

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

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March 27, 2018
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

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

Andy L. King
Chairperson

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

Steven Banks
Commissioner of DSS, HRA & DHS

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DSS First Deputy Commissioner

Grace Bonilla
HRA Administrator

Joslyn Carter
DHS Administrator

Ellen Levine
DSS Chief Planning and Financial Management
Officer

Scott French
DSS Chief of Staff

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ACS Commissioner

Lisa Parrish
Deputy Commissioner for Financial Services at
ACS

Lorelei Vargas
Deputy Commissioner of Child and Family Justice

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

Felipe Franco
Deputy Commissioner of Youth and Family Justice

Catherine Trapani
Homeless Services United

Christa Perfit
City Harvest

Michelle Jackson
Human Services Council

Stephanie Gendell
Citizens' Committee for Children

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District Manager Manhattan Community Board

Jesse Laymon
NYCETC

Ariel Sharansky
UJA Federation

Triada Stampas
Food Bank NYC

Edline Jaquet
FPWA

Joyce McMillan
Child Welfare Organizing Project

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

Lisa Caswell
Day Care Council of New York

Kate Rubin
Youth Represent

Gisele Castro
Exalt Youth

Alexis Sanders
Exalt Youth

Maria Wallace
Picture the Homeless

Jose Rodriguez
Picture the Homeless

Scott Hutchins
Picture the Homeless

Mary Crosby

G.L. Tyler
DC1707

Kevin Kuros
Community Connections for Youth

Wendy O'Shields
Urban Justice Center

Shelley Anderson
Sheltering Arms

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

Mikayla Terrell
Sheltering Arms

Gregory Brender
United Neighborhood Houses

Kirk Wilson
Browery Hotel CB3

Robin Vitale
American Heart Association

Andrea Bowen
Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Solutions
Coalition

John Sentiger
Covenant House New York

Danette Rivera
Jesus is the Answer Community Outreach Center

Stephanie Phillips
Sylvia Rivera Law Project

Sasha Alexander
Sylvia Rivera Law Project

Jackson Wolfe
Sylvia Rivera Law Project

Nancy Rankin
Fair Fares

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

Janice Tosto
Writer's Alliance

Gillani Englin
Good Call

Malik Reeves
Good Call

Olivia Dana
Staten Island Justice Center

Towaki Komatsu

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning,
3 everybody. My apologies for my tardiness. I was a
4 across the street at a Land Use vote. So, my
5 apologies for starting late this morning. I am
6 Stephen Levin, Chair of the Council's General Welfare
7 Committee. I want to thank you all for joining us for
8 the Fiscal 2019 Preliminary Budget hearing be held
9 for the General Welfare Committee. The City's Fiscal
10 2019 Preliminary Budget totals 88.6 billion dollars
11 of which 14.1 billion dollars, or 16 percent, funds
12 the three social services agencies: Human Resources
13 Administration, otherwise known as HRA, the
14 Administration for Children's Services, otherwise
15 known as ACS, and the Department of Homeless
16 Services, otherwise known as DHS. These agencies are
17 in charge of providing support and assistance to the
18 most vulnerable New Yorkers, and today, we will hear
19 from these agencies on each of their proposed Fiscal
20 19 budgets. We want to know how the agencies' new
21 initiatives, various funding adjustments, and new
22 policies will impact their ability to serve New
23 Yorkers, and how through an effective budget agencies
24 are striving to render the best possible services to
25 the most vulnerable in the City. We will begin this

2 hearing with the Department of Social Services which
3 combines HRA and DHS under one Commissioner. HRA
4 provides economic support and social services to
5 families and individuals for them to fight poverty
6 and to attain self-sufficiency. HRA helps over three
7 million New Yorkers through the administration of
8 major public assistance programs including Cash
9 Assistance and SNAP, and provides central benefits
10 such as Emergency Food and Protective Services. HRA
11 also works in partnership with DHS to address the
12 current homeless crisis. In an effort to combat
13 homelessness, HRA created the Homelessness Prevention
14 Administration which includes anti-eviction and
15 tenant support legal services and rental assistance
16 programs. HRA's proposed Fiscal 19 Preliminary
17 Budget totals 9.8 billion dollars and reflects
18 significant commitments towards homelessness
19 prevention. Total budgeted spending for homeless
20 prevention in Fiscal 19 that includes legal
21 assistance, rental assistance, and HomeBase is 358
22 million dollars. I commend the rapid rehousing
23 approach that the City has adopted and the continued
24 investment in programs that help New Yorkers avoid
25 homelessness and move people from shelters into

2 permanent housing. HRA has also created landlord
3 incentive programs to encourage them to accept rental
4 assistance vouchers. However, in high-rent
5 municipalities like New York City, we have to be
6 cognizant of the fact that the rental assistance
7 vouchers are chasing a diminishing resource of
8 affordable housing, "affordable housing." The rental
9 allowances need to be reflective of fair market rents
10 around the City for landlords to be incentivized to
11 accept them and for clients to have a successful
12 experience with them. The Council wants to be a
13 partner in streamlining and improving the rental
14 assistance programs so that it can successfully
15 arrest the rate of growth of homelessness in New York
16 City. I look forward to discussing the homelessness
17 prevention programs here today. DHS' proposed Fiscal
18 19 Preliminary Budget totals 1.82 billion dollars,
19 increased by 203 million dollars or 10.3 percent when
20 compared to its fiscal-- to the Fiscal 18 Adopted
21 Budget. DHS modifies its budget throughout the year
22 to accommodate the growing adult and family shelter
23 population. The percent increase between the Adopted
24 Budget and the actual spending related to shelter
25 spending was 40 percent in Fiscal 17 and 12 percent

2 to-date in Fiscal 18. So, while that trend is moving
3 in the right direction, it still represents an
4 increase. While I wholeheartedly support budget
5 modifications as needs arise versus over budgeting at
6 the beginning of the fiscal year, this recalibration
7 at every budget plan reveals that the Administration
8 expects the homeless census to fully stabilize, yet
9 the prevention and rehousing initiatives are yet to
10 yield all of the expected results. Through this
11 budget process I would very much like to open a
12 discussion on what the target of move-out and
13 stabilization is in relation to the investments and
14 what is to be realistically expected for the homeless
15 census in the coming years, thereby adopting a
16 realistic budget for DHS for Fiscal 19 and the out-
17 years. While New York is one of the most prosperous
18 cities in the world, there is a darker side of the
19 coin. There were 1.4 million food-insecure New
20 Yorkers who rely on food pantries and soup kitchens
21 to feed themselves and their families. These are
22 hardworking individuals and families whose SNAP
23 benefits are insufficient. If that wasn't troubling
24 enough, there are now more uncertainties presenting
25 themselves from the current federal administration

surrounding the SNAP program. I'm very concerned that further reductions in Emergency Food Assistance Program, otherwise known as EFAP, will put incredible strains on the City's emergency food assistance system and for hungry New Yorkers who rely on the system. We need additional baseline funding for EFAP to combat hunger instead of one-year additions we have been seeing over the last three fiscal years. During this hearing, I would like to hear how DSS plans to address the aforementioned issues and others that the City faces at this point, and besides the services and programs of these agencies, we will also discuss how their budgets can be made more transparent and clearly structured so that the City's fiscal monitors, including us here at the City Council are able to access more information more easily. Before I welcome the Commissioner, I'd like to thank the Committee Staff for their work on this hearing: Nameera Nushat [sp?], Finance Analyst who has put together a tremendous briefing paper for the committee members; Doheni Sampura [sp?], our Unit Head who has done a fantastic job; Amenta Killawan [sp?], Counsel for the Committee; Robbie Akaseem [sp?], Legal Fellow; and Tanya Cyrus our Policy

2 Analyst for the Committee in preparing for today's
3 hearings. I would now like to welcome the DSS
4 Commissioner, Steve Banks, the Administrator for DSS,
5 Joslyn Carter, the Administrator for HRA, Grace
6 Bonilla, the First Deputy Commissioner for DSS, Molly
7 Murphy, the DSS Chief Program and Planning Officer,
8 Ellen Levine, and Chief of Staff for DSS, Scott
9 French. Thank you, Commissioner. Before you
10 testify, can you all raise your hand, please? Do you
11 agree or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
12 and nothing but the truth and to answer Council
13 Members' questions honestly?

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. You may
16 proceed.

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Good morning. I'd
18 like to thank the Committee and Chair Levin for
19 giving us this opportunity to testify today about the
20 Department of Social Services' Fiscal Year 2019
21 Preliminary Budget and our ongoing efforts to serve
22 low-income New Yorkers. My name is Steven Banks and
23 I am the Commissioner of the New York City Department
24 of Social Services, and in this capacity I oversee
25 the Human Resources Administration, HRA, and the

2 Department of Homeless Services, DHS. And as the
3 Chair indicated, I'm joined by DSS First Deputy
4 Commissioner Molly Murphy, HRA Administrator Grace
5 Bonilla, DHS Administrator Joslyn Carter, DSS Chief
6 Program Planning and Financial Management Officer
7 Ellen Levine, and DSS Chief of Staff Scott French who
8 is providing the PowerPoint presentation today. Just
9 four years ago, I appeared before this Committee at
10 the Executive Budget hearing in 2014. I seem to
11 recall Council Member Lander, my Council Member,
12 taking a picture, and announced a series of major
13 reforms at HRA to implement policy changes that this
14 Committee and many in the audience that day and today
15 had long called for. These changes involved a
16 substantial number of reforms that would enable HRA
17 to address poverty and income inequality more
18 effectively than the agency had been doing during the
19 prior two decades. One of the ways we moved forward
20 with these reforms was to self-fund increased
21 staffing needs by repurposing approximately 550
22 central administrative positions to front-line client
23 service delivery positions. And in April 2016
24 following the 90-day review of homeless services and
25 in March 2017 following the release of the Mayor's

2 Turning the Tide plan, I announced significant
3 managerial and policy changes to reform how the City
4 had approached homelessness during the past four
5 decades; these changes reflect the fundamental
6 reforms that have been needed for a very long time.
7 At the core of these reforms are maximizing a
8 prevention-first focus to avert homelessness whenever
9 possible and transforming the City's approach to the
10 provision of shelter and homeless services. The
11 Preliminary Budget for the Department of Social
12 Services, including both HRA and DHS, includes
13 continued major investments in social services and
14 homeless services programs that have been missing in
15 the past. In this testimony, we will discuss some of
16 the crucial investments and reforms that we've made.
17 As this testimony will highlight, our investments are
18 beginning to show signs of progress, but we know that
19 we have much more work to do to address the problems
20 that built up over many years. At the outset, I want
21 to provide the context in which DSS serves three
22 million clients each year. Poverty and homelessness
23 are often attributed to individual decision-making
24 and individual circumstances, rather than underlying
25 structural inequality. However, structural

2 inequality is a reality for the families and
3 individuals we serve every day. Between 2000 and
4 2014, the median New York City rent increased by 18.3
5 percent in real dollars and household income
6 increased by only 4.8 percent in real dollars.
7 Furthermore, between 1994 and 2012, the city suffered
8 a net loss of about 16 percent of the total rent-
9 regulated housing stock, amounting to approximately
10 150,000 units. Combined, these and other trends
11 meant by 2015 the city had only half the housing it
12 needed for about three million low-income New
13 Yorkers. And while the city's overall rental vacancy
14 rate of 3.5 percent poses a problem for people across
15 all incomes, renters who are only able to afford an
16 apartment costing 800 dollars or less must search in
17 a market with a vacancy rate of a mere 1.15 percent
18 in 2017, down from 1.8 percent in 2014. Roughly
19 three out of every ten of New York City's renters are
20 severely rent-burdened, meaning that they spend more
21 than 50 percent of their income on rent. Many of
22 these individuals and families facing rent burden are
23 also those who cycle in and out of poverty, living
24 just one personal crisis away from homelessness. In
25 fact, an ongoing longitudinal study suggests that

2 nearly half of all New Yorkers lived in poverty at
3 some point between 2012 and 2014, the three-year
4 period studied, unable to manage the experience of
5 this income volatility. As a result of these
6 structural economic factors, today's face of
7 homelessness has changed: 70 percent of today's DHS
8 shelter census now consists of families, of which
9 more than one-third of the families with children
10 have an adult who is working. At the same time,
11 domestic violence is one of the major drivers of
12 homelessness, with some 30 percent of the families
13 with children in the DHS shelter system having a
14 history of domestic violence. Lastly, for nearly a
15 decade our single adult census has grown by
16 approximately 1,000 individuals a year, fueled in
17 recent years by direct discharges from State prisons.
18 Let's begin by focusing on one of our most
19 significant reforms over the past four years, the
20 reduction of counter-productive public benefits case
21 closings and adverse case actions that resulted in
22 unnecessary State administrative fair hearings and
23 subjected the City to a potential 10 million-dollar
24 annual State financial penalty. Now, as a result of
25 a change in State Law in 2016 for which we advocated,

2 HRA no longer imposes durational public benefits
3 sanctions, meaning that clients do not lose essential
4 benefits necessary to keep them in their homes and
5 feed themselves and their children as they did in the
6 past. And administrative costs, as well as staff
7 resources are no longer being diverted, as the number
8 of unnecessary State fair hearings is going down.
9 Consistent with State law, we now afford clients the
10 opportunity to comply with requirements so they can
11 immediately cure a sanction without losing their
12 benefits. By addressing counterproductive policies
13 and procedures that led to punitive actions,
14 including sanctions associated with negative outcomes
15 for clients, such as homelessness, we have
16 transformed the way clients interact with HRA. We
17 also removed duplicative and unnecessary
18 administrative transactions that adversely affect
19 staff workload, as well as clients. As a result of
20 these reforms, State fair hearings have declined by
21 nearly 40 percent, from 396,196 in Fiscal Year 14 to
22 247,253 in Fiscal 17, and the City is no longer
23 subject to a potential 10 million-dollar annual State
24 financial penalty for unnecessary State hearings.
25 Our approach has been straightforward: make it easier

2 for clients to obtain and keep benefits for which
3 they are eligible. As a part of our December 2014
4 State Office of Temporary Assistance and Disability
5 Assistance approved Employment Plan, effective
6 December 31, 2016, HRA eliminated the Work Experience
7 Program or WEP program and replaced it with other
8 more effective work activity initiatives, including
9 additional Job Training slots as well as other
10 education and training programs. These additional JTP
11 positions and wage increases for various JTP
12 positions have been funded at \$12 million in FY18.
13 Following a procurement process that included
14 extensive consultation with stakeholders, in April
15 2017, HRA launched a comprehensive new approach to
16 help approximately 70,000 New Yorkers on Cash
17 Assistance who are able to work find the right
18 opportunities that match their skills, needs, and
19 career goals. These clients on our caseload who are
20 able to work include approximately 24,000 clients who
21 are already working, but do not earn enough to move
22 out of poverty and off our caseload. Our new
23 approach leaves behind the one-size-fits-all of the
24 past to offer services that take into consideration
25 the individual needs of clients, while providing

2 specialized services for youth and other groups with
3 more specific needs. The new approach offers more
4 meaningful opportunities to clients, including
5 education and training as now permitted under federal
6 and state law. These programs began in April 2017
7 and we are seeing promising results in less than a
8 year. These include: Clients have enrolled in
9 Alternative Engagement, which are opportunities for
10 clients to access education and training programs
11 external to HRA and its contracted providers with
12 organizations such as BronxWorks, Central Brooklyn
13 Economic Development Corporation, Per Scholas,
14 Brooklyn Education Opportunity Center, St. Nick's
15 Alliance, and Agudath Israel. Financial counseling
16 has been a very successful tool for engaging
17 YouthPathways clients who are our clients under the
18 age of 24. To date, 1,232 YouthPathways client
19 participants have engaged in financial counseling
20 services, and already 519 outcomes have been achieved
21 relating to opening safe bank accounts, increasing
22 credit scores, reducing debt, increasing savings, and
23 taking financial steps towards enrollment in a
24 training/education program. 3,914 clients have
25 enrolled in education and training offered directly

2 by our contracted providers. In FY18, we were funded
3 at 278 million dollars, \$103 million tax levy, for
4 employment and related support services such as
5 transportation, and the Preliminary Budget continues
6 these investments. Another area of significant
7 reform and investment is enhancing services for
8 clients with disabilities. HRA's Customized
9 Assistance Services provide both direct and
10 contractual clinically-oriented services and
11 expertise in the areas of health, mental health,
12 substance use, and rehabilitation for clients served
13 through HRA's programs. The program is budgeted at
14 96 million dollars annually. In order to improve our
15 services for clients with disabilities, we settled
16 the Lovely H. class action that was filed by the
17 Legal Aid Society in 2005. Working with an expert
18 consultant, HRA developed and is now using tools to
19 assess whether clients need reasonable accommodations
20 as the result of physical and/or mental health
21 limitations or other impairments. HRA then provides
22 the appropriate accommodations, including referrals
23 to HRA's Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment,
24 Rehabilitation and Employment program and other
25 services designed to assess and meet the needs of

2 clients with disabilities. For example, WeCARE has
3 had success in helping New Yorkers with disabilities
4 achieve their personal highest level of independence
5 through obtaining and retaining employment or
6 securing federal disability benefits. So far in this
7 fiscal year, there have been increases in key service
8 areas: a 12 percent increase in federal disability
9 awards for clients and an 8.4 percent increase in the
10 number of clients with disabilities placed in
11 employment. In January of 2012, this Committee held
12 a hearing on long lines and overcrowding at HRA Job
13 Centers and SNAP Centers and reported long wait times
14 at our centers. Beginning in 2014, we invested in
15 significant reforms to begin to address this problem.
16 As a result of SNAP in-center foot traffic has
17 declined 32 percent since 2014. The percent of SNAP
18 applications submitted online increased from 23
19 percent in 2013 to 78 percent in 2018 and the percent
20 of SNAP application interviews conducted by phone
21 increased from 29 percent in 2013 to 83 percent in
22 2018. In December 2017, the citywide average wait
23 time was 53 minutes for Job Centers and 32 minutes
24 for SNAP Centers. We built on the initial technology
25 allocations of the prior Administration with two

2 primary goals for our continued modernization
3 efforts: improve the client experience and optimize
4 operational efficiency. By removing real barriers to
5 access and creating a self-directed service model for
6 clients, we now permit applicants and clients to
7 conduct a broad range of transactions with the Agency
8 without the burden of having to physically come to an
9 HRA location. And over time these investments are
10 helping to reduce our physical footprint and save on
11 expensive lease costs while making it easier for
12 clients to apply for and maintain their benefits.
13 Our investment in benefits reengineering through FY17
14 was 159.2 million dollars. The implementation of
15 ACCESS HRA is the cornerstone of our modernization
16 efforts. For a full summary of ACCESS HRA
17 improvements, you can review our testimony at
18 January's Hunger Hearing, but here are a few key
19 highlights: As of February 2018 there were more than
20 1 million ACCESS HRA online accounts for SNAP/food
21 stamps households. We now receive over 24,000 online
22 applications each month and continue to implement on-
23 demand interviews for SNAP/food stamps applicants and
24 clients. Today, all SNAP recertification eligibility
25 interviews can be conducted at a client's convenience

by phone, rather than in a rigid four-hour window under the old system, or clients can choose to come into a center and wait for an in-person interview. In October 2015, before the implementation of the on-demand call center, only 52 percent of the completed SNAP recertification interviews were conducted via telephone. We now have 76 percent of the interviews held by phone, a 46 percent increase. On-demand interviews for SNAP recertifications have been fully in place for more than a year and now on-demand interviews for new SNAP applicants are being phased in. Following our implementation of this service for Brooklyn clients last year, we have just announced an expansion that enables new Manhattan and Staten Island SNAP applicants to complete their eligibility interviews using on-demand services. The Bronx and Queens will be next; we anticipate having these services fully available to our clients in these boroughs by the end of the calendar year. We have also rolled out the HRA Mobile App, a self-service mobile app to give clients the ability to use their mobile device to better manage their cases by having immediate access to case details and the ability to submit required documents from their smartphones.

Since the application's launch in March 2017 clients have uploaded more than two million images. In addition, we've modernized our centers by providing on-site self-services. For clients who prefer to access our services inside one of our centers, we now have a suite of self-service tools, which include self-service check-in kiosks and PC Banks to utilize ACCESS HRA and self-service scanning of documents directly in our centers. In sum, by providing an enhanced client experience, these lower-touch service models free up our eligibility workers' time so they can focus on those clients who need more support and assistance. In partnership with the Speaker of this Council, prior to his assuming this new office, we've made two major reforms to expand services for clients with HIV/AIDS. First, in the State's Fiscal Year 2014-15 budget, we successfully advocated for a 30 percent rent cap to be applied for HASA clients and then implemented this critical policy change expeditiously based on OTDA eligibility instructions, with the City covering 50 percent of the rental assistance costs. Second, on August 29, 2016, we expanded the medical eligibility criteria for the HASA program to permit all financially-eligible New

2 York City residents with HIV to seek and obtain HASA
3 services so clients with HIV do not have to wait
4 until they have AIDS to get help from us. New York
5 City is implementing this program with only 29
6 percent reimbursement from the State. As of January
7 2018, HASA provides services for 33,772 cases, which
8 include 34,354 clients and 10,289 associated case
9 members on those cases, 3,822 of these cases were
10 newly eligible pursuant to our HASA for All
11 expansion. As part of our implementation of this
12 HASA for All initiative, we are working with Housing
13 Works to implement and evaluate a series of pilot
14 programs to help us modernize our client services in
15 HASA. The FY19 Jan Plan allocates \$185 million, \$90
16 million tax levy, for HIV/AIDS housing and support
17 services this year. Examples of other key reforms
18 and investments for our social services programs
19 include: Adding 239 emergency beds and 54
20 transitional units to our domestic violence shelter
21 system, with more on the way so that we can increase
22 our capacity to help 13,300 children and adults a
23 year, an approximately 50 percent increase over the
24 prior level of 8,800 individuals served annually.
25 This is the first increase in domestic violence

shelter capacity since 2010. Participating as a member of the Food Collaborative in the first evaluations of food distribution, capacity, and food equity to identify gaps and address ongoing Emergency Food Assistance Program, EFAP, needs in the FY19 budget. Increasing baseline funding for legal assistance for immigrants from seven million dollars in FY13 to 29.7 million dollars in FY18, which enabled immigrant New Yorkers to receive legal aid in approximately 15,000 cases in FY17, as a result of the four-fold increase in the City's overall commitment to immigration legal assistance programs since FY13. Operating the IDNYC program, which as of December 2017, issued more than 1.2 million cards. One year ago, we announced our Turning the Tide plan to transform the City's approach to providing shelter that had been in place for nearly four decades. Our plan puts people and communities first. It does this by ending the use of decades-old stopgap measures, like cluster shelter sites and commercial hotel rooms, and instead opening a smaller number of new borough-based shelters to help families and individuals stay connected to the anchors of life such as schools, jobs, health care, families and

2 houses of worship, as they get back on their feet.

