going to repeat a lot of the stuff because, you
11 know, many people have already made a lot of crucial
12 points, but there are a couple of things that I'd
13 like to share based on my—on many years of
14 experience. I was the Director of Sylvia's Place,
15 which is an emergency shelter for LGBT homeless youth
16 previously. So, one of the—and they go up to 24 as
17 well, but they do it all with private dollars as does
18 New Alternative do everything with private dollars.
19 One of the things that I have, you know, noticed over
20 my years of working with young people is that the
21 length of time it takes to accomplish many things
22 with young people has been getting longer and longer.
23 For instance, if you're apply for SSI with a client,
24 and it gets denied and you have to wait for a
25 hearing, the length of wait for a hearing in New York

2 is now a year and a half to two years. So, the idea
3 that you're going to accomplish many things with a
4 young person before their 21st birthday is very
5 unrealistic. And so, you know, we go up to age 24,
6 which allows us the time to engage in some of these
7 long-term processes, applying for mental health
8 housing, a very long process. Or, I have one young
9 woman who applied for housing when her son was born,
10 and just got her apartment. He's—he was seven when
11 she got her apartment. So, you know, it's really
12 important to keep in mind that this work is a long-
13 term effort of healing trauma and navigating all
14 these bureaucracies. The other thing I'd like to
15 point out is that LINC Vouchers have been of limited
16 use or usefulness to our clients. There's a huge
17 issue with landlords refusing to take them, and young
18 people who have never had an apartment and have no
19 rental history, no credit history, are in a really
20 poor position to—to navigate leases in the private
21 market. So, if LINC Vouchers are going to be
22 available to young people, there needs to be also
23 some sort of support system to help them navigate
24 that process because I've had young people taken
25 advantages by unscrupulous landlords during that

2 process. I've had all kinds of negative outcomes,
3 and then regarding the DHS system many of my clients
4 have wound up in the DHS system at one point or
5 another because we work with folks who are over 21.
6 We got a lot of them because they can't go most other
7 places, and in the DHS system I have—my especially
8 LGBT clients are very vulnerable and I've had clients
9 suffer assault, sexual assault, have, you know, their
10 belongings stolen repeatedly. It's really not an
11 appropriate place, I would say, for most people, but
12 in particular for vulnerable young people, and
13 finally I think that this age, the age, the young
14 adult period it's vital to intervene. It's almost
15 our last chance to intervene to prevent people from
16 becoming chronically homeless. The longer people are
17 homeless, the more demoralized they become, and at a
18 certain point, it's almost like people just are
19 overwhelmed and exhausted, and they just—you know,
20 they just start to slip into this chronic
21 homelessness. And finally, this is really a matter of
22 life and death. I would say I lose about one client
23 a year. You know, I still have clients who die of
24 AIDS. I have a girl in the ICU at Jacobi right now
25 who probably won't survive. Really housing makes the

2 difference between life and death, and I can't put it
3 any more clearly than that. Thank you.

4 RAMON MCCLINTIC: Good afternoon. I'm
5 Ramon McClintic. Ten years ago I became homeless
6 while aging out of foster care. I have very mild
7 cerebral palsy, and I was scared, pardon my French,
8 but shitless in going to DHS because of things that
9 I've heard, you know. So, I ended up going to Street
10 Works, and but they were—they had a privately funded
11 overnight shelter, which allowed people up to 24 to
12 stay 90 days at the time. I met Craig there. After
13 my 90 days were up, my case manager in the drop-in
14 referred me to Kate. As somebody who identifies as a
15 cisgender heterosexual male, he referred me to see
16 Sylvia's—my case manger referred to Sylvia's Place
17 because of my fears of being bullied and antagonized
18 and whatever else the case may be at the time. Cate—
19 I spoke to Kate. My case was with DHS, but spoke to
20 Kate, and Kate said to me: Well, if you're okay, I
21 call it by their fear. Okay, let me put as bisexual
22 in the paperwork. I said sure why not. I've been
23 working with Kate as a volunteer for—since 2011, and
24 this has just—it's—it's hard. I mean yeah, while I
25 was—after my 24th birthday, I actually started