3 As the lawyer who sued four Mayors and five Governors

4 to enforce the right to shelter under our State

5 Constitution, I understand the legal, and, yes, the

6 moral responsibility we have toward our neighbors who

7 do not have homes. I understand the basic human pain

8 our neighbors who do not-- our basic human pain New

9 Yorkers feel when we see someone living on the

10 street. So does Mayor de Blasio. After all, he knew

11 my résumé when he hired me. We stand by our moral

12 and legal obligation to provide shelter to New

13 Yorkers experiencing homelessness on any given night

14 and keep people off the streets, and we won't let

15 them down. Over the past year, we have been

16 implementing our transformation plan through

17 significant new investments. The plan has four core

18 pillars: one: preventing homelessness in the first

19 place whenever we can; two: bringing people in from

20 the streets 24/7; three: rehousing people who become

21 homeless; and four: transforming the haphazard

22 approach to providing shelter and services that has

23 been used over the past nearly four decades. The

24 average monthly census for DHS shelters increased 115

25 percent from 1994 into 2014, rising from 23,868 men,

2 women, and children in January 1994, to 31,009 in
3 January 2002, and reaching 51,470 in January 2014.
4 Without the initiatives we've been implementing, the
5 current DHS census would be in excess of 71,000
6 instead of at the 60,000 level where it is today. In
7 fact, a recent Furman Center study found that the
8 year-over-year shelter census growth from calendar
9 year 15 to calendar year 16 was the lowest increase
10 since 2011, the year the Advantage rental assistance
11 program ended, leading to a 38-percent increase in
12 homelessness in three years. The DHS shelter census
13 for 2017 remained roughly flat compared to 2016.
14 This is the first time in more than a decade that the
15 DHS census has remained level. And during the first
16 four months of Fiscal 2018 compared with the same
17 period in the prior year, the number of families with
18 children entering the DHS shelter system declined
19 15.1 percent and adult family entrants declined by
20 10.8 percent. We know that our investments and
21 efforts are beginning to work, but we also know that
22 we have more work to do. Prevention first: Our first
23 priority is stopping homelessness in the first place.
24 We have implemented three key prevention initiatives
25 to do this: an expansion of the network of Homebase

2 neighborhood-based prevention offices in all five
3 boroughs, increased access to rent arrears grants,
4 and universal access to counsel in Housing Court to
5 prevent evictions. The Homebase program remains at
6 the center of New York City's homeless prevention
7 efforts. Homebase's community-based prevention
8 programs has expanded to ensure that Homebase is the
9 first point of entry for those at risk of
10 homelessness and that people can be served in their
11 home boroughs. We expanded Homebase from 11
12 providers across the City to 16 operating at 23
13 locations and we will be expanding to 25 locations by
14 the end of FY18, more than doubling the program's
15 funding. In FY18, we increased funding to include
16 community-based Aftercare and other services, for a
17 total budget of \$59 million. At our Homebase
18 locations, New Yorkers are assessed to determine the
19 prevention and diversion tools for which they are
20 eligible, including: onsite processing and triage for
21 public assistance and rental assistance, landlord and
22 family mediation, educational advancement,
23 employment, and financial literacy services. Through
24 January of FY18, the Homebase program enrolled 12,865
25 families with children, 621 adult families, and 3,296

2 single adults. Compared to the previous two complete
3 fiscal years, enrollments were 1.2 percent higher for
4 families with children, 28.7 percent higher for adult
5 families, and 30.4 percent higher for single adults.
6 Since 2014, we have provided an increased level of
7 emergency rent arrears assistance, both to cover the
8 increasing costs of rent for individual clients as
9 well as serving more people so that more New Yorkers
10 are able to stay in their homes. To date, this
11 Administration has provided emergency one-time rent
12 arrears assistance to 217,000 households from FY14
13 through FY17. The annual FY17 expenditures for this
14 assistance program were \$210 million. We also made
15 the payment process more efficient and quicker by
16 replacing the old system of generating checks at each
17 individual HRA Job Center with a centralized rent
18 arrears processing unit. Moreover, we have
19 implemented an electronic benefits payment system for
20 Housing Authority rent arrears payments and we are
21 developing a similar payment system for private
22 landlords. Using ACCESS HRA, clients can confirm
23 that the rent was paid to their landlords, a reform
24 now codified in State law. We've also exponentially
25 increased access to counsel in Housing Court, first

2 through a series of pilot initiatives in all five
3 boroughs and now through implementation of the
4 universal access to counsel local law passed by
5 Council and signed by the Mayor. We increased
6 funding for legal assistance for tenants facing
7 eviction and harassment from \$6 million in FY13 to
8 over \$77 million in FY18, a more than twelvefold
9 increase, and \$93 million has been allocated for
10 FY19. When the universal access to counsel law is
11 implemented fully in five years, the annual funding
12 will be \$155 million to handle a projected 125,000
13 cases that will benefit 400,000 New Yorkers each
14 year. The legal services programs are leveling the
15 playing field for tenants in Housing Court across the
16 five boroughs. So far, HRA's tenant legal services
17 programs have successfully contributed to an increase
18 in legal representation for tenants facing eviction
19 in Housing Court from one percent of tenants
20 represented in court in 2013 to 27 percent in 2016,
21 while 99 percent of landlords had legal
22 representation. HRA's tenant legal services programs
23 have provided more than 180,000 New Yorkers with
24 legal services since 2014. The impact of these
25 expanded prevention efforts is already being felt by

2 New Yorkers who are receiving these benefits and
3 services. Residential evictions by marshals declined
4 27 percent since 2013, when there were nearly 29,000
5 evictions annually. The number of evictions in 2017
6 was 21,074 compared to 22,089 in FY 16. That means
7 evictions decreased five percent in 2017 alone,
8 representing a total of 1,015 households and an
9 estimated 3,000 New Yorkers across all five boroughs
10 who were able to remain in their homes. Over the
11 last four years, an estimated 70,000 people have
12 remained in their homes as a result of the 27 percent
13 decrease in evictions. Addressing street
14 homelessness, bringing people inside: Through
15 increased investments and program reforms, since the
16 launch of HOME-STAT in the spring of 2016, the City
17 has helped 1,480 people come in from the streets into
18 transitional programs or permanent housing and
19 provided assistance so that they have remained off
20 the streets. Our HOME-STAT, Homeless Outreach and
21 Mobile Engagement Street Action Teams, program
22 encapsulates all of New York City's street homeless
23 outreach efforts. HOME-STAT is the nation's most
24 comprehensive outreach program, which includes
25 24/7/365 citywide outreach efforts, through which

2 hundreds of highly-trained not-for-profit outreach
3 staff, including licensed social workers, proactively
4 canvas the streets to engage homeless New Yorkers.

5 Each borough has a dedicated provider: the Manhattan
6 Outreach Consortium, led by CUCS in partnership with
7 Goddard-Riverside and Breaking Ground, in Manhattan;
8 Breaking Ground in Brooklyn and Queens; BronxWorks in
9 the Bronx; Project Hospitality on Staten Island;
10 Bowery Residents' Committee, BRC, in the subways.

11 These providers offer services and assistance, and
12 work daily to build relationships and gain the trust
13 of individuals with the goal of addressing the
14 underlying issues that may have caused or contributed
15 to their street homelessness, in order to ultimately
16 help these individuals transition off the streets.

17 Since 2015, through our new investments, we've
18 doubled and are now tripling to more than 1,700 the
19 number of low-threshold beds to better serve our
20 street homeless population, up from the roughly 600
21 beds that existed at the beginning of this
22 Administration. We've also more than doubled the
23 number of outreach staff canvassing the streets and
24 working to engage New Yorkers who are experiencing
25 street homelessness from 191 in 2014 to nearly 400

2 outreach staff today. Overall we have more than
3 doubled the City's investment in street homeless
4 programs, increasing by more than \$53 million, 119
5 percent, from \$44.6 million in FY14 to \$97.6 million
6 in FY18. Through this investment, we've built the
7 City's first-ever by-name list of individuals known
8 to be homeless and residing on the streets to improve
9 delivery of services, and this new approach is now
10 codified in local law. Through this by-name list
11 initiative, outreach teams now know more than 2,000
12 individuals by name who are confirmed to be homeless
13 and living on the streets and we're actively engaging
14 more than 1,500 individuals encountered on the
15 streets to evaluate their living situations and
16 determine whether they are homeless and whether
17 specific supports are needed. The third pillar, the
18 third core of our program is rehousing. The DHS
19 Commissioner in 2011 warned that with the end of the
20 Advantage program the result would be the need for 70
21 new shelters, as the census of Families with Children
22 was anticipated to increase by 13,000 people. What
23 we know today is that by 2014 after the City and
24 State ended the Advantage rental assistance program,
25 which had offered short-term subsidies for people in

2 shelters if they took part in job training, the
3 shelter population increased by 38 percent, or by
4 approximately 14,000 people. To fill the gap left by
5 the elimination of the City's rental assistance
6 program and other rehousing programs from 2011 to
7 2014, we created and implemented a variety of rental
8 assistance programs and developed associated
9 incentives in order to address the fears of landlords
10 who were concerned that the new rental assistance
11 programs could be eliminated in the future as
12 Advantage was. We also formed a Source of Income
13 Discrimination Unit at HRA to address the problem of
14 individuals and families being discriminated against
15 because of the source of income of their rental
16 assistance. So far the unit has responded to
17 referrals of possible Source of Income
18 discrimination, including successful interventions
19 that reversed landlord reversals-- landlord refusals
20 to accept security vouchers from our clients;
21 reversed a management company's decision to reject
22 electronic rental payments mandated by the Tenant
23 Based Rental Assistance program; reversed a co-op
24 board's decision to deny a sublet to a voucher
25 holder; and reversed a management company's refusal

2 to rent to a HASA program client. This
3 Administration also restored Section 8 and New York
4 City Housing Authority priorities that had been
5 eliminated prior to 2014. As a result of our
6 restoration of rental assistance and rehousing
7 programs, over 81,124 children and adults have moved
8 out of, or averted entry into, shelter through
9 December 2017. In FY18, the budget for rental
10 assistance is \$165 million, and in FY17 our
11 expenditures were \$138 million. We have also made
12 the single largest municipal commitment to Supportive
13 Housing by announcing the creation of 15,000 units
14 over 15 years in NYC 15/15. From decades of
15 research, we know that this plan will benefit New
16 Yorkers in need, including homeless veterans,
17 domestic violence survivors, and street homeless
18 individuals. This cost-effective approach to deliver
19 stable and permanent housing to New Yorkers
20 struggling with mental illness, homelessness, and
21 substance use is worth the investment. Supportive
22 Housing is a proven model and reduces our reliance on
23 homeless shelters, hospitals, mental health
24 institutions, and incarceration. Since the beginning
25 of this Administration, HPD's Housing New York Plan

2 has funded 3,017 supportive units by leveraging a
3 variety of City, State, and Federal funding sources
4 including NYC 15/15. In less than two years, since
5 the release of the first NYC 15/15 supportive housing
6 RFP in August 2016, HRA, using NYC 15/15 resources,
7 has made 1,426 awards to providers, 406 of which are
8 congregate units that have closed on financing and
9 are included in the 3,017 units in the HPD production
10 pipeline. And to date, New York City has moved or is
11 in the process of moving 488 clients into supportive
12 housing, funded by the Mayor's NYC 15/15 plan. The
13 last and fourth pillar: Transforming the approach to
14 providing shelter and services. We have committed to
15 getting out of 360 cluster shelter and commercial
16 hotel sites in order to reduce our overall DHS
17 shelter system footprint by 45 percent across the
18 city, and also committed to opening 90 new borough-
19 based shelters across all five boroughs. To date,
20 we've already gotten out of 100 locations bringing
21 our shelter footprint from the 647 buildings we
22 reported in the Turning the Tide plan a year ago to
23 our current use of 547 buildings, a 16 percent
24 reduction of our footprint in one year. Our new
25 approach will allow us to maintain a vacancy rate to

2 ensure the flexibility necessary to give homeless New
3 Yorkers, who come from every community across the
4 five boroughs, the opportunity to be sheltered in
5 their home boroughs, as close as possible to their
6 support networks and anchors of life, including
7 schools, jobs, health care, families, houses of
8 worship, and the communities they called home, in
9 order to stabilize their lives and return to living
10 in the community as quickly as possible. We've
11 committed to a notification process that provides a
12 minimum notice of 30-days to elected officials and
13 community leaders before opening a new permanent
14 shelter. And to date, with the 17 shelters we've
15 notified on since the announcement of our plan a year
16 ago, we've averaged 65 days' notice to communities.
17 We have already opened 11 of those 17 sites and they
18 include a shelter for women with special needs, the
19 City's first dedicated site for homeless seniors, and
20 DHS's first dedicated site for LGBTQ young people,
21 all thanks to New Yorkers' fundamental compassion and
22 understanding. Since January 2016, when we were
23 using a high point of 3,600 cluster units citywide,
24 we have closed more than 1,500 cluster units,
25 including transitioning over 300 cluster units to

state-certified shelters. This represents a more-than 42 percent reduction citywide in this 18-year old cluster shelter program. And we recently announced our plans to transition another 800 cluster units into permanent affordable housing using eminent domain if necessary, which covers more than a third of the remaining cluster units. As we announced when we released the plan last year, we have prioritized ending the cluster program, and we are on pace to end the use of cluster units as shelter by our 2021 deadline. Consistent with our legal and moral obligation to provide shelter every night to families and individuals who are homeless, including during the extreme cold weather this winter, we have increased our use of commercial hotel locations to meet immediate nightly capacity needs, with these locations serving as a bridge while we bring new borough-based shelters online. The City's periodic use of commercial hotel locations is not new, in fact, it dates back off and on to the 1960s. While we are deeply committed to the goal of eliminating this use, the hard truth is that our transformation of the shelter system will take time. We anticipate that it will take five to seven years for our plan to

2 be fully implemented, as the new borough-based
3 shelters are developed and opened and the use of
4 commercial hotels is then fully phased out. Having
5 litigated about hotel conditions and the need for
6 client services for decades at the Legal Aid Society,
7 I agree that waking up in a hotel, far from home,
8 without wraparound social service support, is not the
9 way forward. We know our homeless neighbors deserve
10 better. That's why, while we are using hotels in
11 emergency situations during the phase-out period, we
12 are improving that experience for homeless New
13 Yorkers and getting a better deal for taxpayers. In
14 the past, the City rented most of these hotel rooms
15 on a per-day basis, which made controlling costs and
16 providing services and security challenging. To
17 offer better access to social services and security
18 for these families and individuals and keep costs
19 down, we initiated a Request for Proposal competitive
20 bidding process to place all of the hotel rooms we
21 are using under contract. Earlier this month, the
22 City's Budget Director Melanie Hartzog provided the
23 Council staff with a monthly snapshot of City funding
24 for homeless New Yorkers. The monthly spending is
25 \$32 million for commercial hotels, \$2 million for the

2 remaining clusters, and \$96 million for actual
3 shelters. We monitor the spending and costs of
4 sheltering our homeless neighbors on a monthly basis.
5 And to control costs more effectively, the City
6 entered into 364 million dollars in annual contracts
7 to shelter homeless New Yorkers in hotels on an
8 emergency basis over the next three years. Actual
9 spending will be based on the fluctuating emergency
10 needs of the families and individuals who turn to us
11 for help, including weather conditions, the different
12 demographics of households, level of services and
13 security required, and types of shelter settings
14 available, among others. Moving to competitively bid
15 contracts allows us to both hold contractors
16 accountable and fulfill our legal obligations to
17 provide shelter on any given night. This is a
18 significant commitment of resources, but it's a
19 better deal for both homeless New Yorkers and for New
20 York taxpayers than renting rooms on a per-night
21 basis. We're making fewer dollars go farther and
22 getting more guarantees on services, with better
23 mechanisms for locking in room rental rates and
24 ensuring quality control. Under these contracts, the
25 average nightly rate for a hotel room has been 174

2 dollars, and no room costs more than 250 dollars on
3 any given night. The quality of client services at
4 these sites has been enhanced, and we will be able to
5 hold service providers accountable for delivering the
6 same types of social services found at contracted
7 shelter sites, including case management, assistance
8 with public benefits, help finding permanent housing,
9 and job training and counseling. It is true that
10 even under contract, rates may sometimes exceed what
11 you or I might find online for a night or two, and
12 that's because we're providing more than a roof over
13 people's heads. We require accommodations for
14 caseworkers, microwaves, refrigerators, bedding, and
15 24/7 security to ensure we are giving New Yorkers
16 experiencing homelessness a safe, secure, and
17 supportive environment, and we require that our
18 providers have on-site social services so that
19 clients can receive individualized assessments and
20 referrals to meet their needs through their
21 Independent Living Plans. As we work to phase out
22 the use of cluster apartments first, followed by
23 commercial hotels, and revamp the shelter system with
24 our new borough-based approach, we are asking
25 communities to come forward and help us identify

sites for new shelters. It's better for our homeless neighbors and it's better for taxpayers, and we could save the City a total of 100 million dollars per year if we can utilize only shelters and end the practice of using hotels. At the beginning of the 90-day review in 2016, there were three urgent problems that we needed to address: the cumulative impact of years of underinvestment in shelter maintenance, security, and client services. Significant progress has been made to raise the bar for clients in each of these areas. First, we have conducted more than 34,000 shelter inspections in 2016 and 2017, thanks to the work of the Shelter Repair Squad, an aggressive multi-agency task force launched in 2015 to systematically identify and address shelter conditions that had been previously left unaddressed for decades. The number of outstanding violations within traditional shelters has dropped 84 percent since January 2016, with many of the remaining repairs involving capital projects. Second, the NYPD now oversees and manages shelter security. We have partnered with the NYPD to implement an NYPD Management Team at DHS overseeing shelter security citywide, including providing 200 hours of enhanced

2 training developed by the NYPD to all new and in-
3 service DHS Peace Officers, and implementing a new
4 DHS Peace Officers tactical training facility at the
5 Bedford Atlantic Men's Assessment Shelter, all while
6 doubling previous investments in DHS shelter
7 security, with a total annual security budget of \$240
8 million for fiscal years 2017 and 2018. Third, we
9 dedicated an unprecedented amount of funding to
10 reform the rates not-for-profit social service
11 providers' receive to ensure our not-for-profit
12 partners are appropriately funded to deliver the
13 services our homeless clients rely on as they get
14 back on their feet. In 2016, during the 90-day
15 review, we announced we would rationalize payment
16 rates for shelter providers, through a model budget
17 exercise to reform the rates providers had been paid
18 for years. Through this process we are addressing
19 the need for contracted shelter programs to be funded
20 to provide consistent and high quality services and
21 maintain their facilities in accordance with City and
22 State standards for operations. DHS is making a 236
23 million dollar investment in our not-for-profit
24 sector which will result in better facilities and
25 services for our clients. This investment is in

2 addition to the \$163 million we spend annually for
3 health and mental health services. We spent this
4 year working with providers in focus groups to
5 develop the model budgets, which we are now in the
6 process of implementing and which will result in less
7 variability across providers. This investment
8 included rationalizing caseload ratios, resources for
9 specialized services and the facilitation of housing
10 placement, real-time maintenance and repairs,
11 security and funding for health and safety standards,
12 and support staff. Overall, one-third of DHS's
13 increased shelter budget is largely attributable to
14 the social services, maintenance, and security
15 enhancements that we have put in place to address
16 years of underinvestment. The last few slides in our
17 power point present a number of additional reforms we
18 implemented over the last year, some of which we have
19 already discussed at prior hearings. We have
20 accomplished a great deal over the past year, and we
21 will continue with our reform initiatives during the
22 coming year because we know that much more needs to
23 be done. Thank you again for this opportunity to
24 testify about our budget and our programs, and I
25 welcome your questions.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
3 Commissioner. So, I want to acknowledge Council
4 Members who are here: Council Member Adrienne Adams
5 who was the first one here, I believe. Thank you,
6 Council Member Adams. Council Member Diana Ayala, cm
7 Brad Lander, Council Member Barry Grodenchik, Council
8 Member Antonio Reynoso, Council Member Mark Treyger,
9 Council Member Mark Gjonaj, and Council Member Helen
10 Rosenthal. And I will turn it over to my colleagues
11 for questions in a moment. I have a few questions
12 Commissioner that I would like to ask first.

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, the first
15 question I want to ask is around-- and Doheni Sampura
16 [sp?], our Unit Head at the Finance Division is
17 bringing up a chart here. So, this was-- the chart
18 up there was identified by our Finance team from
19 Crystal [sp?] which was the software that they've
20 been able to use to get rental assistance program
21 data from fiscal years 16 to the Prelim. Plan here in
22 19, and this was information that we were not able to
23 get from the Administration, so we had to get it
24 ourselves. And so that's the first question, which
25 is-- I think moving forward we've experienced some

2 frustration and our Finance team has experienced some
3 frustration and being able to get data and
4 information from the Administration in a reasonable
5 timeframe when we request certain information. So, I
6 think before we go down the road of other questions,
7 can we get a commitment from the Administration, from
8 DSS, that when we're asking questions that are
9 relevant to this committee and relevant to our
10 oversight here at the Council, that we're able to get
11 that information in a timely fashion. So, say, when
12 request is made no more than two weeks' time?

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: As a topline matter,
14 of course you have that commitment. I want to say,
15 however, as we're running a relatively large program
16 over the last couple of years, sometimes information
17 that may seem easily available is more complicated to
18 produce, but we will work with you. We want to get
19 you the information. I have found over my four years
20 in these positions, four years in one, two years in
21 the other, that it's been a good partnership with the
22 committee, and it's been helpful to provide you with
23 information, and we'll be happy to do that to the
24 best of our abilities.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I mean, from,
3 you know, just from the perspective of the Council
4 there's been some significant frustration. I think
5 there's times when we've requested information and
6 that information hasn't been forthcoming. So, if we
7 could kind of redouble our efforts and make sure that
8 when those requests go in, that if it's not done
9 within say two weeks that there's some follow-up from
10 the Administration as to maybe why that is it, or
11 identifying, so if there's a snag at say OMB or OMB's
12 not providing the information to DSS staff, that
13 there's a communication, chain of communication that
14 goes back to us to say specifically why information
15 is not forthcoming.

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I certainly will
17 keep the lines of communication open, and OMB and the
18 Agency are certainly on the same page so there's no
19 issues about the information coming from one place or
20 the other. But just to give an example, since the
21 question is out there, Medicaid is a good example of
22 the challenges that occur in providing information.
23 SO, Medicaid is a city/state program in which under
24 state law there was a projection that the state would
25 take over operations. The Council, the

2 Administration had some concerns about how that would
3 work, but it has not proceeded as on the pace for a
4 number of understandable reasons that was originally
5 projected, and so we find ourselves in a world in
6 which essentially half the caseload we're managing
7 directly, the other half of the caseload is coming
8 directly to the state. So, there are sometimes
9 challenges to provide information, but I fully
10 understand your question, and we will provide you
11 with information when we have such challenges.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And more specifically,
13 can we get a commitment that whatever-- if we're
14 requesting, and once we do receive data that it's in
15 a machine-readable format, so in other words, not in
16 a PDF, but in an Excel file so that we can actually
17 do analysis on our own?

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We'll certainly work
19 with our team. You have a confirmed luddite [sic]
20 testifying before you, so you're going to need to
21 deal with people whom are expert in the right
22 formats.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, so we just want
24 it in like an Excel document and not a PDF that we
25 can't do an analysis on.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: As I said, I
3 conceptually understand what you're describing, but
4 we do need to have technical people work with your
5 technical people.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. If we do get
7 PDF's that are not readable, I'll be taking out
8 directly with you or with the administrator.

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We have use of a
10 cell phone, and I'm always available to talk.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Moving on to
12 the chart that's up. What our finance team was able
13 to identify was, as you can see in the red columns,
14 the unspent funds allocated both at adopted and
15 modified to the rental assistance programs from FY 16
16 to today. So what we saw-- if you first could give
17 a-- help us understand why we saw in 16 and 17 the
18 unspent funds of 25.8 million dollars in 16, 22.9
19 million dollars in 17. As you can see, adopted,
20 modified, and then actual spending. So the adopted
21 was at budget adoption. Modified was throughout the
22 course of the year. Actual spending was then the
23 actual amount drawn down through the programs in that
24 fiscal year.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think we're--
3 actually, this is a good example. It's something we
4 should sit down staff/staff and look at. You have me
5 on the record, and let me give some reactions I have
6 to this. I haven't seen this document, so you're
7 getting my direct reactions to it. There are
8 different components that may be at work here. I
9 don't know to what extent you're pulling amounts that
10 are paid to landlords as monthly rent versus amounts
11 that are paid to landlords for incentives, and
12 whether or not as much incentives had to be issued as
13 we projected in order to secure the number of
14 apartments. I don't know whether or not these numbers
15 include other aspects of how we operate the program.
16 Increases sometimes are related to-- from year to
17 year related not to new move-outs, but to the fact
18 that the existing tenants are going to have new
19 obligations to pay rent as we go forward. I don't
20 know whether or not all this information is pulled
21 from simply the rental assistance programs, whether
22 or not there's any FEPS programs involved in here.
23 Some of it could be affected by when actual move-outs
24 occur. I think it's going to be a good subject for
25 staff review, but I want to go back overall with

2 allocated. We had actual spending last year of
3 rental assistance of 138 million, and we're
4 projecting 165 million this year, 175 million next
5 year, and that's reflective of sequencing when people
6 actually are projected-- will move out during the
7 course of the year in terms of the experience that
8 we've had. And if we could get more people to move
9 out, we certainly will work with more people to move
10 out, but I want to caution that I'm not sure that
11 these numbers directly align to our actual
12 expenditures, and have actually budgeted, but this is
13 a fair conversation for us to work through with you
14 offline, and I'm sure it's come up at the Executive
15 Budget if there are still questions remaining.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there a reason why
17 you would see a 96.9 million dollar under-- unspent
18 in FY18 to date?

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It could simply be--
20 it could simply be the timing of when matters are
21 posted or recorded. I don't know. We're going to
22 have to have the staff look at it together, but
23 we're--

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] We drew
25 this down-- Nameera [sp?] drew this down on the 23rd

2 of March of 2018, so that would be three-quarters of
3 the way through the year.

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: If it was a straight
5 application, it would indicate that we're spending
6 less money this year than we were spending last year,
7 and we have tenants in place who we're paying to.
8 So, there must be some disconnect on how information
9 tracks to what we're actually spending. Yeah, it's
10 only seven months, I think, is what you've got here.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, we also have, as
12 of today, we got information that the total year-to-
13 date move-outs using any of the voucher programs is
14 1,999 for FY18. That's-- this was provided from you
15 all today to our Finance staff.

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Let me look at what
17 you're referring.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because that would be
19 in comparison if you were to-- we have, you know, the
20 data on previous fiscal year move-outs and--

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Yeah, I
22 don't-- I'm not sure how you're getting those
23 numbers, because in the CITYFEPS program alone there
24 have been 1,719 move-outs involving 5,326 people, and
25 I could-- you know, we can go through program by

2 program. You know, there's been-- taking away NYCHA,
3 the total amount of rental assistance that's been
4 used has enabled us to move out roughly 5,000
5 households through various forms of rental
6 assistance. I'm just doing that with my eyeballs.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Year to date?

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'm doing that by
9 eyeball, so if I'm off a couple of numbers, I want an
10 opportunity to correct my testimony, but I'm simply
11 looking at--

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Fiscal--
13 this is Fiscal 18 year-to-date?

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yeah, yeah, through
15 December. I have through December. I don't have
16 through February.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, we'll take this
18 up later, but we received an email from HRA this
19 morning showing 1,999.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'm not sure how
21 that number was derived or how that happened, but I
22 know that the information that I'm looking at in
23 front of me is-- doesn't reflect that.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, if we-- so we
3 have also from HRA the number of move-outs from FY15,
4 16, and 17.

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: This includes-- I
7 don't believe it includes FEPS, but it includes
8 CITYFEPS. So it's the same programs that are listed
9 here, and what we have seen since FY15, 16, and 17 is
10 just in terms of households, I'll say households
11 here, in FY15 total move-outs, 5,217. In FY16,
12 8,609, and then in FY17 it dropped from 8,609 to
13 4,037. Is that not correct?

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yeah, I'm looking at--

15 -

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We're looking at the
17 same chart?

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yeah, I don't get
19 the same conclusion that you get. Our entire move-
20 outs in 15 from all sources, both rental assistance
21 and rehousing programs,--

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing]
23 Including NYCHA.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: including NYCHA is
25 5,356 households, 16,356 people.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That's close to what
3 we have.

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay. In FY16, 8,770
5 households, 24,062 people.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Also close to what we
7 have.

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: And 17, 9,934
9 households, 25,793 people.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, we have about
11 half of that.

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thus far in FY18,
13 5,708 households, 14,913 people. The total
14 households--

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] So, just
16 I want to stop you there, Commissioner.

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yep.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because I just-- so
19 in FY17 and FY18, our numbers show about half of what
20 your numbers are showing. Now, are numbers in 15 and
21 16 are, you know, margin of error, but about 50
22 percent less than in our 17 and 18 numbers. That's,
23 obviously, a wide discrepancy.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I don't know if this
25 is the reason why we have the discretion--

2 discrepancy, which is at various hearings I 've been
3 providing year-to-date numbers, and does that result
4 in you having different numbers for different parts
5 of the year, I don't know, but these are the numbers.
6 I'm under oath, and I'm swearing to them. And again,
7 the total of-- since we began these programs in FY15
8 is 29,768 households; 81,124 people have been able to
9 move out or avoid going into shelter. It's primarily
10 a move-out program, but to zero in on the rental
11 assistance only pieces of those larger numbers, and
12 rental assistance includes Section 8 as well because
13 we run it in the same way, it is 22,453 households
14 have used rental assistance, and that is 57,442
15 people have been able to move out of or avoid going
16 into shelter using rental assistance.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I mean, I think
18 that this, obviously this is such a wide discrepancy
19 in terms of what our numbers are showing. So, I
20 think that it does beg the question of like, we do
21 need to have, I think, a better system in place so
22 that what data we have access to is the data that you
23 have access to, and we can have a conversation about
24 why we have a three percent discrepancy or why we
25 have a 50 percent discrepancy.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Understood, and
3 we'll work with you to address that.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Just in terms of
5 looking at the programs themselves, we do see a
6 significant amount of fluctuation between adopted and
7 modified in various program areas. For example, in
8 Fiscal 17 the budget for CITYFEPS was adopted at 12
9 million, modified to 41. Fiscal 18, the budget for
10 LINC V was adopted at 10 and modified to 5.7. What
11 are the performance indicators that you are using to
12 determine your modified amounts? In other words, how
13 are you-- throughout the year, how are you
14 determining where your modifications go if some of
15 them are going up by 400 percent, some of them are
16 going down by 45 percent.

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, just to take
18 the one you mentioned, that kind of modification you
19 mentioned, and I don't want to get into the
20 specifics, because again I'm not familiar with the
21 document that's up on the projector, but for example,
22 LINC V is a program focused on a particular group of
23 clients and CITYFEPS is focused on clients that are
24 DV survivors, and people who either are primary or
25 secondary tenants who lost their housing for that,

2 basis and changes can reflect the ability to match
3 people who have the appropriate length of stay and
4 fit those criteria to be able to move people out. I
5 think as we've testified before, after this FEPS
6 settlement in September, we've been engaged in
7 discussions with the state on streamlining all these
8 programs.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uhm--

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] And I
11 just-- so that it's clear, I think it's clear, but I
12 just want to make sure, that modification is also the
13 easiest way to understand it. It's based by
14 utilization, but utilization is effected by the kinds
15 of factors that I described. For example, if you
16 take length of stay, which is one of the criteria,
17 and you match it up against LINC V, single adults
18 working, versus families with children and CITYFEPS
19 who might have been a secondary tenant, the prime
20 tenant was evicted, depending what the numbers show
21 we make modifications to try to match up who the
22 people are, to match up with the people.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Can you explain why
24 the SEPS budget is proposed at zero in the
25 Preliminary Budget?

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We're-- we're still
3 evaluating what the utilization rate will be. We
4 clearly have people that have SEPS payments that are
5 being made to them now, and we're continuing to move
6 people up with SEPS. Part of that simply a
7 reflection of trying to more fine-tune our
8 projections, and I think you'll see it reflected in
9 Exec., apropos of your comments and my comments.
10 We'll have a discussion with you about what we're
11 doing.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because last year at
13 Adopted SEPS was at a zero as well. It was adopted
14 at zero, modified to 9.5 million. So, we're
15 expecting-- we're not expecting to do that again.
16 We're going to have budget for SEPS at Exec?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We will work with
18 you on that. We hopefully will reflect the
19 conclusion of our state streamlining process, which
20 we're very hopeful will be completed before Exec.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm going to turn it
22 over to Council Member Adams because I know she has
23 to leave, and then I'll resume.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you very
25 much, Chair Levin. Good morning, Commissioner.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Good morning. How
3 are you?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I am doing well.

5 Thank you very much. This is usually my mantra

6 whenever you and I are together, and I will repeat

7 that mantra yet again. Southeast Queens is home to

8 the largest percentage of homeless shelters in the

9 entire borough of Queens. We are still looking for

10 quietly and parody for the placement of future

11 facilities in Queens. We would like to see equity.

12 We'd like to see equity. We'd like to see equity.

13 Specifically, in the future for the borough-based

14 plan. And that said, I'll just move onto my

15 question. I am now, because of my new job, a daily

16 commuter. And in my travels I am noticing that

17 particularly Jamaica Station has become a homeless

18 shelter. On any given morning during the hours of

19 operating rush hour timeframe, the first three or the

20 last three cars are homeless shelters. This is

21 creating a bit of a difficult position to those of us

22 who are commuters in the area and I would imagine

23 that my area is not the only area experiencing this

24 as well. So, with regard and with all due respect to

25 HOME-STAT, we applaud the progress that HOME-STAT has

2 made and continues to make. What is the total number
3 of street outreach worker, and how are the outreach
4 workers sourced?

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you for your
6 question, and at some point in my answer I do want to
7 reflect on some of our conversations and just put it
8 on the record--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: [interposing] Sure.

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: for transparency
11 about Southeast Queens. The total number of outreach
12 workers is just shy of 400. The subway team, though,
13 has been substantially increased. BRC runs the
14 subway team. There are additional efforts now that
15 the Transit Division of NYPD is focused on, and we'll
16 certainly send out some teams today to address the
17 issues you're raising at that station to see if we
18 can. On the other hand, I want to level-set [sic] in
19 two respects. One is that the homelessness isn't a
20 crime, which I don't say to you, because I know you
21 and I have had this conversation and you don't view
22 it that way, but I just want to make that clear. So
23 then our ability to move people out of the-- off the
24 streets into shelter is really reflective of our
25 ability to engage them and have them accept services

2 unless they meet the state standard for being a
3 danger to themselves or others, and that's a state
4 standard that we do evaluate when we work with
5 individuals. But will send a team out to look at
6 that particular situation and see what we can do, and
7 I think what we have found is many of those
8 situations, the people that we are sending our teams
9 out to engage with are on our by-name list, and by
10 building that by-name list, that's how we've had the
11 success over the last year and a half of bringing
12 1,480 people off the streets and have them stay off
13 the streets. The metric of just bringing people off
14 the streets is not one that we're very focused on.
15 We're focused on the metric of bringing people off
16 the streets and having them stay off the streets, and
17 we got to keep working with that. As to the issue
18 about Southeast Queens, if I may, the Southeast
19 Queens issue that you're raising with me really
20 highlights the underlying principle of the plan,
21 which is that we are going to bring our borough-based
22 plan so that we will have balance within boroughs.
23 Queens, for example, has more people sheltered within
24 the borough than are from the borough, but once we
25 close all of the commercial hotels that are in the

2 borough-- there's a significant number of commercial
3 hotels in that borough-- we will have a deficit
4 between the remaining shelter capacity, and what we
5 need to do in order to shelter all the people from
6 Queens. There are 38 hotels in use in Queens, and
7 once those hotels are closed under the plan, we will
8 have almost-- I think it's almost a 2,400-person
9 deficit in terms of being able to shelter Queens's
10 residents. And as we move forward, we will then have
11 closed the commercial hotels in southeast Queens, in
12 your district as we-- Joslyn Carter and I discussed
13 with you and others in the community over the summer,
14 but we're going to have to look to make sure that we
15 have capacity for the people who do become homeless
16 from the borough and also from that part of Queens.
17 And you've been-- I don't want to embarrass you, but
18 you've been a very good partner and working with us
19 in terms of looking at the issue that way, which is
20 once you take the hotels away, then we still need to
21 make sure we have residual capacity, and I appreciate
22 your help on that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Absolutely.

24 Absolutely. Thank you for that. And just to note,
25 the progress on the hotels in my district, we have

2 seen progress and movement from hotels finally into
3 other spaces of housing. We had a constituent last
4 week, and I'll let you know, she was complaining
5 because she was being moved from a hotel into a room
6 and she wanted an apartment. So, we had to explain
7 that this was the way that the City is going now in
8 getting residents out of that permanent hotel housing
9 situation and moving into other living arrangements.
10 So, we are seeing movement in that area. So, thank
11 you for being a partner with that. We look forward
12 to continuing to work towards equity in Southeast
13 Queens. Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Absolutely, just to
15 reiterate, the essence of the plan is one that will
16 ensure that homeless New Yorkers, homeless families
17 and individuals have an opportunity to be sheltered
18 close to the anchors of their lives instead of this
19 haphazard system which is wherever you could rent
20 hotel, whether you could-- wherever you could get a
21 cluster apartment, which has resulted in school
22 children commuting across the boroughs. That's
23 ultimately the plan, and we're moving forward with
24 it. We have to identify it by 18 shelters a year.
25 Year one, we have 17 that were identified. We've

2 already got 11 of them up and running, and we're
3 working to get through year two. I know that a number
4 of you may have received letters from us recently in
5 the Turning the Tide plan a year ago. We welcomed
6 communities to come forward, and we've had some great
7 examples. Council Member Cohen, we just opened a
8 shelter that a local Community Board helped us
9 identify. I know working with Council Member Lander
10 in terms of Community Board Six, and we've gotten of
11 those shelters have been helped to identify with
12 local input. And then year two we welcomed more
13 input and we reiterated in a recent communication all
14 Community Boards be partners with us, come forward,
15 help us identify sites so that we can take down the
16 hotels quicker, because we can save ultimately 100
17 million dollars a year when we're out of all the
18 hotels.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Again, I think
20 it's really important to note that the majority of
21 homeless are families who are in need of homes,
22 sheltering, at this moment. So, we are grateful for
23 the upcoming parody across the city, specifically in
24 Queens, and we look forward to, as I said, continuing
25 that movement with DHS. Just one more question, and

2 going back to HOME-STAT really quickly. How much of
3 HOME-STAT's cost is going towards training?

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Part of the
5 contracts that we have with the not-for-profit
6 providers incorporates within the contract that there
7 is a rigorous training program. In fact, our teams
8 do training for the NYPD in order to provide the kind
9 of information and technique that assist them in
10 doing their jobs, but I appreciate your focus on
11 training. We think it's important, too.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: So we don't have a
13 specific cost amount?

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's built into the
15 contacts with the providers.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay. Alright.
17 Thank you very much, Commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
20 Council Member Adams. So, Commissioner, I'm sorry, I
21 have to revisit this issue because I went back, I
22 just looked at the document provided to us from HRA
23 yesterday on year-to-date Fiscal 18 shelter move-
24 outs. Now, it does not include NYCHA, but I'll tell
25 you what it does include. It includes CITYFEPS,

2 FEPS, Home TBRA, LINC, and SEPS. I just did the
3 additions myself, although I trust my Finance Analyst
4 Nameera 100 percent. We confirmed the numbers. I
5 just did the addition, 1,999 move-outs. Of the--
6 from-- this is an email that you sent to us.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I see what you're
8 talking about. It doesn't link up to the information
9 we actually have. We should have been clearer with
10 what we gave you, and unfortunately I can see why we
11 gave it to you. It was the way the question was
12 asked, but I'm telling you the information that was
13 sworn to on the record is the correct information.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What's missing from
15 that number?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It doesn't include
17 HRA, DV families. It doesn't include community
18 placements. It doesn't include usage. It doesn't
19 include Section 8. It doesn't include usage in 420 A
20 [sic] units. It doesn't include the full range of
21 all the program the way it was presented here. I
22 will make sure you have an appropriate chart that we
23 can address the questions you're asking.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Can you
25 explain to us where-- so, when we're looking in our

2 budget analysis for FHEPS, where does FHEPS, where
3 would that be in terms of a budget line for us to be
4 able to determine the allocation on that?

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Because FHEPS is an
6 entitlement, it is in the public assistance budget.
7 The programs that you-- that we've been talking about
8 are largely city-funded and are not part of the state
9 public assistance entitlement funding stream. Just
10 to give you a context, Assembly Member Hevesi's bill,
11 that would have created the home stability support
12 program, that would have been a public assistance
13 program in contrast to the rental assistance programs
14 that we've stood up largely with city dollars.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And just for the
16 record, can you say what exactly is FHEPS? At this
17 point, you know, people's heads are probably spinning
18 with regard to all these acronyms. So, can you tell
19 us? These aren't even acronyms at this point.
20 They're just like made up words based on letters.
21 So, what does FHEPS mean? It's F-H-E-P-S. What is
22 FHEPS?

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: One thing I can
24 promise you with streamlining, we are going to
25 economize on the use of acronyms. The FHEPS is the

2 program that replaced the state FEPS program. The
3 state FEPS program is an out-growth of litigation
4 brought in the 1980s and 90s called Jigits [sp?]
5 versus Borallis [sp?] and that eventually was
6 replaced by state rental assistance program called
7 FEPS, Family Eviction Prevention Supplement, and
8 that's how you got the term FEPS, Family Eviction
9 Prevention Supplement, and then as part of the
10 settlement of a lawsuit by the Legal Aid Society
11 against the state in which the city was a party to
12 the settlement, though not to the litigation itself.
13 A new program was developed in order to cover
14 priorities that we-- the City and I believe the
15 Council wanted covered, which was to also cover
16 people who were in shelter more clearly than the FEPS
17 program had covered them if they had lost their
18 housing, were evicted and were in shelter, and also
19 covered DV survivors, and that we wanted to expand
20 the old F-E-P-S, FEPS program into this new program,
21 and so family homeless eviction prevention
22 supplement, there's a part A and a part B, and one of
23 it relates to evictions, and one of it relates to
24 domestic violence survivors, but the eviction part of
25 it continues to be a public assistance benefit, and

2 we think that that is-- has been helpful in terms of
3 the effectiveness of that program that it is a public
4 assistance benefit.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, just from here on
6 out, the new program FHEPS will supplant FEPS. Is
7 that correct?

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: correct. And it
9 will supplant much of CITYFEPS, because remember we
10 created CITYFEPS--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] In order
12 to--

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: in order to fill the
14 gap that was left by the state FEPS program.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, can you explain
16 to us what the OCFS cap savings are, 25.3 million
17 dollars in FY18, and how that's spent? Because of
18 right now, it just as a budget line of OCFS cap
19 savings. It doesn't actually tell us where it goes.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay, so you were
21 helpful on this, so I want to give you credit for it.
22 Several years ago you remember that the state said
23 that it would provide the City with a certain amount
24 of funding that was achieved by the OCFS savings
25 relating to how juvenile justice expenditures were

2 allocated between the city and state and that those
3 funds would come to us in order to supplement-- I'm
4 sorry, in order to subsidize our operation of these
5 city programs. Those funds would come to us not to
6 run an entitlement program, though. It would come
7 simply to subsidize part of our city expenditures,
8 and that is the nearly 500 million dollar plan that
9 is still being negotiated between the city and state
10 over the course of several years, and ultimately the
11 streamlining will resolve the plan questions.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, speaking of the
13 streamlining, the Council hasn't been a part of the
14 process to determine how the streamlining is going to
15 happen. We don't know what it's going to look like.
16 We don't know when it's going to look like. We don't
17 know anything. Can you-- can we get a commitment
18 that the Council will be part of this process moving
19 forward, and you know, being able to provide
20 meaningful input?

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think it's
22 important to understand what the process is, and then
23 you can-- we can have a back and forth.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I agree.
25

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, but I've
3 testified about it before. So, here's what the
4 process is, when the FEPS litigation was settled
5 there were a number of features of that settlement
6 that we thought were important. For example, the
7 five-year time limit was an issue, and that was an
8 issue that was addressed on settlement. There are
9 other questions that arose in the context of that
10 settlement that we wanted to be able to implement as
11 part of our rental assistance, our city rental
12 assistance programs, with state approval and support.
13 The city/state relationship is one in which we do
14 need state approval for certain change that we make,
15 and particularly if we want state money. And so the
16 streamlining process is aimed at attempting to get
17 state approval for certain changes that we would like
18 to make, a number of which have been changes that
19 this committee has proposed to us to make, like the
20 one I just mentioned, and to also obtain state
21 reimbursement for programs that have been run with
22 city dollars for several years. That's the nature of
23 the process, and it involves our agency. It involves
24 OMB. It involves State DOB, and it involves the
25 State Office of Temporary Assistance and Disability

2 Assistance. Our hope is that at the end of the
3 process that we will be able to, with state approval,
4 address the kinds of issues that have come up at
5 other hearings around how these programs have
6 operated. The end result that we're seeking is to
7 have one unified program as opposed to the
8 individualized programs that we stood up as part of
9 the pilots and experimentation that were done the
10 last couple of years.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, but the question
12 is, can we at the Council be a meaningful partner in
13 this, because right now we're not. I mean, I don't
14 even know what-- I mean, I don't-- again, I don't
15 know when this is going to be implemented. I don't
16 know what the status of conversations are with the
17 state. I don't know what any of the visioning of
18 this has-- what it looks like. I don't know what
19 process DSS has done so far.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, let--

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: [interposing] So, I
22 mean, we're pretty much in the dark here, and as a
23 co-equal branch of government, as a legislative
24 branch with oversight over these agencies, you know,
25

2 it's-- we ought to be much more involved than we have
3 been to-date.

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, let's review
5 what we did with the programs that we've implemented
6 for rental assistance. Each one of them was subject
7 to Kappa in which they were all subject to public
8 comment, and at the end of whatever approval process
9 we're able to reach with the state, and we're
10 optimistic that it'll be a positive one. We will
11 subject to Kappa the rental assistance programs that
12 we conclude based upon the agreements with the state,
13 and just as we did when we Kappa'd [sic] our own
14 programs, we made changes based upon input from the
15 Council. We made changes based upon input from the
16 advocates and input from clients. Part of the Kappa
17 process involves the Council. WE provide the Council
18 with a rule. The Council is involved in commenting
19 on it. The Council did comment on the-- or did give
20 us input on various of the rental assistance
21 programs.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, that's-- well,
23 alright. You're saying that we have the opportunity
24 to comment during the public comment period.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: But I'm following
3 what the-- There's a charter provision that says
4 we're supposed to, when we're proposing a rule, that
5 we're supposed to propose it and provide it to the
6 Council and take the Council's input into account
7 just the way we take all input into account, and we
8 did actually take Council's input in the account.
9 I'll give you an example, the way that the rules were
10 written--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] It's
12 possible, but we didn't even know that you did
13 because we haven't had it. There's been no
14 involvement of the Council. I'm wondering, are we
15 prohibited-- are we prohibited by the Charter from
16 being involved in the process at this state in the
17 process?

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: You have a
19 negotiation between a state agency and a city agency
20 to try to reach a resolution based upon a litigation
21 that was brought against the state agency by the
22 Legal Aid Society.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That was-- that's
24 been resolved. We're-- the reform is a City reform--
25

2 city-initiated reform informed by that settlement.

3 The settlement isn't as accomplished. So--

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] If we
5 reform the rental assistance program without state
6 approval we will end up paying 100 percent city tax
7 levy.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I don't think
9 anyone's asking to do it without the state approval.
10 We want to be a meaningful partner and provide some
11 informed input into the process. At this point, the
12 Council, frankly is-- has been left out of the
13 process. We have no-- we just don't know. We can't--
14 - if I had a-- if I talked to an advocate or a
15 provider or a constituent seeking rental assistance,
16 and they say, "Hey, what's the story with this
17 reform?" My answer to them is I have no idea. I
18 have-- not only do I have no idea, I don't know when,
19 I don't know what. I have no- I have absolutely no--
20 not only do I not have input, I don't even have
21 information.

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: well, the reforms
23 that we proposed took into account a number of bills
24 that the Council introduced. The bills roughly, I
25 think, fell into three main categories. One category

2 was time limitedness of the assistance. Second
3 category was broader eligibility and the DHS shelter
4 system, and the third category was the amount of the
5 rental assistance that was provided. Those are three
6 categories that were a subject of a pretty long
7 series of hearings, and they were bills that we took
8 seriously and we used those as guise to try to reach
9 the best resolution that we can in discussion with
10 the state, but I also want to come back to what I
11 said originally. We spent the first four year
12 operating city-only rental assistance programs. We
13 want to turn our programs into programs that can make
14 use of the OCFS savings and all the dollars that are
15 not being provided to us currently. So we need state
16 approval to do that, and so for example, and I think
17 I testified to this previously, if the bills were
18 simply passed and the state decided not to approve
19 them, they would be 100 percent city cost. So, we've
20 had a loss of discussions and hearings about whether
21 or not passing those bills should be the--

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Our--

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: end of discussion or
24 whether or not we unilaterally could do it without
25 state approval.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Our role, though, is
3 not strictly legislative, and the fact that we or
4 were not going to be passing bills related to rental
5 assistance programs does not in any way speak to
6 whether we can-- we, as the Council, can play a
7 meaningful role in working with our partners in the
8 Administration and our partners at the state level,
9 because we're all-- the government that citizens,
10 that the residents of New York, the taxpayers of New
11 York are supporting their government with their tax
12 dollars, and we at the Council are by Charter to play
13 a meaningful role in the application of government in
14 the city, and right now, on this issue we are not
15 playing a meaningful role because we have not been
16 allowed in the door, and whether we pass bills or
17 whether ideas that we float as legislation inform
18 your process with the state is irrelevant. We have
19 to play a meaningful role in the development of the
20 way in which our government applies services to its
21 residents.

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I agree with that,
23 but I think you'd agree with me that matters of
24 city/state relationships where an agency such as the
25 Department of City Services is by state statute an

2 agent of the Office of Temporary Assistance and
3 Disability Assistance that sorting out everybody's
4 role is very complicated. We have tried to create our
5 own city-funded programs, and we feel that in the
6 long run the best thing to do is get state
7 reimbursement for those programs. This body and
8 Administration agreed that one way to try to do that
9 was through the Home Stability Support Program--

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Requires
11 state legislation.

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right, requires
13 state legislation. It's not at the moment in the
14 state budget, and the Council made an effort to get
15 into the state budget as the Administration. That
16 would actually be the solution to this problem.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I'm going to
18 move on. This is not the satisfactory position for
19 us to be in vis-à-vis the Administration on this
20 topic. So, I'll just-- I'll leave it there, but that--
21 - this is not where this conversation is going to be
22 ending.

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We'll certainly keep
24 talking with you. I also want to say that in a City
25 of 8.6 million people, the structured relationship

2 that requires us to get everything approved is a
3 challenge for a government agency, and we welcome
4 your help on that issue.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I have one more
6 question on rental assistance, then I'll turn it over
7 to my colleagues. The Fiscal 17 MMR states that the
8 number of requests for emergency assistance at the
9 rental assistance units in the first four months of
10 Fiscal 18 was 4,165 lower compared to that in Fiscal
11 17. So, that's year-over-year. Why are there less
12 people asking for assistance when more and more
13 people are at risk of homelessness?

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Could be reflected
15 of the drop in evictions. It could be reflective of
16 the expansion of State FEPS. It could be reflective
17 of the fact that we are more focused on making sure
18 people don't lose their benefits and therefore don't
19 fall into arears. Could be a result of having HRA
20 workers at Homebase and so problems are caught
21 earlier and so you don't need as much rent arears,
22 but it's an entitlement program. So, it's not an
23 issue of a change in application of the processes. I
24 think as you can see what's dramatically expanded the
25 numbers of clients getting rent arears over the last

2 fours, and the fact that it's slightly down this
3 current period may well reflect other systemic
4 changes that we've made, but we're watching this
5 also.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: At the January 2017
7 General Welfare hearing, HRA testified that allowing
8 youth living in runaway homeless youth shelters to
9 utilize LINC was in the works and that we would
10 receive updated information at the budget hearing.
11 Here we are a year later, more than a year later.
12 When will homeless youth in the RHY system be able to
13 apply for a LINC voucher?

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That is part of what
15 we're seeking state approval to do.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, so case in
17 point, because I didn't know that.