2 attending school, and on numerous occasions, while in
3 DHS my books were stolen. I was afraid to go to
4 class because I still had the high school that—I had
5 like you say the high school mentality when I first
6 started at BMCC. So, you know, I thought the
7 professors were in care. You know, oh, you're in a
8 shelter. Your books got stolen. Oh, well, find a
9 way. You know, that's what I thought, but then I
10 dropped and then I went back and then I figured that
11 I found—I realized that it wasn't that way that they
12 were actually more compassionate. But, yeah, so, it
13 was a real obstacle for me to have to navigate the
14 DHS system and, you know, be a student, and
15 maintaining a part-time job at the time, too. So,
16 yeah, I mean I've hardly ever had the opportunity
17 (sic) to be in school or in class or work but, yeah,
18 it just became a real challenge, and I wasn't able to
19 finish my degree because of the obstacles and, you
20 know, financial aid and things like that. Also, I
21 wanted to reiterate that we really don't need—I know
22 it's a little off topic. We really don't need no
23 more DHS shelters. We really do need permanent, safe
24 housing because yeah, and it's—it's a lot to still
25 deal with, you know, and—and honestly maybe we will

2 stop the home, you know, this homeless epidemic if we
3 didn't turn having more buildings into the shelters
4 instead of--instead of turn that--trying to turn that
5 into a, you know, an independent housing opportunity,
6 low-income. Thank you.

7 CRAIG HUGHES: [coughs] Good afternoon,
8 Council Member Chin. Thanks for allowing me to
9 testify. I'm honored to be on a panel with Kate and
10 Ramon and to be--I'm extremely appreciative to be here
11 today. My name is Craig Hughes. I'm a social worker
12 by profession. I've worked with homeless youth for
13 well over a decade. I'm also a researcher, and
14 presenting in the capacity of a social workers and a
15 researcher today. I'm not going to read you the book
16 that I handed into City Council, although I will
17 highlight particular part of it that I think should
18 be made salient, but I am going to start and
19 appreciate that DYCD is here to hear this with a
20 story from experience I had about two weeks ago. And
21 this will be the one portion of the testimony I read,
22 and I do quote DYCD testimony from the past at
23 length. I will not do that. I will summarize it,
24 but it's in my testimony. So, in the beginning of
25 this testimony, I'd like to give an anecdote from my

2 own recent experience. The anecdote is minor that I
3 might illustrate the haphazard way that the de Blasio
4 Administration has sought to aid homeless youth who
5 survive on city streets. While working for a local
6 agency, a colleague reached out to me because a young
7 person seeking services through a social service
8 program elsewhere in the city was trying to access an
9 RHY bed and having difficulty. Unfortunately, the
10 city has no sufficient central hotline or centralized
11 emergency intake system for RHY beds. Rather, the
12 policy is that a city official holds a cell phone and
13 will take calls if a provider is having a difficult
14 time finding a bed. Last year, in testimony before
15 the Council, the city official who is here today with
16 DYCD testified to the following process for placing a
17 homeless young person: I go into—I quoted the
18 testimony from last year at length, but in that
19 testimony he ended with a hard-if a young person is
20 having a hard time finding a bed or the advocate is
21 having a hard time finding a bed, gave out his
22 personal cell phone number. So, on the afternoon
23 that I'm referencing, the official was home with the
24 phone sick, and as I—that's how I found that out
25 later on via an email from a Deputy Commissioner who

2 is also here today. Before finding that out, I called
3 the cell phone number mentioned above earlier in the
4 testimony from both my work phone and my personal
5 cell phone, but only a voice mail answered. I also
6 called various numbers and DYCD's RHY Unit and no one
7 answered. I sent emails to DYCD's Deputy
8 Commissioner and the official who testified today,
9 and at that time to holding the relevant cell phone.
10 Email and calls went unanswered until nearly two
11 hours later. A second email I said was only returned
12 after I emailed the same DYCD officials and informed
13 them that I had contacted Legal Aid about the issue.
14 It took approximate at that point 14 minutes to get
15 an answer to my emails. Suddenly, a city official
16 was dispatched to find the young person a bed.
17 Clearly, we all get sick, city officials are
18 extremely busy by the nature of their work. However,
19 since city policy, as outlined in testimony here is
20 that this—that this cell phone is the route through
21 which a bed can be found if someone is experiencing
22 difficulty. Clearly, this is insufficient. This
23 past weekend while writing this testimony at about
24 1:00 in the morning—I work late—I called and—I called
25 the Youth Hotline that's on DYCD's website. I—in