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think if you go
19 back and-- we'll talk about it offline, but I think
20 if you go back and look at my testimony that was
21 roughly what my testimony was before on this topic.
22 We really need state approval. I can't create
23 programs that I don't have approval for.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm going to turn it
25 over to my colleagues. Council Member Barry

2 Grodenchik for questions. Barry? Yeah, okay.

3 Council Member Diana Ayala for questions.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Sorry, for--
5 Council Member Grodenchik. We won't tell him that we
6 skipped him.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry, we've been
8 joined by Council Member Carlos Menchaca.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Good afternoon,
10 Commissioner. My questions are relating to--

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Good
12 afternoon.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: homeless seniors.
14 Can you tell us what the proportion of seniors in
15 homeless shelters is?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We've approximately
17 2,000 seniors in our shelter system.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: How does DHS
19 coordinate with DFTA and HRA's Adult Protective
20 Services in identifying seniors who need to be in
21 shelter versus be under supervised protective
22 services?

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, if I may, could I
24 go through a couple of-- several of the approaches
25 that we have here?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay. So, oen
4 approach was to develop a specific rental assistance
5 program within the rental assistance package, which
6 is LINC IV that is available to seniors, and there ws
7 never such a program that existed before. It was one
8 of the rental assistance programs that we developed
9 in order to help move seniors out of shelter. In
10 addition, we've opened the first shelter in Brooklyn,
11 the Burgen [sp?] Street Shelter, for senior men in
12 order to give a specialized environment for senior
13 citizens, and in terms of APS clients, clients who
14 are APS clients are eligible for some of our rental
15 assistance through the SEPS program that the Chair
16 raised to avoid them having to come into shelter to
17 be able to provide rental assistance to avoid people
18 coming into shelter. In terms of the Division of
19 Labor among the different agencies, one of the
20 advantages of the integration of HRA and DHS together
21 is that whether APS is part of HRA, and DHS runs a
22 shelter system, HRA also runs rental assistance that
23 can help all of those clients. So we think there's
24 some greater efficiencies on how we're really focused
25 on the population you're asking about. DFTA is a

2 great partner for us in terms of in the community
3 providing services, but once that's no longer
4 tenable, then it falls to us to either provide
5 shelter or provide some form of other assistance to
6 avoid the need for shelter.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I mean, I think
8 that as we're having the conversation about
9 rethinking the way that we shelter people in their
10 home borough that we're not really having-- and I
11 appreciate that we finally got to a place where we're
12 open. We opened the one shelter for older adult men,
13 but I know that that is-- that there's a great need
14 for that, sir-- I mean, seniors come with a host of
15 issues that they need, you know, services provided
16 for, and we have time and time again seen-- I used to
17 work-- I was actually the director of a senior
18 center, and a lot of my seniors ended up being put
19 into the general population, and because of the
20 issues that they came with, you know, were
21 oftentimes, you know, beaten up or verbally attacked
22 at the shelters that they were put in, often times,
23 you know, single female shelters. So, I know that
24 there is a lot of concern about the missed
25

2 opportunity to have that conversation. Is there any
3 plan to build any others, to open any others?

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I appreciate that
5 you're highlighting this issue for us and for
6 everybody, because it's one of the reasons why we're
7 trying to trans-- why we're putting in place a plan
8 to transform the shelter system from this haphazard,
9 one-size-fits-all approach, and as I said, this year,
10 in year one of the plan we identified 17 shelters.
11 We're going to average about 18 a year to get to the
12 90, and we're certainly open to input about the need
13 for additional specialized shelters like the one we
14 just opened in Brooklyn.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: One more question
16 about this. The Homebase providers provide services
17 to seniors at risk of homelessness, and how can
18 Homebase work with senior centers to seek out seniors
19 that could benefit from Homebase assistance?

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think one of the
21 changes we made in Homebase was to expand the
22 population of clients that can be served to include
23 single adults. When it was originally started it was
24 largely focused on families with children, and in
25 terms of percentages of people being served in

2 Homebase programs, single adults has increased. I
3 think you raise an important point about coordination
4 with senior centers, and it's certainly something
5 we'll take back.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay. [inaudible]
7 Steve [inaudible] one, can I?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Oh, go ahead.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: One last question,
10 sorry Barry. I'm sorry, Antonio, I'm going to ask
11 it. SO, we've been having a conversation for a long
12 time in the Constituent Services Division about
13 placement of individuals into the lotter-- so when a
14 person applies for a lotter apartment in New York
15 City, there has to be an income eligibility,
16 guideline that's met. If a person has Section 8,
17 that eligibility, that income requirement is waived.
18 Why is that not the case for people that have HASA?
19 Do you know?

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think it would be
21 helpful if we sat down and looked at the specific
22 kinds of cases you're talking about staff-to-staff.
23 when HASA was originally-- when the 30 percent rent
24 cap went into place, we had wanted a different
25 budgeting methodology that would include, for

2 example, people that have social security/disability
3 and not simply social security SSI, and the budgeting
4 methodology that we were required to put in place,
5 again because this relationship between the City and
6 State agencies was more narrowly focused than the one
7 we wanted to put in place. But we should look at the
8 kinds of cases that you're seeing on a constituent
9 level to see whether or not that helps us make the
10 case to reargue the need for a broader perspective.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Yeah--

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] But we,
13 we wanted there to be a broader income level.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: The units are
15 available, I don't see why we wouldn't include them.
16 Thank you so much.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
18 Madam Ayala. Good m-- good afternoon, Mr.
19 Commissioner, your able staff. I'm going to say a
20 couple of things, then I'm going to ask a question,
21 and then I got to go chair my own committee. One, I
22 am speaking for a lot of Council Members, we are
23 incredibly disappointed that the Administration has
24 not chosen to fund, baseline fund, the emergency
25 food. We talked about this last year, a year ago, at

2 this hearing. You took the hit as the Commissioner,
3 and I know you have to do it. I hope you will
4 deliver a very strong message to the other side of
5 City Hall. This money which amounts to between 18
6 and 23 million depending on how you count goes a
7 very, very long way to feeding thousands and tens of
8 thousands of New Yorkers who otherwise would not
9 simply have enough to eat, and I am frankly, to be
10 quite honest, I'm embarrassed that we're even having
11 this discussion. It is such a small percentage of
12 the overall social service budget in this city. So, I
13 want to put that on the record. Secondly, twice in
14 the last nine months of hearings that we've had where
15 you have been present, I have asked you personally
16 for the make-up of the individuals coming into the
17 shelter system. you have told me that 11 percent
18 come from evictions, 30 percent come from or have
19 been involved unfortunately in domestic violence
20 situations, which leaves a whopping 59 percent that I
21 cannot account for, and given that we are spending--
22 I would refer you to page 11, paragraph five, by my
23 count we're spending 130 million dollars per month.
24 Is that correct? I'll take that from anybody.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: If you're adding up
3 the math, you're referring to my page 11, right?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Yes, to your
5 testimony, so if--

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing]
7 Roughly--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK:
9 [interposing][inaudible]

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: if adding up the
11 amount for clusters, the amount for commercial
12 hotels, the amount for shelters.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Right. So,
14 that's a 130 million dollars a month. Is that City
15 tax levy dollars? I want to get a clear answer on
16 that.

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: No.

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: How much of
21 that is City tax levy--

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] It's
23 largely City tax dollars in terms of single adults.
24 There's a state cap on the funding that we get, and
25 so it's largely city tax dollars in terms of--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
3 Can you give me-- Commissioner, can you tell me what
4 number of that 130 million a month comes directly
5 from City tax levy dollars?

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I can-- I can, I
7 believe, in a moment.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: And the families
10 with children expenditures are significant City
11 expenditures, federal expenditures, and less state
12 expenditures. While we're looking for that, I want
13 to answer your question, however.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay.

15 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, about a third--
16 let's sort of walk it through for the record. A
17 third of the families are found eligible for shelter
18 because of a history of domestic violence.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That doesn't mean
21 that the entire third are not eligible for DV
22 shelter. About a third of that 30 percent would be
23 eligible for DV shelter, but a third of the families
24 with children are-- have a history of domestic
25 violence, but 20 percent of the families are found

2 eligible based upon overcrowding or some type of
3 conflict where they are previously residing. I want
4 to come back to that reason in a moment, and a little
5 over 20 percent are found eligible because of
6 eviction, but that's primarily when the family is
7 forced to leave by the prime tenant and not the
8 landlord. The remainder of the families-- so a third
9 plus 20 percent plus 20 percent it's about a quarter--
10 - have multiple reasons including ACS, unlivable
11 conditions, and other situations. I want to go back
12 to a couple of the pieces of information that I gave
13 you and delving a little bit more deeply. So, the 11
14 percent eviction number cuts across families with
15 children that fit in all of those categories because
16 I think what you have seen in all the years we've
17 known each other as an elected official, because when
18 they lose their homes don't necessarily come into
19 shelter right away. They may double up. So, the 11
20 percent, we-- it was very important to us when we
21 implemented the universal access to council to have
22 understanding, what was the true number of people
23 coming to us as a result of an actual eviction
24 proceeding. It's 11 percent, but it's across all of
25 these different categories. So, I know that you had

frustration and we did some digging down to try to give you a better answer, I anticipated this question was going to come, that instead of leaving you to add 11 percent plus 30 percent, and what's the remainder, the 59 percent, we wanted to step back and say what are the reasons why people are becoming eligible, families are becoming eligible. And so that's this larger group, but within that you get the eviction number. Now, when I gave you the 20 percent are found eligible because of overcrowding and some type of discord or conflict, that's why we've expanded the services that are funded through Homebase to be able to do some family mediation. Homebase was originally conceived of as an eviction prevention, keep people in their homes service, and gradually the providers have been expanding their services, and our funding now this year reflects that expansion finally, because we want to really focus on that particular group of people. Is there some intervention that we could have to keep them with family or friends in some way or other? In terms of single adults, I mean, the class definition of the single adult shelter population is "homeless by reason of physical, mental, or social dysfunction." There's

2 still about 15 to 20 percent depending on how one
3 looks at it, the people that are employed that are in
4 the shelter system and just can't afford housing.
5 It's also a remind-- remember that one of the
6 drivers, and this is sort of in reference to the
7 Chair's questions to me earlier, the single adults,
8 the state shelter allowance for rent is 215 dollars a
9 month. So, that's a factor. I know you were focused
10 on that when you were different body. In terms of
11 the expenditures, overall it's about 60 percent City
12 tax levy. For adults it's 90 percent City tax levy.
13 Families with children, it's 40 percent City tax
14 levy. And the IBO has a recent report showing the
15 relative proportions of city, state, and federal
16 expenditures.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
18 Mr. Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
20 Member Grodenchik. Council Member Brad Lander?
21 We're also joined by Council Member Ritchie Torres,
22 Andy Cohen and Vanessa Gibson.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thanks very much,
24 Mr. Chair. Commissioner, it's good to see you and
25 your team, and I appreciate your words about the work

2 we're doing with you and your team to try to site or
3 convert one of the hotels in the district to be a
4 shelter, and I don't want to get in a whole
5 discussion about fair share today, which we've had
6 before, but just for the record, I do feel the need
7 to say, while I appreciate that the de Blasio
8 Administration shift as saying communities should at
9 least shelter folks who come from their neighborhood
10 that that's not mine, nor do I think that Charter's
11 definition of what fair share actually says we should
12 do. it actually says that white or wealthier
13 communities should do a lot more than that, and that
14 we should actually see it as something we seek to
15 site fairly across the City, and while the principle
16 of close to homeness [sic] is in some ways a
17 reasonable way, I just-- those elementary schools
18 that have dramatically high numbers of kids from
19 homeless shelter cannot possibly succeed in providing
20 as good an education as the schools in my district.
21 So, I don't want to get in a back-and-forth about it.
22 We've had it before. We'll have it again. Let's get
23 one sited in Community Board Six. Keep moving on the
24 plan that you're doing, but I think if we actually
25 sited homeless shelters more equally across the City,

2 we might be more willing to do what was necessary to
3 actually confront homelessness than we are when it
4 stays predominantly an issue for low-income
5 communities of color. But I want to ask is sort of
6 the ambitious question of what that would look like.
7 Like, I appreciate everything in your testimony you
8 have done in these past four years, and the more
9 recent amount of time since DHS came under your
10 tenure, an awful lot, and personally you've done more
11 than anybody else to try to move this city forward in
12 meeting our obligations to end homelessness. So, I
13 really appreciate all of that, and I don't want to
14 like short-circuit how much energy has gone into it
15 by saying what would it do to do what we ought to be
16 doing, but I am going to ask that. We are doing a
17 lot, but what we ought to be doing is making a much
18 deeper reduction in the number of homelessness
19 families. So, if we were willing to spend more, I
20 guess I want to know, is it that we would put more
21 folks in public housing placements? Is it that we
22 would put a higher percentage of homeless families in
23 newly developed affordable housing built by the City
24 to which sometimes Council Members, you know, are the
25 ones who push back. You know, what is it that we

2 would do if we could just stop being constrained for
3 a minute by all of the many bureaucratic and
4 political realities we have, and say what would it
5 take to actually make a real dent in reducing the
6 number of homeless individuals and families that we
7 have? And you can free yourself from state
8 constraints if you want as well. Like, I just would
9 like to spend at least a minute talking about what we
10 would really do if we had an ambitious goal, not just
11 of kind of stemming the tide, but of really reducing?

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: First of all, thank
13 you for your kind remarks. Also, thank you for your
14 partnership in trying to-- and moving forward with
15 siting our shelter in your area of Brooklyn, which is
16 needed for our clients. You know, I remember cross-
17 examining an official in the-- in the priori
18 Administration, many, many years ago when you and I
19 were a lot younger, both of us were a couple of jobs
20 earlier than the ones we're currently in, and asking
21 the then I guess he was an Executive Deputy
22 Commissioner of HRA, what would it take to comply
23 with the court orders, which is slightly different
24 question that we're asking, but not so different.
25 And the-- Judge Friedman said, "Actually, I'd really

2 like to know the answer to that question, what would
3 it take to comply with these court orders." And the
4 answer from Jeff Carpal [sp?], who was a terrific
5 public servant who passed away, was, "Look, you need
6 a combination of prevention, decent shelter, and a
7 way to rehouse people." And then you can have a
8 system that treats people differently, decently, and
9 really address homelessness. That was a very simple
10 thing that was said, not four decades ago at the
11 beginning of, you know, homeless litigation and
12 homelessness in New York City, but it was said sort
13 of part-way along the road, probably about 30-plus
14 years ago from today. And you know, the history of
15 that period of time where I talked about homelessness
16 increasing 115 percent is a history of lost
17 opportunities to put in place a system that looks
18 like that, and the system that we've been articulated
19 and working very hard to put in place is that system,
20 but it has those three parts, and I talked earlier
21 about in addition to bringing people in off the
22 streets, which is not something that people focused
23 on. So, looking at each of those pieces, prevention
24 is so critical, and if you look at the numbers in
25 terms of reducing homelessness, you can start to see

2 reduced numbers of applications from families with
3 children, for example, which is showing the beginning
4 impact of the cumulative impact the last couple of
5 years of what we've been focused on accomplishing.

6 So, I think doubling down on prevention is part of
7 what it takes to really address this problem. Having
8 a decent shelter system is part of what it does take
9 to address this problem, because to an extent you put
10 people, I'm going to just say, far away from anchors
11 of life or however you and I would have wanted to
12 find it, but put people far away from supports or
13 without supports or in rotten conditions like in
14 clusters, the ability to work with families and
15 reconnecting to the housing that is available is a
16 challenge. And now let's talk about rehousing. So,
17 you know, at the beginning of my testimony, it's in
18 the Turning the Tide Plan, we talked about that the
19 reality of our city right now is that we have half as
20 much housing available for the client base that our
21 agency serves. That's roughly the number that I
22 described and the overall housing plan plus the
23 supportive housing plan plus the rental assistance
24 initiatives are all aimed at trying to bridge that
25 gap, but it's a very big gap that's built up over a

2 lot of time. So, you and your question to me, and I
3 appreciate your question, raised a lot of issues that
4 one might look at every time we consider a decision.
5 And so, you know, the difference between a 10 percent
6 set-aside that a project might start with for
7 homeless families and a project that ends up with a
8 seven percent set-aside may not seem like a lot
9 because it's only three percent, but they add up, and
10 that has an impact on how quickly we can move people
11 out of shelter. As we try to site supportive
12 housing, delays that arise has an impact on how
13 quickly we can get people out of shelter. Even just
14 the question that I know you're asking about
15 rehousing, and I'm not trying to go back to shelter
16 alone, but even just the question of spending 100
17 million dollars because we're in hotels and we better
18 be in shelters, would help us overall for this
19 approach. So, I would urge, and we've known each
20 other a long time, so it's great to have this
21 conversation with the entire City of New York
22 watching, I would urge us to keep focusing on are we
23 doing everything every day we can on those three
24 things, and all branches of government have the
25 ability to look at those three things. As the Chair

2 pointed out to me, I think quite appropriately, the
3 committee has oversight over those three things, and
4 the committee has oversight on each of those areas,
5 and we'll keep coming before you telling you how
6 we're doing.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, I appreciate
8 all of that, and look, my daughter and I over mid-
9 winter break were out on the west coast, and the
10 difference between having a right to shelter and
11 taking it seriously and not is like plain for all to
12 see, I have to say. Like, what LA looks like right
13 now with tens of thousands of people, unsheltered
14 homeless, makes me appreciate the broader plan, and
15 so I-- but I just worry that we get complacent in
16 our-- even for all we're doing, and that it is-- I
17 don't know who else's job it is other than yours to
18 lay out what it would take if we actually saw
19 homelessness as an unacceptable crisis in our city
20 and said we might not be able to get it done today,
21 but this is what it would take to do, and some of
22 that is on us. You're right, Council Members we
23 don't always look for sufficient homeless set-aside.
24 Some of that is on this Administration. The Council
25 has pushed hard to get the deeper affordability and

2 the advocates have pushed hard to get deeper
3 affordability in the housing plan, but I guess I'll
4 just end it there, because it's-- we're not going to
5 drill down on it at the level that's necessary, but I
6 just don't feel like I can let it stand at the budget
7 hearing. What we are collectively doing is accepting
8 a city with 60,000-plus people homeless every night,
9 because we either aren't clear about, and I think
10 we're smart enough collectively, so I think it's
11 political will and not intelligence that collectively
12 leaves us with that city. So, I don't know where
13 it's supposed to come from, but I would like to at
14 least see a plan of what it would take to like cut
15 that number in half in some amount of time, and then
16 figure out if we're willing to spend that money or
17 make those political choices. I think we should push
18 ourselves to do it in addition to, and I appreciate
19 it's on top of an enormous amount of work that you
20 guys are doing every day. I just want to ask one
21 more question on the HRA side of the issue, and kind
22 of I think a less big picture way and a more
23 practical way. I know that you've also done a lot of
24 work to try to change the way, and I appreciate all
25 the things you said in your testimony about

2 employment and training and the way, you know, the
3 ending of WEP, all the shifts in that system. I
4 think it also, you know, remains true that the work
5 to try to help people find the employment they need
6 before they hit the end of their five-year timeline
7 is a big challenge and a problem to solve. So, I
8 just want you to speak specifically to what you guys
9 are doing to focus on folks who are nearing the end
10 of their five years, either have already gotten
11 there, or say like one year away, and what kind of
12 particular employment supports you're putting in
13 place to try to just focus everything you can on
14 making sure people find jobs before they hit the end
15 of their time limit, and like how many people are in
16 that category? Are there some particular
17 interventions that you guys have in place to do it?
18 How does that fit more broadly with the workforce
19 development system? If you could just drill down in
20 that space in particular.

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure. Sure. And
22 thank you for a question about HRA. Look, the focus-
23 - by the way, I should say first that the-- we don't
24 have a time limit on assistance in New York State
25 because of Article 17 of our State Constitution. So

2 there's a state safety net program that comes into
3 play after federal assistance has run out--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing]
5 After the exhausting of the federal assistance.
6 Thank you for the--

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] No, I
8 just want to make sure that--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing]
10 Absolutely.

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: no, but that
12 everybody is aware of that. I think the
13 repositioning of our approach to employment has been
14 focused on the issue that you're getting at, which is
15 that we need to provide our clients with a career
16 pathway to move off of the caseload, and the
17 reorientation of the employment program is really
18 focused on what we like to call Career Pathways
19 instead of WEP, for example. And you know, we're not
20 quite a year into it, and I think we're starting to
21 see the kind of promising initial results that I
22 described which are giving people the tools to have a
23 career pathway, the education, the training, the
24 connection to some of the alternatives that you and I
25 in years past would have advocated for HRA to allow

2 the existing great programs in the community to be
3 available for training, and so we're doing that. I
4 think it's also important to come back to what are
5 the real numbers we're looking at now. And there had
6 been so much focus for years on the HRA work
7 programs, it's really only about 70,000 of the
8 500,000-- I'm sorry, of the 370,000 people who get
9 assistance in any given month, and again, 24,000 of
10 that group of people are actually working already,
11 and our focus is to try to help them with income
12 maximization to help them on their career pathway.
13 But I do think that the shift in training and skills
14 for pathway ultimately is going to be what will make
15 the difference, and one of the things that we did
16 when we put together the employment plan was to see
17 what other states were doing, and other states like
18 Kentucky and Texas has a lot more robust training to
19 deal with that tissue because they actually do have
20 time limits. They are-- and so there's even more
21 urgency. You know, if we could bring the urgency
22 here on a human level of urgency, I think that that's
23 why we've emphasized education training so much.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright, well, I
25 don't want to use more time here because there's lots

2 of other members, and this is something we've talked
3 about really trying to do a hearing that drills down
4 on maybe with the Economic Development Committee as
5 well. I think both to get some more clarity on the
6 numbers, on the links between the 60 million in the
7 Career Pathway system and what's coming to the folks
8 how need it most, understanding a little better what
9 programs are-- how many people that is, what the
10 programs that are in place and what the results we're
11 seeing so far. So, let's, you know,-- I'm not going
12 to ask again about it today but I would love if we
13 could maybe, you know, look toward doing some kind of
14 either joint hearing or-- and get the information we
15 need to really shine a spotlight there.

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Happy to do that,
17 and I guess I want to compliment the Chair. You've
18 done several joint hearings that we think illustrates
19 the inter-connectedness of the services that we're
20 providing with other agencies. HPD, you did to
21 Department of Health, those have been helpful looks
22 at how services are being provided.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member
25 Gjonaj?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you,
3 Chairman. Thank you, Commissioner. Medicaid and
4 HomeCare programs constitute about 60 percent of the
5 HRA budget, am I correct?

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Correct.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: As such, the
8 budget needs to be-- needs to provide a more detailed
9 breakdown of this spending. The budget lacks
10 transparency as to how the City's reimbursement to
11 the state is calculated and how this funding is spent
12 down for services for Medicaid clients and HomeCare
13 services. How does the Department plan, or how are
14 you planning to solve the lack of transparency for
15 Medicaid and HomeCare programs?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I mean, we can work
17 with the Committee on that, but one of the structural
18 challenges we have here is that we pay the state, and
19 the state pays the providers. Our role in managed
20 long-term care is reflective of the transition of it
21 being a local administered program to its
22 transitioning to a state administered program. So,
23 in managed long-term care, the state is making the
24 eligibility-- I'm sorry, the service determination,
25 and we're only doing financial eligibility. We pay

2 about five billion dollars a year to the state and
3 then the state pays the remaining 20 billion dollars,
4 and they're making those kinds of payments for the
5 long-term care that you're focused on. We can
6 certainly look to see what we can do, but it came up
7 at the beginning part of the hearing where if you
8 look at our Medicaid caseload, it's a city caseload
9 of about 3.3 million people, but only about half of
10 that number we directly administer and care to, and
11 it's been a decreasing number because the way that
12 people get on Medicaid now is through the exchange
13 and with the advent of Medicaid long-term care. The
14 state is making the decisions and we're an
15 administrative partner to them. When I first became
16 Commissioner there was a big issue about a concern
17 that the City wouldn't have any direct involvement
18 because if someone walks into an office they're more
19 likely to walk into an HRA office to try to get help,
20 than, you know, call a hotline that's not in the
21 City. And so we've been working with the state to
22 try to make sure that there's some portal that people
23 can come to us to operate under. The takeover across
24 the state has been proceeding methodically, a little
25 bit slower than originally projected, and the next

2 phase of the takeover isn't really slated yet for the
3 rest of our caseload, and I think what you're
4 reacting to in looking at our budget is a little bit
5 of we're caught between the-- we're no longer running
6 it directly, but it's not entirely taken over yet,
7 and we're giving you the most information we've got,
8 but it's not as robust as I think you'd like, but I
9 understand the question.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you,
11 Commissioner. The Preliminary Care Plan, the total
12 available appropriation for Fiscal 2018 is 213
13 million against planned commitments totaling 110
14 million. This access [sic] balance of 103 million in
15 appropriations give the Administration considerable
16 flexibility within the capital plan. How does the
17 Department plan to use the access balance of 103
18 million in appropriations?

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'm sorry, you're
20 referring to which program?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: The Capital Plan,
22 the Preliminary Capital Plan that you proposed for
23 2018. It's 213 million against commitments.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Are you referring to
25 the HRA plan or the DHS plan?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Totals of 213
3 million. While we look for that, Commissioner, let
4 me go onto another question, and come back to that
5 one.

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Maybe you can
8 help located it, budget. There was a commitment to
9 create 15,000 supportive housing units over the next
10 15 years. Is that correct?

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That's correct.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: My concern is
13 supportive housing, in particular for the borough of
14 the Bronx where per-capita we currently have more
15 than 41 percent more than Brooklyn, twice as many as
16 Queens, 13 percent more than Manhattan, and 99
17 percent more than Staten Island, creating an
18 oversaturation of supportive housing units for the
19 entire borough of the Bronx compared to the rest of
20 the City. We know that it impacts our educational
21 systems, our safety nets from healthcare to policing,
22 and more importantly, it takes affordable housing
23 units off the market for Bronx sites. How can we
24 address oversaturation of boroughs and communities?

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay, I'm not sure if
3 you're referring to-- with you numbers, I'm not sure
4 if you're referring to supportive housing or if
5 you're referring to shelter.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Supportive
7 housing.

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay, because
9 supportive housing wouldn't impact the education
10 system at all, since it's really for single adults or
11 adult families. There's a growing number of families
12 with children, but of the 15,000 units, I think maybe
13 less than 1,500 of them are targeted for families
14 with children in terms of supportive housing.
15 Supportive housing is really a plan in two different
16 parts. Part of it is congregate and part of it is
17 scatter site. The congregate part of it is actually
18 developing new sites that go through the Land Use
19 decision-making process, and those are sited in the
20 way that they would be. The other part of the plan
21 is for scatter site housing, which is something
22 that's been very successful in New York, New York
23 agreements, and the City kept it in its own program.
24 I think we're trying to connect people as much as
25 possible in communities where they previously resided

2 in both supportive housing and permanent-- and
3 shelter, but I'd certainly be happy to look at what's
4 going on in your district with you and see what the
5 needs are and see what improvements we could make or
6 not, and I'd be happy to look at what's happening in
7 your district.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: well, this has
9 been brought up before, and not much has changed.
10 While the reimbursement rates that these developers
11 continue to see are a standard citywide, well,
12 they're a target in the borough of the Bronx be we
13 have the lowest or the cheapest land, and will
14 continue to have an inundation of supportive housing
15 which will also include homeless sites as well. And
16 when you refer to cluster sites, how many cluster
17 sites do we have throughout the city and what is a
18 number broken down by borough?

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Let me give you the
20 top line, that there were 3,600 clusters in operation
21 when we began the closedown program. This is a
22 program that goes back 18 years to the Giuliani
23 Administration. We have already gotten out of 42
24 percent of them, 1,500 of them, and the majority that
25 we got out of first were in the Bronx. We've done

2 some very successful announcements in the Bronx,
3 Council Member Gibson and previously Council Member
4 Torres, about closing the clusters in the Bronx.
5 Part of the cluster closure plan involves converting
6 800 of those units to permanent housing by financing
7 not-for-profit housing developers to renovate them
8 and offer them as permanent housing wherever possible
9 to the people that are in them, and if not, take them
10 by domain. The 70 percent of the overall clusters
11 when we were at 3,600 were in the Bronx, and we
12 certainly prioritize getting out of the units as
13 quickly as we possibly can.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Was that-- so
15 that number brings the total number of cluster sites
16 down to 2,100, is that correct?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Correct, and then of
18 that 2,100, an additional 800 units will be covered
19 by the initiative that we announced in December.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right, but can I
21 have the breakdown of the 2,100 by borough?

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I can't do that off
23 the top of my head, but I will certainly get them to
24 you. I can tell you that when we were at 3,600, 70
25 percent of them were in the Bronx, and that--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: [interposing]
3 Exactly my point.

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: And then in our first
5 tranche over the summer when we closed the first
6 1,000, 600 of the first 1,000 were closed in the
7 Bronx, and we're continuing it roughly that kind of
8 approach.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Which makes my
10 point that the borough of the Bronx is inundated by
11 supportive housing, homeless housing, and cluster
12 sites, and we must prevent the borough from being
13 inundated and oversaturated. You go back to the 800
14 additional cluster sites that you're going to remove
15 though eminent domain. Can you explain that to me,
16 please?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, we identify 25
18 to 30 buildings that we thought would be appropriate
19 for not-for-profit, local not-for-profit, housing
20 groups to purchase with city financing, and we've
21 been very clear that in the event that we can work
22 this out out of court, that's our preference, and if
23 we can finance the purchasing of 25 to 30 buildings
24 that would enable 800 cluster units to be returned to
25 permanent affordable housing that is our first goal,

2 but if we cannot achieve that, we're prepared to go
3 to court, because the public purpose here is to use,
4 convert the cluster units to permanent housing as
5 part of our cluster phase-out to address
6 homelessness, and we announced that we would either--
7 we expected to either conclude out of court purchases
8 by the end of this calendar year, or if not, commence
9 the imminent domain process.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: That's going to
11 require a long legal battle of imminent domain.
12 Historically, it is not something that is done
13 quickly and the property owners do fight back. I
14 don't understand why we would take the approach of
15 imminent domain when there are other viable options,
16 and when you say you've chosen 25 properties, I
17 believe--

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Yeah,
19 we identified 25 to 30 properties where the City is
20 operating 50-- is using 50 percent of the units, and
21 therefore, we believe that those are appropriate for
22 a public purpose perspective to end the cluster
23 program.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Which was done
3 through an agreement of some sort with the property
4 owner?

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That's our fir-- as
6 we've stated very clearly publicly, our first
7 priority is to attempt to finance the purchase
8 without having to use imminent domain. If we do have
9 to use imminent domain, we will, and we'll be able to
10 accomplish the conversion of those cluster units
11 within our phase-out plan, and we have made a public
12 commitment that we would end the use of the cluster
13 program in 2021. We're well on the way to do that
14 having gotten out of nearly half of them already.
15 Those additional 800 would dramatically help us get
16 out.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: You know, I just
18 wonder if those property owners ever thought that
19 there would be an attempt to take their property away
20 from them. Would they have contributed to the
21 programs that are made those cluster sites available
22 initially? I don't think that they would have
23 embraced the contract, and it's a fair warning to
24 other property owners that have any fair dealings
25 with New York City when it comes to housing. Imminent

2 domain is a last resort, and because the property
3 owner was willing to rent out a number of units in
4 his building is a terrible standard to set, and I
5 feel that we're going to have negative push-back
6 moving forward in the future.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, I would just
8 say that we're ending the cluster program. We don't
9 think that it's an appropriate program. It was
10 started 18 years ago, and our preference would be to
11 finance purchases without imminent domain, but we
12 think it's an important tool to use in order to end
13 this program and to restore the units to permanent
14 housing.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you,
16 Commissioner. How do you explain the homeless
17 population living in New York City shelter system has
18 reached an all-time high while the City has the
19 highest number of people on payroll and the lowest
20 unemployment rate for such a long period of time?

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think as I said at
22 the beginning of the hearing, we have in the City
23 currently a situation that has built up as follows:
24 The City lost 150,000 rent stabilized units, and
25 rents up more than almost 19 percent between 2000 and

2 2015, and incomes went up less than five percent.

3 The result is that we have twice as many people-- so

4 we have half as many apartments available for the

5 three million low-income clients that we serve, and

6 the result is a lack of affordable housing for our

7 clients, and that's why we have the numbers of people

8 in the shelter system. Having said that, at the

9 beginning of the hearing we went through some of the

10 important data. One piece that's important to note

11 is that over the past year, the census-- the DHS

12 shelter census remained essentially flat for the

13 first time in a decade, and the numbers of families

14 with children and single adults seeking shelter-- I'm

15 sorry, the number of families with children seeking

16 shelter has been declining in recent months, and we

17 think it's because of the investments that we're

18 making in prevention and rehousing that we've been

19 able to break the trajectory of the increases in

20 homelessness that we have seen these last period of

21 time.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you. So, I

23 understand the argument of supply versus demand and

24 the rising rent. Do you think, or do you believe

25 that the increase in real estate taxes and

2 water/sewer rates that are imposed on these
3 properties that trickle down to the tenants are also
4 contributing to the amount of homelessness through
5 high rents and unaffordability?

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I appreciate the
7 question, but I'm also cognizant of being the Social
8 Services Commissioner and having a very broad mandate
9 to provide services and a broad mandate to be
10 required of expertise in. This is something that's
11 clearly, I think, one of my colleagues would be
12 better situated to answer than me. I appreciate your
13 confidence that I might know the answer, but I think
14 one of my colleagues would be better situated to
15 answer that than me.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I'm looking
17 forward to having an answer. What is the number of
18 staffing that-- or employees currently in this agency
19 through PS, Personal Services?

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Across the
21 integrated agencies, approximately 16,000.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Sixteen thousand?

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Correct, to serve
24 three million New Yorkers.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And what is the
3 total dollar amount allocated to PS to cover those
4 employees? While they look that up, let me go to the
5 next question, maybe you can get back to me.

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: When it comes to
8 the lack of transparency, and I say that with the
9 utmost respect on the hotel spending, I believe
10 that's 384 million dollars?

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's approximately
12 30-- it's approximately 36 million a month, two
13 million for clusters, about 96 million for
14 traditional shelters.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Does that total
16 to 384 million?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No, the 364 million
18 dollars is the annual cost of our commercial hotel
19 contracts. We put those in place in order to control
20 cost and more effectively provide services.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Explain that
22 please. I'm not sure. So you-- those are contract
23 costs whether they're a part-- these hotels are being
24 used or not, this is blocking of rooms?

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: For-- hotels have
3 been used in the City for many years, and one of the
4 things that we found is when we looked at this during
5 the 90-day review of homelessness services in 2016
6 was that the city by renting rooms on an individual
7 night basis was paying much more than we could if we
8 could enter into contracts with not-for-profit
9 providers to be responsible for these operations. And
10 so whereas the City used to pay significantly more
11 than this, we've been able to hold the average cost
12 to 174 dollars a night, and no room costing more than
13 250 dollars a night. Of course, the cost of rooms
14 that you and I might be able to rent, it's different
15 because we require security and space or caseworkers,
16 and amenities and conditions-- accommodations in
17 rooms, refrigerators and so forth. So, the total
18 monthly cost that we gave you gives you each kind of
19 shelter that we use. We're using traditional
20 shelters at 96 million dollars. We have remaining
21 clusters at two million dollars, and we have
22 commercial hotels at 36 million dollars, but we have
23 a contract with several not-for-profits that are
24 improving services and helping us control those
25 costs.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: It looks like a
3 longer question. I'll follow up with you. Any num--
4 on the number or the cost for the number of employees
5 at 16,000?

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: For PS, it's a
7 billion dollars.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: One billion
9 dollars for salaries?

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: For PS for both
11 agencies, the 16,000.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Salaries and
14 differentials for us and overtime for 16,000
15 employees.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
17 Member Gjonaj. We've been joined by Council Members
18 Deutsch and Jager [sp?], and I'll turn it over to
19 Council Member Gibson for questions.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very
21 much, Chair Levin, and good afternoon, Commissioner.
22 I'm going to be brief. I do have a hearing next door
23 to chair on Parks. But first, I wanted to thank you
24 and your team. We have worked consistently together
25 on all of the issues that we've had to address in the

2 City, and certainly I appreciate the work and the
3 cooperation, because I am a member who represents a
4 district that has systemically been over-saturated to
5 no end with homeless shelters, family shelters, and
6 single adult shelters. So, while I appreciate the
7 efforts that the Department continues to undertake, I
8 have to align myself with certainly Council Member
9 Adams and others that have spoken about saturation.
10 There are some communities that have absorbed a lot,
11 and there are some communities that have not absorbed
12 much of anything, and that certainly needs to change.
13 I also want to associate myself with my colleague,
14 Barry Grodenchik, who talked about EFAP funding. My
15 district is high in terms of the needs for homeless--
16 not just homeless but hungry families as well, and so
17 that's always a critical priority we have. I wanted
18 to just ask two very brief questions. Children in
19 shelters, I've worked with your staff on this time
20 and time again, and School District Nine in the Bronx
21 is one of the school districts that has-- you know,
22 Ms. Bonilla, the highest concentration of students in
23 temporary housing. So, I understand past budgets.
24 The Department of Ed has added about 10 million
25 dollars to focus on absenteeism, on dealing with

2 literacy and afterschool and working with a number of
3 shelter providers. So, my first question is how is
4 that going, and what more can we do as we see in our
5 district the number of students in temporary housing
6 continues to grow? The partnership with DOHMH with
7 DOE, how is that going, and what more can your agency
8 to do to provide better service?

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you, and thank
10 you for the partnership with you in your district.
11 You've been a great partner to focus on places that
12 we're getting out of, and as I said at the beginning
13 of the hearing, over the course of the year we're
14 reduced the footprint of DHS by 100 buildings, and
15 we're on our way to reducing the footprint by 360
16 buildings over the course of the plan, and that
17 ultimately has a benefit in your district as well,
18 including the location you and I were at not so long
19 ago that we got out of. I just want to correct the
20 record and answer to Council Member Gjonaj's
21 question, I believe I said 36 million dollars a month
22 for commercial hotels, and earlier in the hearing I
23 said the correct number which is 32 million. I
24 apologize that I confused myself and therefore
25 confused you. So, again, it's 32 million for

2 commercial hotels, 96 million for traditional
3 shelters, and two million for the remaining clusters.

4 Council Member Gibson, we've had a very good
5 partnership with the DOE in terms of the new
6 initiatives that the DOE has put into place. The
7 outgoing Chancellor Farina has been very concerned
8 about these issues, and we appreciate the efforts
9 that are done. The new chancellor is coming in now.

10 We'll certainly be working with him to take a look at
11 how these programs are operating. You highlight, and
12 it came up in connection with Council Member

13 Williams' question, you highlight I think a very
14 important issue, which is that if I be-- if I'm a
15 family with children and I become homeless in your
16 district, I live in your district, I become homeless

17 in your district, and I'm sending my children to a
18 school in your district, our plan is focused on

19 enabling me to keep my school, my children in that
20 school, as opposed to what you have experienced and
21 what has happened for many years, which is the

22 happenstance of locating a shelter in your district
23 results in not only me wanting to have my kids still
24 go to school in your district, but kids from a
25 different place having to leave their school and now

2 be registered in your school in your district. So
3 we're going to be working as we move forward with a
4 plan to achieve that better balance between I'm able
5 to keep my child in the school, and that applies to
6 someone becoming homelessness in your community
7 district as well as someone from Queens, from Staten
8 Island, from Brooklyn, from Manhattan, and that will
9 dramatically transform the experience that you and
10 the schools in your district I think have had in the
11 past, which is that you have the challenges of
12 children that were going to school originally, and
13 the challenges of children that are now sheltered in
14 the district that are now transferring their kids to
15 the school that you're describing, and that's a very
16 real problem. It's been a problem for a number of
17 years, and the plan will address that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: In the meantime, I
20 think the work with the Department of Education will
21 be really focused on what can we do in the interim
22 to deal with some of the issues that you have raised
23 with us.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay. And what I
25 want to offer as a suggestion is to have a more

2 collaborative fashion, so I would love to see if we
3 could be a part, and I say we because I'm including
4 myself to be a part of more conversations with the
5 district superintendent, with Leticia Rosario [sp?]
6 and her staff as well as DHS staff and some of the
7 shelter providers to find out what more we can do. I
8 mean, I don't think we should ever be satisfied with
9 where we are. We should always strive to improve,
10 but certainly I think having the continuous
11 conversations, because I don't want to make it seem
12 as if everything's done in a silo. And I also wanted
13 to ask, the PATH Center, as I understand when we had
14 a hearing last year focused on students in temporary
15 housing, there was to be an additional staffer added.
16 It may not be on DHS. It may be DOE's staff. Okay,
17 but you guys would still be aware of that, because
18 the person would be at PATH right?

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I mean, we have
20 sufficient staffing that's out-stationed to us from
21 both--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [interposing] From
23 DOE?

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: DOE and ACS.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That they're both
3 part of our placement process to give us the
4 assistance we need in making the best choices we can
5 for clients.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Placement in light
8 of educational needs has been-- has improved, but
9 it's not going to be at the place that either you or
10 I would want it to be until we're able to make-- move
11 further in terms of implementation plan.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, and my last
13 question focuses on an area that I'm always
14 passionate about, public safety and just general
15 safety and security in our shelters, working with the
16 NYPD, training up more Peace Officers, the
17 installation of more cameras and security measures,
18 is there an update you can provide to us on where
19 that is going? And you know, we have to acknowledge
20 that although we've made progress, there have been
21 recent incidents that have taken place in some of our
22 shelters, and I speak from knowledge of one that
23 happened in my district. So I guess two questions:
24 What is the update in terms of cameras being
25 installed in our shelters? What is the update on

2 Peace Officers and other security officers that as I
3 understand were being trained by NYPD through that
4 partnership? And then thirdly, what are we doing as
5 an agency to make sure that providers are holding
6 their staff to a higher level of standard? So, in
7 particular, one location I've been working on,
8 there's only two fulltime security guards for a
9 family shelter of 81, and we're now three years later
10 talking about adding a third security guard. Those
11 are the types of things that we should be talking
12 about during the infancy when a location first opens,
13 and not necessarily in years two or three,
14 unfortunately, many times after something happens.
15 So, I don't want to be reactionary. I want to be
16 preventive. And so is there like a formula or
17 something that providers can use to determine how
18 many security officers, how many cameras at each
19 location will get? So, is there an update you can
20 give us on everything I described?

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'm going to do my
22 best.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: You're good at
24 it. You can.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'm going to do my
3 best. I don't want to follow [sic] the Chair--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [interposing] This
5 is my last question, though.

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Oh, okay. First, a
7 very top line, I mean we've doubled the investment in
8 security since the beginning of the Administration,
9 and NYPD has a management team led by Chief Thompson
10 that he meets with, Justin Carter, Administrator of
11 DHS, and myself on a weekly basis. We're in constant
12 contact with him, but he's managing and overseeing
13 our overall security operations. As we open the
14 first 17 shelters that we notified on the plan in
15 year one, and as we move forward into year two and so
16 forth, he and his team will play an integral role in
17 evaluating what our needs are as we open new
18 facilities. We continue to evaluate what is needed
19 in new facilities, and one of the issues that is
20 included in that model budget process is the
21 investment of 236 million dollars in our not-for-
22 profit providers. It includes evaluating how to
23 deploy security as part of the process. Security and
24 rent are varied from facilities, so in a model budget
25 we're going to not have a cookie cutter number. It

2 really depends on what the facilities look like. I
3 don't know whether or not the deployment in the
4 shelter you're describing is correct or not but I
5 will certainly take a look at it. If it's the
6 facility I'm thinking about, it's one that I know
7 we're looking at with you to see what can be done to
8 enhance it. Obviously, there was a tragedy that
9 happened to a family member when they weren't in the
10 facility in the neighborhood, and then there was
11 another incident that involved a dispute among family
12 members in the shelter, and we're looking to work
13 with you to address what happens in the shelter, and
14 the NYPD--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [interposing]

16 Right.

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: obviously does an
18 excellent job on what happens in the community.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay. Thank you
20 so much. I look forward to working with you and your
21 team, and you do amazing work with great challenges,
22 and I certainly commit to working with you on behalf
23 of my district. Your team, I mean, they all know me.
24 I always make sure I'm a loud voice, because my
25 district deserves the attention, and we're going to

2 get it. So, I thank you so much and look forward to
3 working with you. Thank you, Chair Levin, for
4 letting me speak. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
6 Member Gibson. Good luck at your hearing. Council
7 Member Treyger? Okay, Reynoso then Treyger.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Yes, oh,
9 finally. How are you, Commissioner?

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Good, how are you
11 today?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Doing well,
13 doing well, doing well. First, I just want to just
14 looking at the staff and everyone that's here and my
15 experience with working with almost everyone here, I
16 just want to say if there was ever a staff that we
17 should have confidence in in being able to handle
18 these issues, it's definitely your staff. And I just
19 want to shout out our former Council Member Annabel
20 Palma who's also here as well. But with that said,
21 now I got to-- I got to say "but." I just really feel
22 like the operations that we see here or seeing the
23 budget speaks to more like a management of a problem
24 instead of like a solution to a problem, right? I
25 feel like we're figuring out how to manage 60,000

2 people and manage that program, keep it at 60,000,
3 just again, management. And Brad Lander had made
4 mention to actually dealing with an issue. What is
5 the plan to bring this down by half by like 2025 or
6 by 2030? This boldness that we feel that we want to
7 see, we're not necessarily getting that at this
8 moment, and I might-- I agree with that. I don't
9 necessarily think we have a plan to bring the number
10 down a significant amount. I think it's more about
11 how do we manage what we have now. And I just want
12 you to speak to that, and then I want to get into
13 supportive housing. So, I just want you to speak to
14 like a master plan so that we feel comfortable that
15 there is-- there's something going to happen long-
16 term.

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, first of all,
18 thank you for your shout out for our team. I
19 appreciate that, and you have been terrific to work
20 with. We've had some issues that went very smoothly
21 and some issues that were challenges for both of us,
22 and you've been very direct, very forthright, and I
23 think we worked through challenges, and we're going
24 to keep working them through with you, and I really
25 appreciate that. I think that, you know, going back

2 to what I said to an answer that Council Member
3 Lander-- I think it's important to focus on how
4 critical it is to actually manage this challenge
5 that's gone on for a number of decades more
6 effectively, and our plan is really-- I appreciate
7 that you're focused on the plan as one of management.
8 The plan is focused on really four aspects to improve
9 the management and therefore improve better outcomes
10 for the human beings that we're charged with serving.
11 It's not simply a matter of managing things. We're
12 managing services for human beings to get better
13 outcomes for them than they have had in the past.
14 And so that combination of the four approaches,
15 prevention, bringing people in off the streets,
16 rehousing, and transforming approach to shelter for
17 that, keeping people-- giving people the opportunity
18 to be connected to the anchors of life, obviously,
19 taking into account domestic violence survivors and
20 other who need safety and other things. That's a
21 seat change in the way the program, the city has made
22 an approach in homelessness for many years, because
23 it's been without those organizing principles without
24 the kind of investments that we've seen. I know when
25 the Turning the Tide plan was released last-- just

2 about a year ago, that there was a lot of, "Well,
3 your projection is over five years. You're only going
4 to reduce it by 2,500 people." Look, the mayor and I
5 and our team, we're not satisfied with that as the
6 outcome, but we want to also be realistic about the
7 critical importance of changing the approach to the
8 crisis that's gone on for four decades to get better
9 outcomes for people and continue to work hard to
10 drive down the number. So, simply stabilizing it has
11 been-- doesn't happen in a decade, and that's where
12 we are now. We want to do better than that, and the
13 plan involves driving down the number by 2,500
14 people, and we're going to keep looking for ways to
15 do better than that. But we wanted to start-- keep
16 looking for ways to do better than that, but we
17 wanted to start with we have to manage this
18 differently, and that's the approach that we have
19 taken, and you can see the impacts for the, you know,
20 the 70,000 people that didn't get evicted, because of
21 the various legal services and prevention programs.
22 That's a real, live driving down evictions 27
23 percent. That's making a difference, or bringing in
24 the 1,480 human beings from the street and trying to
25 reverse the trend of the people on the street.

2 That's making a difference. And the rehousing moving
3 out of shelter or avoiding shelter altogether for
4 81,000 people, that's having an impact. And then the
5 transformation of shrinking a system that's
6 haphazard, you know as well as anybody what's
7 happened. Your community both when you're out of
8 government and now that you're in government what
9 went on, and trying-- and bringing that 647 buildings
10 down by 100 this year and continuing to drive it down
11 by-- those are the markers of progress, but we want
12 to keep going further as we tackle the overall
13 drivers of homelessness that twice as many people
14 looking for the numbers of units that are out there
15 in the City overall is particularly difficult for our
16 clients looking for units at the lowest end. And I
17 guess I want to say on a personal level, and I said
18 this at the time of the plan, when I used to be at
19 the Legal Aid Society I had a plan from every
20 Administration in my bookshelf that had promises of
21 dramatic changes, and the end result was after
22 decades we'd have a haphazard system that wasn't
23 working for people. So, we said to ourselves, let's
24 change the system and we'll keep driving down as much
25 as we can, but it's fundamental to change the system

2 in order to drive down the numbers instead of having
3 this constant growth of these great plans that end up
4 on bookshelves.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: So--

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] I know
7 I didn't give a totally satisfying answer, but I'm
8 giving it from--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing]
10 You've admitted to some degree that management is a
11 top priority, is that when folks come through our
12 system that we give them the highest quality service,
13 and we do our best to try to divert and so forth, so
14 management is like the foundation of what you're
15 building off of. So, I'm okay with that. That's
16 fine. That answer is fine. But I want to talk about
17 supportive housing, right? So, a lot of folks
18 believe that if you build-- you can build your way
19 out of this if you build enough supportive housing,
20 maybe the 30 percent, I think is the number, give or
21 take of folks that are actually employed that are
22 living within-- that are in the shelter system?