2 hopes that I would be clear on the process if it's
3 1:00 in the morning how a young person might get a
4 bed. I was routed to 311, and I--actually it played
5 out the message that you get at 1:00 in the morning
6 on a Saturday night. So, what's that message saying?
7 First, it's saying that someone seeking youth shelter
8 is out of luck. Secondly, if they're in crisis they
9 can hang up, and they are referred to a national
10 hotline. It's saying a lot of things, but it's
11 certainly not saying if you need a bed, here's a bed.
12 Clearly a business hours only hotline, which is what
13 is open now, and an individual carrying a cell phone
14 is not a sufficient intervention for linking homeless
15 youth to youth specific beds. Realistically, this is
16 the smallest possible resource allocation the city
17 can make other than making no resource allocation. I
18 got into detail about the need for a functional
19 intake point, a centralized place to get young people
20 into beds, and I go into detail about a lot of other
21 things. I'm just going to finish off this long-
22 winded testimony with a few of the gaps that are
23 otherwise in the system. One that's come up repeated
24 here is the need for permanent housing assistance,
25 the permanent housing assistance, and I appreciate

2 very much Kate's comments about the struggles that
3 young people in particular have in a gentrifying
4 housing market, and young people have no subsidized
5 way to exit homelessness in the city. To be just
6 super clear and Giselle from the Coalition brought
7 this up, there is no way out from the youth shelter
8 system, and what you end up with then are young
9 people who increase their survival behaviors to avoid
10 the DHS system. Having no subsidized way out of
11 shelter and no safe way to leave, it is a mechanism
12 that churns out homelessness. As Ramon brought up,
13 it's going to continue to grow the homeless
14 population in the city. There's some other issues
15 that come up--and again I'm happy that DYCD is here
16 to hear this--in terms of data. The city in its data
17 to the state--in its reports of OCFS for its annual
18 funding states that it depends on its Management
19 Report data in terms of its--the presentation of its
20 system. And if you look at tis Mayor's Management
21 Report data, which came out not too long ago, 2017
22 data, you would think that the system is working
23 miraculously well. For example, just so I can--bear
24 with me as I pull this up here. (coughs) Sorry for
25 the hold. I'm just trying to find a page. Again, I

1 wrote a book. According to FOIL data, well actually—
2 MMR data—MMR data states for 2017 that 88% of youth
3 discharged from TIL beds were “Reunited with family
4 or placed in a suitable environment from the TIL
5 beds.” However, data that I FOIL’ed shows that only
6 a total of 68 of 445 duplicated discharges from TIL
7 bed returned home. Similarly, from crisis beds DYCD
8 reports in the MMR data that 77% “Reunited with
9 family or were placed in a suitable environment from
10 the crisis shelters.” However, data—data produced by
11 DYCD and FOIL requests tells a very different story.
12 What we end up with is a story where DYCD is
13 overplaying its success in helping young people exit
14 homelessness. What the data, and it’s in my
15 testimony, from FOIL documents shows is that DYCD
16 overwhelmingly turns young people into the street or
17 into unknown locations or back into crisis shelters.
18 Unfortunately, both the lack of access to rental
19 subsidies and to permanent supportive housing, these
20 young people unfortunately are disproportionately
21 unable to access it through the various barriers at
22 the provider level. Young people do not sustainably
23 leave homelessness from the DYCD system. So, in—in
24 closing this up here, just a few things about the
25

2 bills. It's fantastic that we've come this far, and
3 I—I'm honored to be in a room with some people who
4 created the history of homeless youth services in
5 this city. With that said, Council Member Johnson's
6 bill or Speaker Johnson's bill was better last time.
7 At that point Speaker Johnson was calling for a right
8 to shelter. What we see now is a walk-away from the
9 right shelter demand. There is possibly nothing more
10 important in this city in terms of homeless youth and
11 solving youth homeless than ensuring that young
12 people are embraced by the city and not turned out in
13 the street and a walkaway from a right to shelter is
14 the wrong point of compromise. The point of
15 compromise starts from the agreement that the right
16 to shelter is necessary. Not that we need a
17 compliance plan or a capacity plan that is based on
18 often faulty data, utterly failed methodologies for
19 counting youth on the street, and relies on turn-away
20 after youth engage the system. The starting point is
21 creating a right to shelter not backtracking from it,
22 and I hope that there's some reconsideration to stand
23 up to the Mayor and the demand by DYCD for an austere
24 budget, or let me restate that. The demands for the
25 city to have an austere budget, which DYCD then tends