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: About 34 percent--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing]
25 Thirty-four percent.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: of the families with
3 children, have an adult working, about 15 percent of
4 the single adults are working--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing]
6 Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: in comparable numbers
8 for families.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: So, we got a
10 population there that with subsidies and supportive
11 housing could move out of the system and into
12 supportive housing, but then I look at the numbers of
13 15,000 is a goal to build, which I think is low,
14 right? Fifteen thousand units of supportive housing,
15 the Mayor's plan for affordable housing, and I think
16 you're at 500, give or take?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, there-- I think
18 there's two different plans that you're referring to.
19 I want to make sure I'm answering it correctly. So,
20 one plan is the Housing New York Plan, how many units
21 are there, and then there's the supportive housing
22 plan, which helps our clients that have mental health
23 challenges and so forth, and the substantial portion
24 of supportive housing plan is congregate constructive
25 housing that HPD is overseeing the development of,

2 and as we know there's a lead time to actually
3 develop it. We said we would get about 500 people
4 into scatter site supportive housing, and we're just
5 about there in terms of people either in units or
6 linked to units and moving forward. Of course, we
7 try to find units in the current rental market. We
8 have excellent not-for-profit providers that are out
9 there searching every day, and we've got that first
10 number of people that are there, and we're going to
11 keep driving forward as we-- as the congregate
12 numbers start to come on, that will give us a bigger
13 boost in terms of those numbers, but the supportive
14 housing is helpful to us predominantly for single
15 adults who have mental health and other impairments.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: So, yeah, I was
17 talking more of the new construction of housing
18 units.

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: In Housing New York.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Yes, exactly.
21 So, I know it's an-- I guess an HPD question more so
22 than an HRA question, but I just want to put that in
23 perspective that we have 400, about 480 units that
24 have been built so far. It's been four years since
25 the Mayor's been in office, four years and two or

2 three months, and we have 488 units, and I just feel
3 that maybe there's some level of bureaucracy or
4 procurement or whatever it is that exists that
5 doesn't allow us to build these units faster, and I'm
6 not specifically speaking to the development and
7 private properties. I'm talking about city-owned
8 sites and city land, and for example, I have the
9 Greenpoint Hospital in my district that has yet to
10 finish an RFP. It's owned by the City. It can build
11 700 units of housing of which many of those can be
12 supportive housing, and we're still sitting on an
13 empty lot. And also I have the Dekalb Avenue Shelter
14 that is new in my site that we worked a great deal
15 with the community who accepted it with no fights.
16 It's supposed to also be converted into supportive
17 housing. I've yet to sit down with anyone that is
18 talking about how that's going to be converted to
19 supportive housing from a shelter, or you know, half
20 shelter/half supportive housing. I just want to know
21 who's going to be in charge of making sure that we're
22 building, we are building as well, that that is a
23 parallel track that we're on, because right now I
24 don't feel like that's being taken seriously now.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I mean, the Chair
3 held a great hearing with HPD Commissioner and me,
4 and we talked about a lot of these issues. Again, I
5 want to emphasize that 488 number is supportive
6 housing which is different from the Mayor's Housing
7 Plan. In terms of the Mayor's Housing Plan we can
8 certainly range for an opportunity for the HPD
9 Commissioner to follow up with you. the shelter on
10 Dekalb which we worked together on, and I thought
11 that was a very positive approach to say, you know,
12 well let's create the shelter from a building that
13 might have gone onto the private market, and then it
14 would have been lost forever with a way to figure out
15 how to try to convert it back to permanent housing.
16 That is actually something that I do have the ability
17 to make a commit on, so why don't we sit down and
18 together continue the good that we did in getting it
19 open to see what's going to happen to that site. I'm
20 happy to follow up with you on that.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member, we
22 have--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing]
24 This is my last--
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] We have
3 five members, and that's supposed to be starting--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Yeah, this is
5 going to be last my question. So, the last question,
6 Chair, I apologize. In the Dekalb Shelter, they're
7 saying that they're spending over 26,000 dollars on
8 fixing items that they're getting ticketed [sic] on
9 for by FDNY and other city agencies, DOB, and they're
10 paying for that out of pocket. Is there a
11 conversation that you're having with these shelters
12 that are being operated by not-for-profits to assist
13 them with not having to pay these fines and maybe
14 fixing the problem and having the fines, you know,
15 absolved?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I mean, we've put a
17 lot of money into the shelter budgets for providers
18 to be able to make repairs. Why don't we look into
19 together what the situation is at Dekalb and see how
20 it got to that point. I-- as I said, I think,
21 earlier in the testimony, there were really three
22 challenges that I saw when the 90-day review began in
23 2016 really. One was the underinvestment in the
24 providers in terms of their staffing and their needs.
25 Two was the underinvestment in maintenance, and three

2 was security. And so the budgeting process that
3 really is resulting in 236 million dollars being
4 invested in the not-for-profit sector is sort of
5 aimed at addressing what I'm assuming maybe the
6 providers coming to you and saying, "Hey, I couldn't
7 fix it because x, y, and z." We're addressing that
8 and I want to just understand what happened in that
9 particular instance.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
11 Member Reynoso. Council Member Treyger? And
12 members, I'm going to actually put a clock on right
13 now because we have five members and I have members
14 of the Juvenile Justice Committee that are going to
15 be showing up in six minutes to seek attendance in
16 the Juvenile Justice Committee. So, if the Sergeant
17 at Arms can put six minutes on the clock? Thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you to the
19 Chair. Welcome, Commissioner Banks. You testified
20 before earlier to Council Member Gibson that there's
21 a good relationship between your agency and the
22 Department of Education. Respectfully, how good is
23 it when significant number of students who are
24 labeled as homeless or students in temporary housing
25 are being reported for chronic absenteeism in our

2 schools? And there is not adequate follow-up being
3 conducted by your agency and the DOE, which I
4 addressed at my hearings recently as well. And we're
5 learning that there is inadequate number of personnel
6 dedicated to this very serious issue, and there's
7 also a question of whether or not the personnel had
8 adequate training to actually navigate the multiple
9 layers of bureaucracy between the DOE and your
10 agency. So, can you speak to the extent of this
11 relationship and making sure that there is adequate
12 communication, coordination when the numbers speak
13 for themselves? We have over 33-- we have close to
14 33,000 students living in shelters. The number,
15 total number of students who are labeled as homeless
16 exceeds now over 110,000. The Comptroller recently
17 conducted an audit that focused on a sample size, but
18 found significant number of kids who are just being
19 absent and absent day after day, missing instruction,
20 and no follow-up being conducted. So, can you speak
21 to this, because quite frankly I have to question the
22 relationship between your agency and the Department
23 of Education?

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: First of all, always
25 good to see you. Thank you for your question on this

2 topic. Let me raise a few issues and then I'm happy
3 to continue the discussion offline because I know the
4 time is limited here. First, from our perspective
5 one of the most important things that the DOE did for
6 us and our clients was to stand up the busing service
7 to provide buses to get our clients to schools. And
8 the whole reason why we need this busing apparatus is
9 because of the problem that we're trying to address
10 in the Turning the Tide Plan, which is the placement
11 of families away from the anchors of their lives,
12 including the schools. So, the busing that they have
13 stood up to enable our kids to get school we think is
14 very important. The Comptroller's report, City
15 Comptroller's report focused on various aspects of
16 the DOE's processes, and we're certainly going to be
17 pursuing with the incoming commissioner, the
18 chancellor, anything that we can do to help with
19 those processes, because we take that seriously. I
20 think you're also highlighting, and I appreciate that
21 you're doing it, that the problem of homeless
22 students is actually beyond the number of homeless
23 students that were in our shelter system because it
24 encompasses, as it should, under the McKinney Act,
25 all of those young people that are not stably housed,

2 not in our system even, and that's part of the
3 challenge that I know that DOE has of a much larger
4 group of young people than the people that are in our
5 system. But I can tell you that from an operational
6 point of view, getting the buses in place is critical
7 to getting children to school, and we'll certainly
8 work with the new chancellor on the kinds of findings
9 that the City comptroller made regarding the DOE's
10 processes, and I'm happy to sit down and meet with
11 you and take any suggestions. You've made a number
12 to me over the years. They've always been good ones.
13 I'm happy to--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [interposing]

15 Right.

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: take into account
17 what you have to say.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I'm aware that
19 the DOE-- well, first of all, in their prelim budget
20 they didn't even indicate that they would continue
21 the 10.3 million dollars for support services for
22 students in temporary housing until we got them on
23 the record recently saying that they would continue,
24 but that number is still woefully inadequate because
25 the need keeps growing and we're playing a game of

2 catch-up here, but one of the things that I believe
3 is critical is that in their initial investments they
4 placed some social workers, some-- we need a lot
5 more-- in schools. We need to place staff, trained
6 staff in shelters, in facilities, because sometimes
7 these students they might be assigned, enrolled in a
8 school, but due to a variety of reasons they might
9 transfer because they might be moving to a new
10 location for a variety of reasons. But the social
11 worker does not move from that school to that new
12 school either. So, I think it makes sense to have
13 trained licensed, credentialed social workers in some
14 of your sites making sure that families can rely on
15 them for assistance to enroll them in those school
16 communities. I agree that this is multi-layered
17 here. It's more than just students in your shelters.
18 It's over 110,000 kids that are living with some
19 relatives, some horrible stories where I've heard
20 students living with parents in cars. It's
21 heartbreaking, but we need to do all that we can from
22 your end and from the DOE's end to make sure that we
23 are just kind of helping them navigate the
24 bureaucracy, and so I believe-- have you asked the
25

2 DOE for social workers or guidance counselors
3 assigned at your facilities?

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: The original program
5 that was developed goes back to when First Deputy
6 Mayor Shores [sp?] was here was developed in
7 consultation with us to stand up the best operation
8 that DOE evaluated would make a difference. Let me
9 consider what you're raising with us to see what
10 other steps we can take. And again, I know your time
11 is up. I'm happy to talk to you offline. I
12 appreciate the recommendation you're making, the
13 suggestion you're making to me.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Closing comment-
15 - thank you Chair. I'd like to follow up as well
16 with your agency with regards to the proposed WIN
17 facility in Coney Island, making sure that the
18 environmental concerns raised by advocates who are
19 actually in support of as well of helping families in
20 Coney Island, that it's actually safe for the
21 residents there. So, I'll follow up with your agency
22 about that. Thank you, Chair.

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Absolutely. Thank
24 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member
3 Ritchie Torres?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: How are you,
5 Commissioner?

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Good, how are you
7 today?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: You and I have had
9 countless conversations--

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing]
11 Absolutely.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: about the
13 complicated balancing act between the goal of keeping
14 individuals and families connected to their local
15 communities and the goal of widely distributing
16 shelters with an eye toward equity, and-- I guess one
17 criticism I would have of DHS is that it seems to me
18 that instead of striking a thoughtful balance between
19 those goals, DHS seems to be pursuing one to the
20 exclusion of the other. So, I'll ask a few
21 questions. How many shelters have been sited so far
22 under Turning the Tide?

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Seventeen. Can I
24 answer the-- what I think is the next question.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: How many are in
3 the Bronx?

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Nine are in the
5 Bronx, five in Brooklyn, two in Manhattan, and one in
6 Queens.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And what are the
8 number of council districts and community districts
9 whose residents enter their shelter system, but which
10 have no shelters of their own? I'll call them the
11 "zero shelter zones."

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, why don't we--
13 if I could answer it this way, and I think it'll be
14 satisfactory to you. So, at an earlier part of the
15 hearing we talked about the borough of Queens in
16 which overall there are currently an excess of
17 10,000, and I can get you the exact number, 10,000--
18 it's like 10,500 or so people sheltered in Queens,
19 and about 8,500 people from Queens-- again, I'm
20 rounding these numbers-- in our system, but when we
21 close the hotels in Queens we'll have a deficit of
22 about 2,400, and where there's a need to site
23 shelters in that borough to replace that hotel
24 capacity. Or similarly, in Staten Island, we have
25 1,300 people from Staten Island in our shelter

2 system. We have capacity only for about 140. And so
3 part of the plan will be addressing that problem as
4 we move forward.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I guess my
6 criticism is that given the initial 17 sitings, I see
7 no evidence of a commitment to fair share or siting
8 shelters in those zero shelter zones. The community
9 districts, there are how many community districts?
10 How many council districts and community districts
11 have zero shelters?

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: There are a number.
13 I can't recall each one off the top of my head, but
14 as you and I have discussed, there are a number, and
15 then we will be building shelters in those districts.
16 Some of those districts have hotels; we'll be closing
17 them and replacing them with shelters. But I want
18 to--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] What
20 keeps you from siting shelters in the community
21 districts that have none?

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Over the life of the
23 plan there'll be nothing that stops us from doing
24 that, but let me talk to--
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] But
3 the initial 17?

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right. I wanted to
5 sort of give you the context.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Because the
7 initial decision set the tone, right? It conveys to
8 me how serious is DHS is about fair share.

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, just by way of
10 example, we've sited the first shelter that there
11 ever was in the Riverdale Community District, for
12 example. That's one of those 17 shelters.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Right.

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: And one of our
15 challenges as we take things down, dealing with
16 replacement capacity, and prioritize taking down
17 clusters first. So, I can see from the points you're
18 raising with me, the challenges that this produces,
19 but I want to assure you that as we continue to move
20 forward we will end up with a system that is across
21 the five boroughs, gives us the ability to offer to
22 clients the ability to be sheltered in their home
23 borough as close as possible to their anchors of
24 life. Let me describe for you the process and some
25 help that we could use in moving the process forward.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I have no clock,
3 or do I have a clock?

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Could I--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] It
6 depends if I have a clock. I'd be happy to hear the
7 process unless I'm time-- do I have a time limit, or?
8 Was there-- okay.

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, let me try to
10 keep this to a minute or a minute and a half. So, we
11 operate in a procurement environment in which we're
12 able to open shelters based upon proposals that come
13 to us from not-for-profit shelter providers, and then
14 it's a procurement matter. Shortly after we
15 announced the plan we called all of the providers in
16 and showed them the areas of the city where we have
17 no shelters where we need to have shelters, and the
18 areas in the City in which we're closing the clusters
19 and the hotels, and we need to have replacement
20 shelters. And we highlighted our expectation that as
21 the plan proceeded that we would begin to get
22 procurement proposals in those areas. We also, in
23 the plan, said that communities were welcome to
24 identify sites for us, and we have some notable
25 examples of that, Community Board Seven. Council

2 Member Cohen helped us site a 200-bed mental health
3 shelter for single men that we're opening shortly.

4 And we just sent out a letter to every single
5 Community Board and every single community and every
6 single Council Member asking to help us in
7 identifying sites. Having said that, you know that
8 one site that we're opening in 58th Street in
9 Manhattan. The comments that are being made about
10 why we shouldn't open a shelter there are exactly the
11 kind of comments that you and I are pushing back on
12 as we move forward with this plan. So, I would say--
13 I would look at where we're siting some of these
14 shelters, like on 50th Street in Manhattan, and the
15 first one in Riverdale.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And what number
17 is that in the list?

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That is number 12 on
19 the list. That was the 12th of the first 17 that we
20 announced. Number six on the list was the first one
21 in the Riverdale Community Board that had ever
22 existed. And then other shelters, as you know, and
23 you've been a great partner in this, we've sited
24 because we wanted to meet special needs. So, for
25 example, the shelter that you were tremendously

2 supportive of, the LGBTQ shelter, the first one that
3 DHS has had. I appreciate that it's in your
4 district, and we wouldn't have been able to do it
5 frankly if it wasn't for you. Or a shelter for
6 single women who have mental health needs that was
7 sited in Prospect Heights in Brooklyn. We wouldn't
8 have been able to do that without the kind of support
9 that we got from the local community, and I could go
10 through various of these sites, but--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] You
12 don't have to.

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: you are right, when
14 we get to 90 and 360 places are closed and 90 places
15 are open, the system is going to look very different
16 from how it looked when we started in terms of where
17 places are and--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: [interposing]
19 [inaudible] Got to keep moving. Thank you. Council
20 Member Deutsch?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you, Chair.
22 Thank you. Good afternoon, Commissioner.

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Good afternoon.
24
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, I understood
3 from what you said before, you have 16,000 employees
4 in DHS.

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And--

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] No, at
8 DSS, the Department of Social Services--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: [interposing] And
10 DSS--

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] It
12 includes both HRA and DSS.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, that
14 includes everyone, 16,000 employees and the budget,
15 that would be approximately one billion dollars,
16 right?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: In PS, including
18 overtime.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Does that
20 include also breaking ground?

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, breaking
23 ground, what is the budget for breaking ground, and
24 how many employees do they have?
25

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I will have to get
3 back to you on that. That's one component of our
4 street outreach operation which we've doubled the
5 spending for overall. I'd have to get back to you on
6 their exact budget numbers.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Alright, thank
8 you. So that would mean if 16,000 employees, that
9 would mean one person per over three homeless people?

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No, the correct
11 calculation is 16,000 people serving three million
12 New Yorkers. HRA serves three million New Yorkers
13 who receive Medicaid, food stamps, cash assistance,
14 adult protective services, HASA services, HomeCare
15 services, customized services, domestic violence
16 services, plus the Department of Homeless Services
17 outreach prevention programs operated by both
18 agencies, legal services programs, and of course, the
19 shelter programs and rehousing programs.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Got it, thanks.
21 So, a few days ago I had an Aging hearing, and the
22 Commissioner mentioned that you have 2,000 homeless
23 seniors. Are you familiar with that?

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes, we have 2,000
25 seniors in our shelter system.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, are those
3 2,000 identified?

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Are they living
6 in homeless shelters, or do you call them-- consider
7 them homeless because they're living in the streets?

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: These are in our
9 shelter systems.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, can you
11 please elaborate on what DHS is doing with these
12 2,000 seniors, and how many of the 2,000 are actually
13 homelessness, not in the shelter system?

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: All 2,000 of those
15 individuals are in our shelter system. We have taken
16 two-fold approach to address senior homelessness.
17 One thing that we've done is we created a rental
18 subsidy that I available to help move seniors out of
19 shelter. It's one of the LINC subsidies, and it's
20 available for senior citizens as well as four clients
21 that are single adults and adult families where
22 they're receiving SSI or they appear to be eligible
23 for SSI. So, we set up a specific rental assistance
24 program to deal with single adult homeless senior
25 citizen adult homelessness, and we also opened the

2 first shelter for senior men in Brooklyn in Crown
3 Heights as one of the first shelters, and we
4 certainly welcome other proposals along those lines.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, from the
6 2,000 homeless seniors, how many shelters are they
7 spread out in? So, is that 2,000 in-- just how many
8 shelters?

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'd have to get you
10 the exact breakdown of where those--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: so, would these
12 seniors be like in the same shelter as homeless
13 people who have mental illness, or do you have a
14 separate facility dedicated to seniors?

15 COMMISSIONER BANKS: A senior that has
16 mental illness would be in a shelter that's intended
17 for mental health clients. A senior that does not
18 have a mental health need might be in a general
19 population shelter.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Okay, if you can
21 just let me know how many shelters that these 2,000
22 seniors--

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Sure.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: spread out.

25 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Happy to do it.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Also, you have
3 approximately a little over 450 homeless veterans.
4 So, they are currently in about six veteran shelters
5 and also spread out in 70 homeless shelters
6 throughout the City. So, veterans have the resources
7 and funding for to have a rental subsidy. So, my
8 question is is that if we take the 450 veterans,
9 because we have federal funding for them already, for
10 most of them if not all, and if we take them out of
11 the shelters and put them into livable apartments,
12 then that would free up these shelters to bring in
13 some of the 63,000 homeless people that you have in
14 the City right now. So, what do you think of that,
15 of taking down the homeless veterans, putting them
16 into livable apartments because the federal funding
17 is there. It means this city does not have to pay
18 for their subsidy. This is federal funding.

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I wish that all
20 veterans were eligible for federal HUD-VASH rental
21 assistance. Unfortunately, not all veterans are--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: No, I understand
23 that. So, from the 450 do you know how many are not
24 eligible?
25

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's not an
3 inconsequential number. We can get you the exact
4 number, but by way--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: [interposing] So
6 you would say most of them are eligible?

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No, I wouldn't agree
8 with that. By way of background, when we were
9 certified by the Federal Government for ending
10 chronic veterans' homelessness, we moved out in a
11 very short period of time about 1,200 veterans, and
12 yet we still have another group of veterans, because
13 veterans become homeless like any other New Yorker.
14 So I want to just put in context, if the suggestion
15 is if we could move out that group of people, we
16 would free up space. Our experience is that that did
17 not occur--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: [interposing] So,
19 over the last few years, those numbers were stable. I
20 checked the numbers over the last two years, and they
21 didn't really go too high up, only by a few
22 individuals.

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That's because every
24 week we move out veterans, and the numbers coming in
25 are roughly equivalent, but again, our experience--

2 let me step back. If anyone's got an apartment for
3 one of our veterans-- you and I have talked about
4 this, and you and I are on 100 percent the same page.
5 The more apartments we get to move out veterans, this
6 is a good thing. I only want to give the context
7 that in a very short period of time we moved out
8 1,200 veterans into permanent housing that allowed us
9 to address chronic veterans' homelessness, but we
10 still have veterans homelessness occurring for the
11 same reasons that we have homelessness occurring
12 overall, but I like your idea that we talked about in
13 other context of trying to focus on this population
14 in particular to connect them going forward. We will
15 get back to you on the proportion that actually are
16 eligible for HUD-VASH to see whether or not we can
17 work together to advance this. I think-- I appreciate
18 your perspective on this.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you,
20 Commissioner. I just-- in closing, I just want to
21 say-- I just want to tell you thank you for always
22 being accessible. I know we had conversations a few
23 weeks ago at 11:00 p.m., 11 o'clock at night, and
24 you're always available to discuss issues pertaining
25

2 to our homeless. So, I just want to say thank you,
3 Commissioner.

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I appreciate it, but
5 now you gave me up to every other Council Member that
6 I'm available at 11, but thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: thank you, Council
8 Member Deutsch. Council Member Yeger?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: good afternoon,
10 Commissioner. I want to take us back real quickly to
11 the very exciting topic of imminent domain that
12 Councilman Gjonaj was talking about. Have you-- you
13 indicate in your testimony that it's a plan. Have
14 you actually begun the condemnation process for any
15 property yet?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: When the Mayor and I
17 announced this along with Commissioner Torres-
18 Springer, we announced as follows and for a range of
19 reasons that I think you-- I know you would
20 appreciate. We identified target buildings, because
21 of the nature of the negotiations. We will reveal
22 them once we conclude the negotiations, and we said
23 very clearly that we've given ourselves a year to
24 conclude negotiations out of court, financing the
25 not-for-profit developers to purchase the buildings,

2 and if we are unsuccessful by the end of this
3 calendar year, we will commence the imminent domain
4 process. Again, we believe that we can complete it
5 within the closure period of time by 2021.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Right, okay. So,
7 as you know, because you're a far wiser
8 constitutional scholar than I am, imminent domain
9 requires first, you know, the offer, at least in New
10 York, the offer to purchase for fair market value
11 which presumably if you're not able to come to a deal
12 it's because the recipient of the offer does not feel
13 that they've been offered fair market value. So, I
14 trust the agency is going to be doing that. But what
15 I want to focus on is the identification of the
16 sites, and just stop me if I'm wrong. Just say,
17 "You're wrong," and you know, fix me. The- as I
18 understand it what you're looking at essentially is
19 to go at the sites where you currently are and to
20 take those under imminent domain to acquire them, the
21 cluster sites. Is that correct?

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's a subset of the
23 cluster sites because the public purpose is to end
24 the cluster program and convert cluster units into
25 permanent housing.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER BANKS: To address
4 homelessness.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: So, in essence,
6 and again, it's not to be snarky at all, but what--
7 the way it seems to me is that an agency or a company
8 or the private owner chose to do business with the
9 City, and as payment for that choosing to do business
10 with the City it maybe was a good partner with the
11 City, maybe not, is in essence being subjected to the
12 potentiality of an imminent domain proceeding that's
13 going to take over their property, because obviously
14 you're only going to do imminent domain if they're
15 not willing to sell.

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, in terms of
17 the-- imminent domain, as you know, is a last resort,
18 as we've articulated it, but it's also a process in
19 which if the parties can't come to an agreement about
20 what the fair value of the property is, the court
21 sets that number, and there's a defined process. So,
22 the property owner is compensated either in an out-
23 of-court agreement or through a court proceeding in
24 which the amount of money is set by a court.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay. And really,
3 I don't want to run out the clock completely, because
4 I know the Chair needs to move on. Without giving
5 any trade secrets, without letting us into any, you
6 know, particular site that does have to stay
7 confidential, and I understand that, the sites that
8 you're looking at for taking over under this, you
9 know, first make an offer then potentially imminent
10 domain, are any of them actually hotels or are they
11 all apartment buildings, or is there a mix, or you're
12 not really able to say?

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: They're in buildings
14 that are part of a cluster program, which by
15 definition is a program in which the City for 18
16 years, going back to the Giuliani Administration,
17 rented apartments in apartment buildings.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay, so no former
19 hotel or currently, current hotel that's being
20 utilized for the service is being looked at for the
21 potential of purchasing, acquiring and eventually
22 condemnation if necessary.

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: For reasons that I
24 know you can appreciate, I'd like to stick the answer
25 that I gave--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: [interposing] Fair-

3 -

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: which is that--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: [interposing] Fair
6 enough.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: focused on buildings
8 that are being used as part of the cluster program.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Fair enough. I
10 appreciate that. I'm going to leave it at that, and I
11 do look forward over the next couple of months as you
12 move further down this process to you updating the
13 Council on where this stands. I've sat on this floor.
14 I've talked about landmarks, which is not the subject
15 of this, but with the same theory that I look at as a
16 taking, and when I see a taking, and you know, again,
17 there was a constitutionalist on this, but when I see
18 a taking, you know, my back stands straight up and I
19 get a little nervous about that. We don't want
20 government doing the takings that the constitution
21 envisioned, and obviously with the payment of fair
22 market value it is the government's right, but I'd
23 like to make sure that the agency is doing this in an
24 extraordinarily judicious, fair, reasonable way,
25 which I know you will. That's your reputation, but

2 part of what I do is to just make sure that that's
3 really what's happening. I do look forward to
4 hearing more about it.

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay, thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you,
7 Commissioner.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
9 Council Member Yeger. Council Member Rosenthal?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so
11 much, Chair, and thank you, Commissioner. It's
12 always a pleasure working with you and your team. I
13 just have a couple of quick questions. I'm going to
14 spend less than six minutes. The number of APS cases
15 seems to be going up, but the staffing level seems
16 flat, and I'm-- this is-- you'll hear all my
17 questions are basically about a question that I asked
18 the Mayor when the Preliminary Budget came out, which
19 made it clear that they were freezing hiring, and
20 when I asked him which positions, he said, "all our
21 nonessential services that are being frozen." I just
22 came from a hearing at, you know, BSA.
23 Unfortunately, their staff is being frozen. I felt
24 the effects of that, buy you know, is there any sort
25 of hiring freeze at your agency?

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I want to answer it
3 carefully. So, at the beginning of this testimony I
4 talked about having repurposed 550 positions in
5 central administration of our agency to be in the
6 direct service part of the agency, and so we do
7 things like that all the time in which we--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
9 Fair, okay.

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: repurpose lines--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
12 So, let's talk about APS in particular.

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right. So, I wanted
14 to drill it down to APS, but I was just-- the way you
15 asked the question--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing] I
17 hear you.

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I said, alright, I'm
19 under oath. I want to make sure I answer it
20 appropriately. In terms of APS, I think there are
21 two things that have been going on with our APS
22 programs since I've been the Commissioner. APS is
23 part of HRA, so it goes back the full four years. We
24 did a focus on two things about APS when I came. One
25 was: is the net wide enough in terms of people who

2 might need our help? It's subject to a state
3 statute, so therefore it's not is the eligibility
4 criteria can we change it, because we're limited by a
5 state statute, but is the net wide enough? And then
6 whether it's wide enough or not, are we deployed in
7 the right way. In other words, is it just every case
8 that comes in or do we have--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing] I
10 got you.

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: different? So we did
12 two things. One is we got a greater presence in the
13 Housing Court in terms of APS staff. Two, we made
14 online referrals possible. And three, we did some
15 redeployment within APS with some additional staffing
16 that we were authorized for OMB, but we're--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
18 When was the additional staff authorized?

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Two years ago?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Two years,
21 okay. So nothing this fiscal year, two years ago.

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yeah, it was--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
24 Okay.
25

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We can get the exact
3 time, just not in the current fiscal year, but I can
4 tell you as we look at-- so we've cast the net
5 wider. Much of what is coming to us--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
7 Okay

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: is not fitting in
9 the state statute. So we have challenges with
10 volume, but ultimately it's the--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
12 So, in other words, you feel like the process, you've
13 made the process more efficient possibly, so you can
14 handle this larger swath of people.

15 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes, with the caveat
16 that like all part of our operation we're looking at
17 all the time, and I wouldn't want you to feel misled
18 if we look at it three months from now saying, you
19 know what, we need to do x, y, and z.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Well, I mean,
21 it came up again when we worked with some of our
22 residents who are HRA clients who go in for services,
23 have to go in. I saw your information about how much
24 can be done online.

25 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: But you know,
3 we're hearing that the workers there, they're well--
4 a lot of overtime, and you know, people are just
5 burning out left and right, and so you know, we're
6 asking a little too much.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: The referrals can be
8 by others of a particular person. Like, I could--
9 I'm not going to do this-- but I could refer you
10 online. But in order to assess you, we have to see
11 you in person, and we typically do that in the field
12 as it's to your home, someone's home.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Got it. So,
14 the point being that staff are being overworked. Do
15 you find that your staff are having to work many
16 extra hours a day, you know, back to the question of
17 do you have enough staff to do the job, or is there a
18 big burnout rate?

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's a field work
20 orientation. That work is frequently outside of
21 regular hours. As I said, we looked at our staffing
22 and did do an additional deployment. They're all
23 members of Local 371 with whom we have great
24 partnership in terms of making changes, and we'll
25

2 certainly follow up with that and look at the overall
3 situation.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So you would
5 consider-- you're going to look into seeing whether
6 or not workers are overburdened in-- I didn't quite
7 hear what you said. I'm so sorry.

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No problem at all.
9 We continue to monitor the situation and we're
10 certainly have had a good working relationship with
11 Local 371, and we'll keep our close eye on it, in
12 part because we should look at it anyway, and in part
13 because you're raising it with me. So, I want to
14 look--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay. Well, I
16 mean, it'd be great to be able to see some sort of--
17 I don't know if you regularly give this information,
18 but some sort of turnover, you know, what you're
19 turnover levels are, how long somebody stays, you
20 know, indicators of burnout. And then lastly, just
21 about your model budgeting, which is something we
22 talked a lot about over the years, I think there was
23 an additional money added for model budgeting, 120
24 million dollars. I'm wondering how quickly you can
25 get that money out. We're nearing the end of Fiscal

2 Year 18. Do you think you will have updated all the
3 budgets by the end of the fiscal year so that that
4 full 120 million, you know, may not have all been
5 allocated for Fiscal Year 18, but you'll have the
6 full-year value for 19? Although, it should be
7 retroactive, but that's just me.

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It is retroactive,
9 and I think you described the situation well. We
10 spent a lot of time engaging the providers, and it's
11 a two-way street sometimes. We're going to agree.
12 Sometimes we're not going to agree. We ran a
13 process, and we do expect to address retroactive
14 activity for 18, some of their expenses, and I assume
15 there are. And in 19 we should be ready--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
17 Do you expect--

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] by
19 running like you said.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: to spend the
21 full 120 million?

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Do you expect
24 it might be more?

25 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Not this--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
3 Could you contemplate that?

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Not based upon the
5 model budget that was set up. We set up a model
6 budget and requested the amount of money to fund it.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you.
8 Thank you very much.

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
11 Member Rosenthal. Council Member Menchaca?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you,
13 Chair, and hello, Commissioner.

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: How are you?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Really excited
16 to see you here and your team. Thank you for your
17 patience in these conversations and your commitment.

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So, I have a
20 couple of themed questions. I'm going to start with
21 the first one, and the first one is on the RFP. I
22 don't think it has a name necessarily, but I think it
23 results in the hotel contracts, the-- to offer better
24 services, or better access to social services,
25

2 etcetera, security for these families. You know what
3 I'm talking about?

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I do.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great. So, I
6 want to get a better sense for you to give us a
7 review of the goal for that contract that's outlined
8 here, better social services, security for families,
9 and costs. You reported about the cost, and you're
10 kind of driving the cost down for the use of these
11 contracts, but I didn't see any other data responding
12 to better social services, how you're measuring that,
13 security for families, how you're measuring that. I
14 just wanted to give you the opportunity to kind of
15 speak to that. And offer any other goals for that
16 RFP that I might not know.

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you. I mean, I
18 think you touched on a lot of the key points.
19 Overall, an overall goal of the RFP is to get out--
20 was to get out of the many years' practice off and on
21 of simply representing-- renting the individual hotel
22 rooms or a few blocks of rooms here and there, and to
23 get to a place where cost could be controlled and
24 services could be improved. And so the numbers that
25 you're looking at of being able to keep cost to 174

2 dollars a night on average, and nothing above 250 was
3 frankly meant to address the situation that I came
4 into when we do the 90-day review of rooms costing a
5 significant amount more than that, that the
6 Comptroller reported on, and this was a mechanism to
7 bring this operation under a contracting process.

8 Parallel to that, though, has been the NYPD oversight
9 of security, and so again, during the 90-day review
10 NYPD evaluated the security needs at each location,
11 and they do that for any new location that's used,
12 and so that's where security is operating separately
13 from what I described to you as we're trying to drive
14 down the cost of the rentals. Security is being
15 driven by NYPD assessment of what's needed. So, the
16 two could be going in different directions, and in
17 fact, they are. Then there's the services to try to,
18 as much as possible, improve the services that
19 clients get, so they could be the types of services
20 that clients would get in shelter-- so, help with
21 public assistance, help with case management and so
22 forth, and making sure that independent living plans
23 are in place. Having said that, there's a reason why
24 we're phasing out the use of hotels, because the use
25 of hotels is not something we want to continue to do,

2 but the RFP and the contract that we put in place is
3 intended in this phase-out period and this interim
4 period to get the best services that we can in this
5 setting, security and control costs of room rentals.
6 So, there's multiple things going on at once, and I
7 think you touched on them in your question very well.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Well, okay. So
9 maybe what we can do is set up some time with your
10 team and talk a little bit about how that's getting
11 felt on the ground.

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I think there's
14 still some issues around security, around social
15 services, and really making sure that there's a
16 baseline experience across the board. While we do
17 have intentions, and I'm hearing from you that we're
18 moving away from hotel use, hotel contracts, that
19 they're still out there, and they're still coming.
20 And not only that, I think you're hearing from
21 members, developers are building for that contract,
22 whether they have formal, informal conversations with
23 all of you. Anytime a hotel pops up in our
24 neighborhoods people are making that connection and I
25 don't know how many times out of what, but it

2 happens. And so I think that's what we're trying to
3 figure out, and for a community like mine, Community
4 Board Seven, we have been good partners with you. We
5 have been working with you and your team to make sure
6 that we can do our part.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: You have been good
8 partners, and look, just to quickly answer a comment
9 that you're making, we've been very clear we're
10 prioritizing getting shelters online. The quicker we
11 can get them online we can save 100 million dollars
12 in hotel costs in a year, but at the same time we've
13 also said in the short term we may need to expand
14 usage, but any developer that thinks this is a long-
15 term proposition, we've been extremely clear, crystal
16 clear that this is not a long-term proposition
17 anymore in New York City.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great. So, I
19 look forward to that conversation. Now, speaking of
20 contracts, I'm going to move away from homeless
21 shelters, and we missed yesterday at our immigration
22 hearing, and I want to-- I just want to follow up
23 with a couple of things that were discussed there.
24 You know, you've made some-- you've taken some really
25 bold moves in consolidating a lot of legal services

2 under HRA. Some were questioning that. I think all
3 of us are seeing the impacts, the positive impacts,
4 but some of the things that came out were super
5 concerning, from the advocates and people on the
6 ground, CBOs, that in the time that you've taken
7 these massive contracts, we've moved away from
8 flexibility and added more constraints. We've moved
9 away from clarity and changes midway with these
10 contracts, making it really confusing. One of the
11 biggest ones is something that I think we're all
12 calling "criminal carve-out" where the Mayor has
13 cited that he's going to not give immigration ser--
14 legal services to immigrants that fall under our
15 detainer law, which is a separate thing, but he's
16 using that as a way. That kind of came in, infected
17 a lot of the contracts. Can you just tell us a
18 little bit about what this tells us in terms of the
19 future and how as providers are kind of communicating
20 to you that we want something different, how you're
21 going to take that in this budget negotiations, and
22 kind of give a sense about what we're dealing with
23 for this budget season. How can we play with you in
24 this budget season to get us to a good spot?

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, let's talk about
3 a couple of aspects of that. So, there's flexibility
4 and then there's the mayoral policy on these
5 immigration contracts. So, flexibility was something
6 we wanted to build into the contracts so that we
7 could quickly adapt to a changing national scene. I
8 don't think that when we built that in three or four
9 years ago that we were anticipating just how changing
10 the national steam [sic] has been for immigrant New
11 Yorkers and immigrants across the country. And so
12 the flexibility that we've built in is to not have to
13 do a new RFP every time there's a federal policy
14 change, which given how many there have been over the
15 last just over a year would have been not workable.
16 And the changes in temporary protective status for
17 clients and the changes with DACA have been a moving
18 process, which has impacts on New Yorkers and the
19 clients of the legal services providers. And so one
20 of the things that we have been working with the
21 providers in, the look of confusion that they may be
22 expressing is because the situation that we're
23 operating in is very confusing given the way policy
24 is being made currently in Washington in the area of
25 immigration. So, we've tried to build in as much

2 flexibility as possible. We've had a lot of very
3 good input from providers recently on greater
4 flexibility they wanted than we were originally
5 proposing for the kinds of-- for the way the services
6 would be rolled out, and we expect to reach some
7 conclusions with us and the Office of Management and
8 Budget and come back to the providers, but we thought
9 that they made a number of very good proposals to us
10 about how to respond to the changing national
11 situation in the current fiscal year and build that
12 into the next fiscal year. So, flexibility, I think,
13 is actually working the way we wanted it to work.
14 The confusion is in part what's happening outside of
15 all of our controls, and but on the other hand, I'm
16 glad that we have the ability to be flexible. In
17 terms of the mayoral policy, we certainly articulated
18 in at the time of the last budget that mayoral policy
19 is to not allocate the City's policies, to not
20 allocate immigration legal services for clients who
21 under the detainer law would be in a carve-out area,
22 and that continues to be what the position is. We
23 have heard from providers about issues around the
24 process of implementation and how to deal with the
25 process of finding out whether or not someone fits

2 into that, and we're trying to work that through with
3 providers. There are limitations on how to do it
4 given the clarity of the policy, but I think we have
5 been trying to do that where we can, and if we've
6 fallen short, we'll keep looking at how we can do
7 that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I'm looking
9 forward to continuing this conversation, and really
10 thankful that the Council as the voice of the people
11 will be setting the policy, and looking forward to
12 you executing that policy in the near future. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
15 Member Menchaca. Council Member Cohen?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you, Chair.
17 Good afternoon, Commissioner. How are you?

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: How are you? I
19 should say thank you to you. Your ears are ringing.
20 I said praise to you earlier in my testimony.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Well, that's good-
22 - the first thing, my first note is to say thank you,
23 because I am particularly proud of the collaborative
24 work we did at CB7. I think that we got an outcome
25 that is-- that really serves the needs of your

2 clients. It serves the needs of my constituents, and
3 I think it really is a model of collaboration. So, I
4 mean, it was hard work, but I really think that it
5 was time well spent and got a result that I, again, I
6 really think serves both of our goals, and I think
7 we-- we're also united in our goals in trying to make
8 sure that--

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I'm
10 sorry--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: you always have a
12 place to live. You know, but one of the things I was
13 just, you know, learning about the process, which I
14 have no clarity on now, in terms of the shelter
15 development I'm very mystified as to how that works
16 in terms of process. It seems to me that developers
17 develop shelters without a commitment from the agency
18 to have a shelter. I don't know if it's capital, if
19 it's expense. Could you just sort of, briefly, as
20 best you can, sort of explain the development
21 process?

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure. Sure. And
23 again, I want to, in the process of explaining that,
24 highlight how you and your Community Board
25 participated in that process, which is a-- continues

2 to be an open invitation, and you took us up on it,
3 and I'm very grateful that you did. So, the shelter
4 development process is a procurement process in the
5 sense of not-for-profit providers proposed to us a
6 particular shelter, and as part of the shelter rate,
7 rent is part of that, and that's part of the
8 negotiations we do with the provider about what we're
9 able to pay or not pay. Having said that, in order
10 to address this haphazard system that's built up over
11 years, the rent that we might pay at a particular
12 place is going to be reflective of what the market
13 is, but also what some of our goals are, because our
14 goal is to get people connected to their borough and
15 to their community as much as possible, and if we
16 simply use the rent as the guidelines, it's going to
17 very much limit where you could open a shelter. In
18 the plan, a year ago, we said we welcomed communities
19 involvement and we said it in a number of different
20 occasions, both the Mayor and me, and you took us up
21 on that, and I don't know all of what you were doing,
22 but from our perspective on it, you were working with
23 a not-for-profit provider, BronxWorks, which is an
24 excellent provider, and together there was a site
25 identified. It was acceptable to the community,

2 acceptable to them to operate, and they proposed that
3 to us in a procurement process. The letter that
4 we've recently sent out to all Council Members and
5 all Community Boards is essentially inviting
6 everybody to do what you did with us, and as you
7 know, we are giving 30 days' notice once we complete
8 the procurement process, and the average is about 65
9 days. We've got 17 sites. We need about 18 a year.
10 We've got 17 sites announced on year one; 11 already
11 up and running, and people say, "Hey, but wait a
12 minute, I only have 30 days now." That's what we
13 want to keep reiterating, come to us so that we can
14 follow the process that we followed with you. Having
15 said that, we want to-- there's an urgency. Where
16 there's a right to shelter, we have to get shelter up
17 every night for people. The cold stretch we had
18 between Christmas and well into January and February
19 was extremely cold, brought a lot of people in.
20 That's a good sign, but nonetheless resulted in us
21 using more hotels, and so there's an urgency of
22 getting things up. So we're going to continue to
23 work through those two lanes. Not-for-profit
24 providers come to us through procurement and leaders
25 like you and others identify sites and come to us.

2 By the way, I've been single-- for the record I
3 should say this, I'm singling you out. You've done a
4 terrific job, been a great partner, but I see Council
5 Member Salamanca, Council Member Levin, there are so
6 many other people that have been helpful, but this
7 example of a shelter we're opening with you in your
8 area very shortly for clients and mental health needs
9 is very important to us. It's a good example of how
10 we can do things.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you
12 Commissioner. Thank you, Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member
14 Salamanca for brief questions?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yes, thank
16 you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. How are you,
17 Commissioner? Commissioner, just want to acknowledge
18 since the last year where we had our hearing, you
19 know, I was very adamant about the amount of shelters
20 that I have in my council district and I know that
21 we've worked together in terms of having more of a
22 dialogue in terms of some of these shelters that are
23 coming in. now, my question to you is, Commissioner,
24 what is your agency doing to ensure that there's fair
25 share across all 51 members of the City Council and

2 the dates [sic] who are doing their part and bringing
3 in shelters to those districts and those affluent
4 communities that have very little homeless shelters?

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I appreciate the
6 question. I also appreciate both the dialogue that
7 we've been having. I think the progress we've been
8 making and you have been a very good partner. That
9 doesn't mean that you don't express to me
10 disagreement from-- occasionally, but our goal is to
11 try to work out as much as we can with you, and I've
12 appreciated the partnership. And you know, in your
13 district relating to your question, we're closing
14 clusters, and that is a plus. We do need some
15 replacement capacity, and that's a conversation that
16 we will talk to you and everybody else about. But
17 stepping back from the plan, stepping back from where
18 we are on that. The plan ultimately lays out, we
19 thin, a very different shelter system than the one
20 that is built up over many years. By way of example,
21 there are 1,300 people from Staten Island in our
22 shelter system and only capacity for 140 people. We
23 have made it very clear that we're looking for sites,
24 and we will open sites that are proposed to us by
25 not-for-profit providers to enable us to house in

2 Staten Island 1,300 Staten Islanders instead of only
3 150. That's that we have the ability to house.
4 Obviously taking into account DV survivors who may
5 need to be elsewhere. Similarly in Queens, we have
6 38 hotels. We're going to close them all. Currently
7 in Queens there are about 10,500 approximately people
8 that are housed there. Only 8,500 people in our
9 system with Queens as their home borough. But once
10 we close all the hotels there, there will be a
11 deficit about 2,300-2,400 people and we're going to
12 need to be opening more shelters. Council Member
13 Lander who was here earlier referenced a process that
14 we are undergoing to open shelter space in Park
15 Slope. We have one shelter in Park Slope, almost to
16 Windsor Terrace near where I live. We're looking for
17 other sites in that community. And so the plan
18 itself makes the commitment that you and others have
19 been, I think, very clearly pushing for.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah. Well,
21 thank you for that, Commissioner. I just would like
22 to see a more equitable distribution of homeless
23 shelters throughout the entire City of New York, not
24 just low-income communities. And then finally, what
25 has your agency-- how are you working hand-in-hand

with HPD. We're seeing all this affordable housing coming through the entire City of New York. They're getting city subsidies. There's a homeless set-aside. How are you working with HPD to ensure: number one, that council members are doing their fair share in terms of homeless set-asides in their units; and number two, how are you getting homeless families that are in a shelter system bringing them back into their communities into these new affordable housing units for those families that are ready for independent living?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you for the question, and you and Chair Levin I thought conducted a very important hearing not so long ago focused on exactly this issue in which Commissioner Torres-Springer and I both testified about it, and I think your focus on making sure that there's enough of a set-aside for people to be able to have an opportunity, move out a shelter back into their communities if they want to and if they're ready to. That's something that we are very focused on, and I think the partnership with you will help us get there. We're-- HPD's Housing New York Plan is beginning to put more units on the ground now, and

2 we're anxious to work with you in your role and HPD
3 and its role to achieve exactly what you're wanting
4 us to achieve.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay. Thank
6 you. And I just want to give a shout out to my
7 former colleague, Annabel Palma, I think that was a
8 great pick-up. Thank you, Commissioner.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
10 Member Salamanca. Thank you, Commissioner. So, I
11 just have-- I have a few things I need to point out--

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Sure.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: for the record.

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You don't have to
16 respond to them, but--

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] I
18 won't.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I think we're going
20 to submit them in a follow-up letter. So, these are
21 areas that we didn't get to, okay. So, with regard
22 to--

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] I'm
24 sorry, are you going to also say, "And I want you to
25

2 give me x, y, and z?" or is this just topic areas? I
3 just want to--

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] No, no,
5 no, these are going to be specific questions. I just
6 need them on the record and these are going to be--
7 perhaps we can have a follow-up meeting before the
8 Exec.

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: These are things that
11 are time-sensitive, so I need to put these on the
12 record here.

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With the hotel RFP,
15 we would like to see that RFP.

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Number one. We want
18 to know the budget codes and program areas for the
19 new contract for commercial hotels. We want to know
20 what steps DHS is taking to make sure that children
21 that are in hotels are receiving all the services and
22 support that they need. We want to know how many
23 children are in hotels. We want to know how many
24 children and how many families with children are in
25 hotels. These are all things-- you don't have to

2 memorize this, because this is-- we'll be following
3 up with an email.

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I have excellent
5 colleagues who are writing it down.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We want to know some
7 details around the Capital Shelter Plan, where the
8 expansions are going to be, specifically with the
9 capital dollars that have been allocated in FY19
10 budget. We're going to have to follow up around
11 issues-- back to the hotels-- about some-- where the
12 wrap-around services really are in the hotels and
13 what we're doing for children. I want to make sure
14 that-- you mentioned this issue around refrigerators
15 being part of hotel cost. We want to make sure that
16 every hotel room has the ability to have a
17 refrigerator, because we're hearing some things to
18 the contrary. Model budgets-- we want to know, and
19 this is actually very important, and maybe you could
20 just answer this. So we've heard that DHS model
21 budgets are not including salary increases?

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: COLA is built into
23 that 236 million dollars investment.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I don't think-- well,
25 there's COLA but that's outside of the model budget.

2 So, there's COLA and then there's the 10 percent for-

3 -

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing]

5 Internal--

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: the administrative
7 cost, but within the model budget themselves, there's
8 not salary increases as part of model budget. In
9 other agencies there are salary increases as part of
10 model budget. APS, for example, is supposed to be
11 having salary increases to match DFTA staff as part
12 of model budget, not COLA and not administrative.

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, we'll look at
14 that and come back to you. APS' process is actually
15 built off of the model budget process for DHS, so
16 we'll have to see what issues there are there.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, on the APS
18 we've heard that there's some concern that it's not
19 done at all. I mean, there's three agencies for APS.
20 So, there's concern that the APS model budget,
21 there's still-- basically, what you have is you have
22 people working next to each other. You have one
23 cubicle that's a DFTA case management being paid one
24 level, and then an APS in the very next cubicle being
25 paid a very different salary.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right, and that's
3 why we put in place the model budget process, but the
4 process did require a give and take, and we're now at
5 the place where the agency and OMB are going to
6 review all the information we've gotten, and we
7 expect to come to a conclusion pretty soon.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. But on the DHS
9 side, obviously, in order to be able to retain staff,
10 we have to be able to pay them, and so we were-- I
11 think there's a hope or an expectation among provider
12 agencies that they'd be able to pay their staff.
13 Increased salaries is part of model budget, not just
14 in COLA, but [inaudible]. We want-- when we send a
15 follow-up letter which will include these questions
16 and others, we would appreciate a timely response to
17 that letter. So, maybe two weeks, is that fair?

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'll tell you what,
19 if it's not going to be two weeks, I'll call you
20 personally on our two-way bat phone.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, but we would--
22 if it's not two weeks, it's got to be very close to
23 that.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Understood.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So, I think
3 that's all that we can get to at the moment. We do
4 appreciate everyone at ACS waiting for us, because we
5 are 45 minutes late on that. So, Commissioner, thank
6 you very much for your time. Thank you to every
7 member of the Administration who was here to testify,
8 for DSS, HRA, DHS. This was very productive.
9 There's more to come.