2 to--obviously justifies, and rather we need an
3 expansive budget that creates a right to shelter on
4 demand as young people need it. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. Well, thank you
6 to this panel and thank you for your advocacy, and
7 thank you for being here today. Okay, we have two
8 more. We have Norma Feliciano (sp?) and also Judy
9 Fernandez from Chelsea Foyer. [background comments,
10 pause]

11 JODY FERNANDEZ: Oh, it was on. Now, now
12 it's on. Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Jody
13 Fernandez. I'm a part of the Chelsea Foyer Program,
14 which is an RHY. Well, my background story is since
15 last February I've been homeless, and gratefully,
16 since I found Chelsea Foyer now I have stability and
17 shelter, but the problem is--the problem is when they
18 accepted me in August I was already 19, and my
19 birthday is in August so basically the week after I
20 was accepted I was already 20. Now, basically being
21 that since at the age of 21 they have to discharge
22 me, basically I'm panicking and worrying since my
23 birthday is in August, this upcoming August now I
24 have to find shelter. Since being in the program
25 I've been in high school, and now I'm graduating in

2 two days, but instead of kind of celebrating and oh,
3 yeah, I'm graduating, I am celebrating, but at the
4 same time I'm worried about where am I going to go in
5 August because I have no—basically my supportive
6 system is Chelsea Foyer. They're my, you know, the
7 staff is my family at this moment. So, since I'm
8 kind of worried about losing that supportive system
9 in upcoming August, my plan was to basically go—go
10 into college and for business management as my major
11 and take some graphic designing classes, and
12 eventually when I graduate from there, I would be
13 able to open up my own—own business. But I would
14 need this bill to be passed so I could have that time
15 to actually graduate and be successful, and if this
16 bill doesn't pass, and basically I'm another kid
17 recycling into being into basically being homeless
18 again. So, just I—I hope you guys make this go
19 through and, yeah, thank you for letting me speak
20 today.

21 NORMA: Hi. How are you. My name is
22 Norma. First I'd like to start off that I'm
23 extremely nervous. So, I would like to thank all of
24 you guys (coughs) for coming. I would also like to
25 say that I'm speaking on behalf of all the Good

2 Shepherd Services and residents and everybody that
3 couldn't make it today. A little bit about me that
4 I'm 20 years old, but like Jody, I am going to be 21
5 in August, and it's literally been a year and a half
6 and, you know, I only have my sister in this country.
7 First, I'd like to say that I'd like to thank—thank
8 all of you for this opportunity, and I've been dying
9 to tell somebody. At least telling somebody, you
10 know, so I can be heard because I know it's just not
11 going to happen, you know. It's been pretty hard.
12 I'm the first generation American, and my mom has not
13 been in this country for 11 years. So, I've been
14 raised by someone who's a decade over-older than me.
15 I haven't been in foster care. I've been under my
16 sister's care until 16 maybe, and then she kicked me
17 out. So, kind of like what other panelists have been
18 saying I've been couch surfing, I've been, you know,
19 looking at other people's houses, but the shelter has
20 never been an option for me, and that's because I
21 knew from stories that it was dangerous. People
22 fight and, you know, I think we're all fighting for
23 the same thing, and, you know, that's financial
24 freedom. That's being able to just be around your
25 family, and it's been hard for me especially because,

2 you know, it's—maybe other things have been passed.
3 Maybe my sister would not have to work in a—I'm just
4 going to be honest. I'm just going to be blunt with
5 you guys. At least my sister probably wouldn't have
6 to work in strip club, you know, and that has been
7 such a really bad example for me because if things
8 were more widely expressed, widely know, maybe
9 everybody else would have the same opportunity that
10 we do, and I think we do need to start with the
11 youth. We need to start with people who are
12 pregnant, people who do have kids, you know, because
13 then that would give them a bright future, and I
14 think that really, really matters because, you know,
15 my sister has no way of finding another job. That's
16 the only thing she knows and, you know, I come from
17 that, but I—I like separated myself from that, and I
18 wanted to go to college, and I wanted to, you know,
19 be a doctor. You know, I really wish I could, but
20 given the circumstances, all I really wanted was
21 somebody to listen, someone like you, you know, to
22 just hear me out and say wow, she hasn't had her mom
23 here. And, you know, I don't want pity. Like I
24 don't nobody to feel bad for me because me going
25 through this I've been through, you know, working as

2 a direct support professional, and I've heard stories
3 way worse than mine. I mean, you know, it needs to
4 be separated for homeless youth. It needs to be
5 separated for the disabled because they go through
6 that, too, and, you know, they go through rape. They
7 go through homelessness. They go through things that
8 is unimaginable, and I would just like to express the
9 need for all of us to at least have somewhere to lay
10 our heads down and somewhere to eat. You know, at
11 least a table to eat. I eat on my bed, but I just
12 feel like everybody needs to eat. Everybody needs to
13 have three times a day. They need to eat meals, they
14 need to have some sort of comfort, and the things at
15 the shelters, I—I really want to push that. It
16 should be 24 hours because at any time of the day
17 anybody could get kicked out, and I know that, and I
18 know that hands on. I feel like some people who are
19 pushing a bill, and they haven't gone through
20 homelessness, they don't know. They don't know hands
21 on. They don't have the experience. They don't—they
22 haven't gone through that, but, you know, I'm telling
23 you from someone who's been through it, that it needs
24 to happen and, you know, it's not easy. So, it's
25 easier said than, you know, going through it, but,

2 you know, I think that shelter systems need to have
3 heavier security as well so that way people don't get
4 hurt. You know, I was diagnosed with Epilepsy since
5 14, and I had a seizure right outside the shelter,
6 and you know, nobody was there to help me. You know,
7 I mean after, there was residents passing by and they
8 saw. But, you know, I think there needs to be more
9 security, and there just needs people—there needs to
10 be people that care. And, you know, unfortunately,
11 we live in tough city, and I think if we implement
12 that, that it can happen and we—we can do it
13 together. Like teamwork makes dream work. So, you
14 know, I appreciate all of you listening and, you
15 know, hopefully this really happens. Thank you so
16 much.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And thank you, both of
18 you for testifying and—and coming today and sharing
19 your stories. We're going to work very hard to get
20 these legislations passed. The fact that we are
21 hearing these legislations so soon is because we have
22 a strong supporter in our Speaker. So, I'm very
23 confident that we will get it passed as soon as
24 possible, and I really urge the providers to gear up
25 so that we can provide services for our youth that

2 needs them. And thank you to all of you for coming
3 today to share your story, to testify, and thank you
4 to all of the advocates out there for your great
5 work.

6 JODY FERNANDEZ: Can—can I add something.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes.

8 JODY FERNANDEZ: Also, since I'm leaving—
9 well, I have to leave in August because I'm turning
10 21, there are no services for me like people like me
11 because I have no disabilities. I have—I don't have
12 HIV or any of that. Like, you know, needs.
13 Basically there are no services for like basic. I
14 don't have a disability so basically there's nowhere
15 that—nowhere that anybody could help me basically.
16 So, yeah, there's no supportive system. There's no
17 system that oh, yeah, we could—we can refer you to
18 here now. It is basically oh you have to work to
19 work hard and basically pay rent, and the rent in New
20 York is crazy. So basically—also like friends and
21 people I know they're 25 or 24, and they're not even
22 ready to move out. So, what do you think somebody at
23 the age of 21 and has no family, no people supporting
24 them. It's not going to be ready. So, basically,

2 that's -that's all I have to say. Thank you for
3 hearing.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But don't be hopeless,
5 okay, because we're going to work to get the
6 legislation passed so that you can continue to get
7 the good services that you have now. Okay? So, study
8 hard and—and do well in school.

9 JODY FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And thank you everyone
11 for being here today. The hearing is adjourned.

12 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 19, 2018