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you, and thank
11 you for our good collaboration even when we agree to
12 disagree.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

14 [break]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [gavel] Hey,
16 everybody. Welcome back. I want to thank you all
17 for your patience for allowing members to ask all
18 their questions in the prior part of this budget
19 hearing. Good afternoon. I want to also, I want to
20 thank obviously ACS for their patience. Good
21 afternoon, I'm Council Member Steve Levin, Chair of
22 the Committee on General Welfare, and I'm glad to be
23 joined by committee colleagues-- none, actually at
24 the moment, but my good colleagues from the Juvenile
25 Justice Committee. I want to-- I welcome Robert

2 Holden, Mark Levine, and of course, my colleague and
3 Co-Chair of this hearing, Council Member Andy King.

4 I also want to acknowledge we are joined in the room
5 right now by former Council Member and New York City
6 Comptroller John Lieu and his Columbia Budget

7 Graduate Class who is here. So, welcome, Comptroller
8 Lieu, and welcome, students. Welcome once again to

9 the Fiscal 2019 Preliminary Budget hearing for the

10 Committee on General Welfare. This afternoon we will

11 hear testimony from the Administration for Children's

12 Services, otherwise known as ACS, on its proposed

13 Fiscal 19 budget. General agency operations within

14 its proposed-- general agency operations within its

15 proposed 2.57 billion dollar budget and performance

16 indicators for Children's Services within the Fiscal

17 2018 PMMR. ACS has a critical mission to protect and

18 promote the safety and well-being of New York City's

19 children and families. As a father of a young

20 daughter I can assure you that this committee takes

21 its oversight budgetary and policy-making roles very

22 seriously for achieving the goal of safe, happy, and

23 healthy children in our city. Between fiscal years

24 2014 and 2018, ACS' budget grew by 12 percent with

25 historic investments in child protection, preventive

2 services, and foster care. However, Fiscal 19
3 presents a serious challenge to the Agency, as many
4 of you I'm sure have been following. ACS will
5 migrate over 600 million dollars in childcare and
6 Head Start contracts and services to the Department
7 of Education, also known as DOE. In addition, there
8 are severe budgetary threats in the state's Executive
9 Budget that have been proposed this year to child
10 welfare including juvenile justice services. My
11 colleague Andy King, Chair of the Committee on
12 Juvenile Justice, will address those challenges
13 shortly. With respect to the transfer of EarlyLearn
14 services to Department of Education, the Fiscal Year
15 2019 Preliminary Budget takes initial steps in
16 expressing how the 600 million dollar transition will
17 move forward. ACS has previously stated that the
18 transition will be completed by February 2019, but
19 there continues to be few details about the actual
20 process. Today, I hope to hear more details on the
21 full range of expected budgetary implications and a
22 clear vision for the transition. Also, I hope to
23 find out more how the Childcare Voucher Program,
24 which currently serves 65,000 children in New York
25 City, and will remain administered by ACS, how that

2 will move forward. In addition, there are profound
3 financial threats to child welfare services in the
4 Governor's State Executive Budget. The proposed
5 budget would cap payments to ACS for preventive
6 services cutting 129 million dollars in anticipated
7 revenue for the City in Fiscal Year 2019 on top of
8 the 65 million dollars in this fiscal year. Let's
9 just make that clear. The cuts that we're looking at
10 are 65 million dollars just in this year between now
11 and the end of June, and 129 million dollars in next
12 fiscal year. ACS has made significant investments in
13 preventive services, and that's to the credit of
14 Commissioner Hansell, but also his predecessor
15 Commissioner Gladys Carrion, to keep families
16 together and children out of foster care where
17 possible. The proposed cap is absolutely 100 percent
18 the wrong direction for New York, and I and many of
19 my colleagues in the City and State have been
20 fighting very hard against this proposed cap. It
21 would be absolutely devastating to the provision of
22 protective and preventive services in New York City
23 and would set us back many, many years. We cannot
24 afford to go backwards. I look forward to having a
25 discussion about ACS' contingency planning. However,

2 in light of all this, to maintain our investment in
3 child welfare as well as action to eliminate
4 preventive service wait-list. Finally, I would like
5 to hear more about the next steps on the foster care
6 taskforce. I want to thank Commissioner Hansell and
7 his entire team, Deputy Commissioner Julie Farber and
8 the entire ACS team as well as the sister agencies
9 for coming together around this Foster Taskforce
10 which just announced last week its recommendations.
11 This taskforce was pursuant to Local Law 144 of 2016
12 which created the Foster Care Taskforce and charged
13 it with issuing recommendations to improve services
14 and outcomes for youth in and aging out of foster
15 care. As I said last week, the taskforce issued its
16 initial recommendations, and I hope to discuss today
17 what we can do to improve permanency outcomes and
18 support the health, education and career prospects of
19 children in foster care, also to maybe talk a little
20 bit about some of the budgetary impacts may be
21 particularly in the initiatives that have been
22 announced and committed to already. Before I pass it
23 over to Chair King to say a few words, I'd like to
24 thank the Committee Staff for their work in preparing
25 for this hearing: Daniel Krup [sp?], the Finance

2 Analyst, Doheni Sampura [sp?], our Finance Unit Head,
3 Counsel to the Committee, Amenta Killawan [sp?], and
4 Policy Analyst Tanya Cyrus. We will now hear from
5 Chair of the Committee on Juvenile Justice, Council
6 Member Andy King.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Chair
8 Levin. I'm Council Member Andy King, Chair of the
9 Committee on Juvenile Justice. First and foremost I
10 want to say thank you to each and every one of you
11 who work tirelessly each and every day to improve a
12 system that saves the lives of our young men and
13 young sitters who just happen to have struggles and
14 complications in their lives. I want to say thank
15 you all today for your commitment to help improving
16 all those lives. As Chair Levin said, this afternoon
17 we're hearing testimony from the Administration of
18 Children's Services, also known as ACS on its
19 proposed 2.57 billion dollar Fiscal 2019 and 2018
20 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report. The City
21 spends approximately 200 million of that budget
22 annually on juvenile justice services which includes
23 alternatives to detention, non and limited secure
24 detention, secure detention, placements, and juvenile
25 justice support. The State Executive Budget has

2 particularly vexing cuts to juvenile justice. This
3 includes the elimination up to 41 million in state
4 support to the City's Close to Home program, which
5 has proven to be safe and effective to the City and
6 State partner to launch this program in 2012. The 31
7 small group non-secure placement residence allow
8 young people to live in the City of New York closer
9 to their family instead of being sent upstate to
10 these facilities that allows them not to be connected
11 to home. We cannot go backwards to the old model,
12 and the state has a responsibility to support this
13 program as it does in every county of the state. In
14 addition, there's an erroneous question about Raise
15 the Age. Like many, I strongly support raising the
16 age of criminal responsibility to 18 years of age and
17 moving our children off of Rikers Island. However,
18 we now have to implement this change on a tight
19 timeline by October 1st of this year. I'm looking
20 forward to hearing from the Commissioner and ACS on
21 more details of how they're planning on delivering
22 these services. Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner
23 of Division of Juvenile Justice, I'm looking forward
24 to hearing today's conversation. A key question
25 nearly [sic] about the 300 million of capital budget

2 for repair and refurbishment of existing secure
3 detention facilities in Brooklyn and the Bronx to
4 know the status of these projects and whether they'll
5 be ready for the 16 and 17 year olds that are coming
6 off of Rikers Island in October. Another key
7 question is how Raise the Age will be financed. The
8 State Executive Budget added only 100 million dollars
9 across the state, yet, the City has estimated that
10 200 million in cost. In addition, the City may fail
11 to qualify for state funding under current rules.
12 These matters of critical concern for our young
13 people who are involved in the justice system and
14 children and family deserve justice, and it is
15 essential that ACS plays a role in achieving a more
16 fair future. But before I do introduce the
17 Commissioner of the Administration for Children's
18 Services and his Deputy and his team, again, I want
19 to say thank you to each and every one of you. I'd
20 like to thank Committee Staff for their work in
21 preparing. This is my first Juvenile Justice budget
22 hearing, so I want to say thank you for the hours and
23 the time spent to help me get it right, and I'd like
24 to thank them all for their work, and that is Daniel
25 Krup [sp?] as well as Finance Analyst Doheni Sampura

2 [sp?], as well as Counsel Beth Golub [sp?], and
3 Policy Analyst William Honnuk [sp?], and now we will
4 hear from ACS Commissioner David Hansell after sworn
5 in by Counsel Beth Golub. We also want to recognize
6 the Juvenile Justice Council Member from Harlem,
7 Brother Perkins.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your
9 right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the
10 whole truth and nothing but the truth, and answer
11 honestly to Council Member questions in your
12 testimony today? You may begin.

13 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Thank you very
14 much. Good afternoon Chair Levin, Chair King,
15 members of the General Welfare and Juvenile Justice
16 Committees. I am David Hansell, Commissioner of the
17 New York City Administration for Children's Services.
18 With me today are Lisa Parrish to my right who is
19 Deputy Commissioner for our Office of Financial
20 Services, to my far left, Lorelei Vargas, who is
21 Deputy Commissioner of Child and Family Well-Being,
22 and to my left Felipe Franco who is Deputy
23 Commissioner of Youth and Family Justice. I very much
24 appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you the
25 ACS Fiscal Year 2019 Preliminary Budget. I'd like to

2 take a brief moment to welcome the members who have
3 newly joined the two Committees this year. We're
4 delighted to have you and a new Chair of Juvenile
5 Justice, Council Member King. And I have to say that
6 I have very much appreciated in my year as ACS
7 Commissioner, the transparent and collaborative
8 relationship that we have had with the City Council,
9 and I very much look forward to continuing that
10 relationship under your new leadership. As some of
11 you already know, my career has been dedicated to
12 serving vulnerable communities, and I believe that
13 there really are few missions that are more important
14 than that of Children's Services, and so I am honored
15 to have served and led the agency for just over one
16 year now. I remain committed to moving ACS forward
17 and building on the Mayor's historic investment in
18 our agency and our reform agenda. One year ago,
19 actually one year ago precisely today, I shared with
20 the Council my plan to conduct a top to bottom review
21 of the agency's protective and preventive functions,
22 and to implement necessary reforms, and today, I'm
23 pleased to share updates on the progress that we've
24 achieved. And there have, in fact, been many
25 exciting changes and significant practice reforms at

2 ACS over the past year, and I have to say that the
3 voice of our staff has been instrumental in making
4 our system more effective and more efficient. Over
5 the year I visited almost every single ACS office
6 location. I've met with thousands of our staff.
7 I've participated in Town Hall meetings with our
8 frontline Child Protective staff and others across
9 the agency, and we completed our agency's first ever
10 staff engagement survey. And I will tell you that
11 much of my agenda as Commissioner has been driven by
12 the input and feedback I've received from the
13 frontline, and I cannot overstate my appreciation for
14 their commitment and dedication to our work. Our
15 Child Protective Specialists, in particular, are
16 truly first responders. They are charged with
17 keeping children in this City safe, the same way that
18 police and firefighters are first responders who
19 protect all of us. Over the last year, we have
20 improved our child protective practice by
21 strengthening accountability, by enhancing quality
22 assurance, bolstering investigations in the highest-
23 risk cases, and deepening our relationships with
24 governmental and nongovernmental partners. While
25 making these key improvements to our child-protection

2 work, we also recognize that getting families the
3 help they need to overcome challenges, including
4 trauma, poverty, mental health issues, domestic
5 violence, substance abuse, so many others, that
6 getting families that help is critical to keeping
7 children safe. So, over the last year, we've
8 expanded the support that we provide to children and
9 families through preventive services, and we've taken
10 major steps to strengthen our network of preventive
11 providers. ACS has steadily increased the
12 availability of evidence-based preventive services,
13 those programs that have been shown to reduce rates
14 of maltreatment and improve overall child and family
15 wellbeing. Thousands of families today are receiving
16 intensive counseling that is tailored to their needs,
17 and thousands of parents are receiving parenting
18 coaching to help them cope with the pressures they
19 face and raise healthy children. Last year, the
20 nationally recognized organization, Casey Family
21 Programs noted that New York City is now at the
22 forefront nationally in providing evidence-based
23 preventive programs to support families. And we're
24 seeing strong, positive outcomes from our preventive
25 work. ACS's unprecedented investment in preventive

2 services has allowed the agency to serve increased
3 numbers of families through those services, while
4 reducing the number of children in foster care. And
5 today, the number of children in foster care is under
6 9,000, which is a momentous shift from the nearly
7 50,000 children in care 25 years ago. Because we
8 believe so strongly in prevention, we are taking that
9 work even further. In September, we announced the
10 creation of the new Division of Child and Family
11 Well-Being, making ACS the first child welfare agency
12 in the country to spearhead a new primary prevention
13 approach, which seeks to reach families proactively
14 with services, resources and educational messages
15 that can support healthy children, families and
16 communities. Our Division of Youth and Family
17 Justice has also made significant strides to improve
18 the lives of children and families involved in the
19 juvenile justice system, with a special focus on
20 keeping young people strongly connected to their
21 communities. We're proud to say that fewer young
22 people are being arrested and fewer young people are
23 entering our juvenile justice system than ever
24 before. Overall admissions to juvenile detention
25 have decreased significantly year over year, dropping

32 percent from Fiscal Year 2014 to 17, and we've also successfully lowered the census of our Close to Home residential program by 20 percent from Fiscal Year 14 to Fiscal Year 2017. Beyond that, we've developed and are instituting a number of enhancements to the Close to Home program that focus on improving youth monitoring and accountability, enhancing oversight of staff and providers, and increasing inter-agency partnerships. Now, as you know, only weeks after I started at ACS last March, the State enacted the long-awaited Raise the Age legislation, and since then, ACS has been working nonstop with the Mayor's Office and our sister City agencies on planning to implement the initial requirements of the Raise the Age beginning on October 1st, 2018. We've also made structural changes at ACS over the last year to help strengthen agency operations that support all of our programmatic work. Early in my tenure, I created a new Office of Accountability to centralize and strengthen all of our internal and external accountability functions. Our Chief Accountability Office reports directly to me and works closely with all of our program directors and divisions and our

2 oversight entities. And more recently, we've created
3 an Office of Organizational Effectiveness, to
4 coordinate our efforts to streamline operations,
5 improve business process, and enhance overall agency
6 efficiency. So, we've done a great deal in the last
7 year to strengthen ACS and improve outcomes for
8 children in New York City, and we know there is much
9 more to do. As we work to advance the programs and
10 practices that have positioned New York City as a
11 national model for child welfare and juvenile justice
12 reform, we are deeply concerned by the threats posed
13 by the proposed State Executive Budget for Fiscal
14 Year 2019. And Chair Levin and Chair King, I
15 appreciate your acknowledgement and your support for
16 us as we try to address those concerns. As you've
17 said, the Governor's budget proposes to: implement an
18 arbitrary cap of 320 million dollars in State child
19 welfare funding, a cap that would apply to New York
20 City only, not the rest of the state, resulting in
21 what we have calculated to be a 129 million dollar
22 annualized cut to ACS for next year. However, just
23 last week, the Independent Budget Office reported
24 that, with modified commitments in the January plan,
25 the reduction in funding to the City would actually

2 be 161 million dollars. This funding supports all of
3 our protective and preventive programs, core services
4 that keep children safe and support families in New
5 York City. The Governor's Executive Budget would
6 eliminate all State funding for our very successful
7 Close to Home program, just when the number of youth
8 in Close to Home is expected to more than double once
9 Raise the Age is implemented; and it would also
10 effectively exclude New York City from accessing
11 funding for implementation of Raise the Age. The
12 City projects the costs of Raise the Age
13 implementation to be about 200 million dollars, and
14 the Governor's budget would leave New York City to
15 shoulder those costs without aid from the State.
16 These proposed state budget cuts would be the most
17 drastic cuts to child welfare in New York City in
18 decades. The last time the State made such drastic
19 cuts to New York City's child-welfare system in the
20 1990s, the results were disastrous. The number of
21 children admitted to foster care in New York City
22 increased by 57 percent, and the average caseload of
23 frontline child-protection workers swelled to 24,
24 which is twice our current level. It's important to
25 note that these cuts would seriously jeopardize our

2 significant progress and leadership within New York
3 State. From 2010 to 2017, the number of children in
4 foster care in New York City declined by 38.4
5 percent, while in the rest of New York State, the
6 number of children in foster care declined by 13.9
7 percent. The reason that foster care is declining
8 almost three times faster in New York City than in
9 the rest of the state, we believe, is the scope and
10 scale of investments and the improvements that we've
11 been making in New York City, particularly in our
12 preventive programs that are helping keep families
13 together. So, I respectfully ask all of you to join
14 us in urging the state in its last week of the state
15 budget process to remove the child welfare cap, to
16 restore funding for Close to Home, and to allow the
17 City access to appropriate funding for Raise the Age.
18 We stand by and fully support the Mayor and the City
19 Council in fighting against any detrimental impacts
20 the state budget may pose to New York City children
21 and families. As an agency dedicated to serving
22 children and families throughout a wide continuum of
23 services, ACS is uniquely positioned to help create a
24 stable, more equitable foundation of opportunity for
25 those we serve, and I'll dedicate my remaining

2 testimony to highlighting core areas of our work.

3 Beginning with Child Protection, as you know, our

4 Child Protective Specialists carry out some of the

5 toughest, most challenging work in this city, so it

6 is imperative that our staff is well equipped and

7 well supported in this work. And with that in mind,

8 we've made significant investments in tools, training

9 and technology that frontline staff need to increase

10 safety and enhance their work with children and

11 families. The most immediate reforms we made last

12 year focused on strengthening quality assurance in

13 our protective work. We have restructured and

14 reinvigorated our ChildStat model as our core part of

15 our agency's quality improvement program. Now, child

16 protective zones around the City that have defined

17 geographic responsibilities in rel-- we now are

18 assessing them on a rotating basis, reviewing their

19 performance in relation to borough-wide and city-wide

20 standards, and developing concrete recommendations to

21 strengthen protective and investigative practice.

22 Since we re-launched ChildStat in May 2017, we have

23 held more than 45 sessions, resulting in

24 recommendations for zone-based and system-wide

25 improvement. To help strengthen case practice within

2 the Division of Child Protection, we've also created
3 a new Quality Assurance Unit to provide frontline
4 staff with real-time feedback on safety assessments,
5 decision-making, and service provision. We've worked
6 closely over the last year with the State-appointed
7 independent monitor, Kroll Associates. In December,
8 as you know, Kroll released its monitoring report,
9 outlining 11 recommendations for strengthening our
10 protective and preventive practice, all of which we
11 have accepted, and we are well underway in
12 implementing many of the reforms, including
13 enhancements in our training, investigation
14 protocols, and oversight mechanisms. ACS's
15 Investigative Consultants have for many years
16 assisted our child protective specialists with
17 particularly challenging investigations and they've
18 reviewed sensitive cases along with other experts,
19 including medical personnel, clinicians, and current
20 law enforcement officials. Since the end of 2016,
21 ACS has increased the number of Investigative
22 Consultants on our staff by 28 percent and we've
23 expanded our partnership with the NYPD in several
24 ways: We've begun a cross-training program in which
25 our child protection frontline staff are now training

2 alongside police investigators at the NYPD Police
3 Academy, taking courses that include Forensic
4 Interviewing and recognizing evidence and resources
5 available to assist in investigations. And also, and
6 I think this is really noteworthy, NYPD staff are now
7 attending specialized ACS training to deepen their
8 understanding of child welfare issues, investigative
9 process, and our safety and risk assessment. Law
10 enforcement is also involved with us in
11 investigations where there is reason to believe that
12 there has been physical abuse, sexual abuse, or other
13 criminal activity. In 2017, ACS and the NYPD made
14 5,579 Instant Response Team joint responses on
15 investigations, and police were brought into hundreds
16 of other ACS investigations to provide their support
17 and expertise. And finally, we're using NYPD
18 Neighborhood Coordination Officers which exist in
19 many neighborhoods around the City, and in many of
20 those neighborhoods our frontline child protection
21 staff now have direct relationship with precinct
22 Neighborhood Coordination Officers on the ground.
23 That means that when they need to consult with the
24 police or need police support, they can do that
25 through direct relationships with folks that they

2 know in their precinct rather than having to rely on
3 9-1-1 calls to summon police support. And finally,
4 under a new Heightened Oversight Protocol that we put
5 in place last year, an Investigative Consultant
6 supervisor and a Child Protection manager or
7 supervisor conduct a joint case review prior to
8 initiating an investigation on all State Central
9 Registry reports when the maltreated child is three
10 years old or younger, and the report involves either
11 a fatality, an allegation of serious physical injury
12 or sexual abuse. Under this new protocol,
13 Investigative Consultants remain involved in cases
14 and participate in further reviews in the course of
15 the investigation, to provide enhanced support in
16 these most serious cases. In 2017 we hired more than
17 600 new CPS, and we're on track to hire another 400
18 by the end of the fiscal year, and with more
19 frontline staff on board, we've been able to reduce
20 the average investigative caseload from 14.8 in May
21 2017 to 12 as of last month. And although ACS has
22 some of the lowest caseloads among major child
23 welfare jurisdictions, we also know that the caseload
24 metric itself doesn't always tell the full story, and
25 there's nothing more important to our success than

2 making sure we're doing everything possible to
3 support our frontline workers. So, by taking into
4 account all of their job-related duties, we can
5 better assess the real impact of our staffing and
6 case management levels. And so, to that end, we're
7 launching an innovative pilot program to help address
8 CPS workload, in which Case Aides will provide hands-
9 on support to CPS staff in some of our Child
10 Protective Units in our DCP Bronx North Borough
11 Office. Those Case Aides will carry out case-
12 supportive tasks such as reaching out to collateral
13 contacts, obtaining medical records and supervising
14 visits. This important initiative is one that we
15 hope will demonstrate its value in supporting CPS in
16 their work. We've expanded our training to the
17 extent that last year more than 4,000 frontline child
18 protective staff and supervisors received training to
19 strengthen their practice. The curriculum includes a
20 new Safety and Risk module to assist in developing
21 stronger safety plans for children and an implicit
22 bias module which is under development. That module
23 will enable us to work with staff to reinforce the
24 importance of treating all families equally
25 regardless of race, ethnicity or other factors that

are irrelevant in child welfare investigation. Supervisory managerial training are also being enhanced, and to ensure continuity from the training academy, ACS began in Fall 2017 to deploy Staff Development Coordinators and coaches in DCP borough offices to bridge the transition from training to the field, and we thank the Council for supporting these enhancements in the enacted 2017-18 budget. To strengthen CPS's ability to conduct and document investigations, last year we provided all child protective staff with internet-activated smartphones with relevant apps and tools. And we're going in the next step right now, several hundred frontline staff are part of a pilot project to use tablets in the field, and all of our frontline CPS will have tablets within the next several months. This will strengthen their ability to conduct and document investigations by enabling CPS to download case information when and where needed, and upload case notes in the field, in court, or elsewhere. And finally, with regard to child protective work, we're expanding the role of our Division of Child Protection in providing support services to families. In December we collaborated with Food Bank for New York City to launch our first-

ever emergency food pantry for families involved with ACS. It's located in our Bronx South DCP Borough Office, where there is a high concentration of families who are struggling with food insecurity, and we're thrilled that our child protective staff can now connect families in the Bronx to healthy and nutritious food resources when they are in need.

Moving on to preventive services. We made major Investments with the Council support in preventive services in FY18. That's helping us to implement the best possible service models to support families and to make sure that our providers are adequately compensated for the work that they do. Last March, when I started as Commissioner, ACS had a backlog of almost 500 families waiting months for preventive services that had already been recommended for them following a child protective investigation. After an aggressive implementation of business process improvements, we eliminated that backlog by September and we restored our ability to provide timely matching of families with preventive services. And since then, we've continued to improve the quality and consistency of services with additional improvements. The goal of preventive services, of

2 course, is to help at-risk families develop skills to
3 manage crises, to maintain safety and stability
4 within the home, and strengthen their ability to
5 thrive in their communities. Our non-profit partner
6 provider agencies are among the best in the nation
7 and they do extremely challenging work, so it's
8 imperative that our providers receive the supports
9 they need to do that work well. Most of ACS's
10 contracts with preventive agencies have been in place
11 since 2007, with minimal budget increases, and by
12 early 2017 when I became Commissioner, many providers
13 were facing critical staff shortages because of
14 inadequate salaries with reduced capacity and that
15 contributed to the service backlog I just mentioned.
16 So, last spring ACS began a model contract review
17 process, in close collaboration with our providers,
18 to assess where more resources were needed, and in
19 the City budget for Fiscal Year 2017 and 18, we
20 received more than 26 million dollars in increased
21 funding to develop a quality model budget to assist
22 providers in raising salaries, retaining staff,
23 strengthening training, supervision and quality
24 assurance, and improving the delivery of services to
25 children and families. We announced the model budget

2 components in January and we're in the final stages
3 of amending provider contracts to implement the
4 enhancements. We've also launched a number of new
5 program models and service protocols in the last year
6 to connect families with services that can most
7 effectively meet their needs. Last year we launched
8 the Group Attachment Based Intervention, or GABI
9 initiative, that provides access to trauma-informed,
10 intensive attachment-focused therapy for our hardest
11 to reach families, parents and young children age
12 zero to three who have experienced significant
13 trauma, housing instability, mental illness, domestic
14 violence, or other challenges. GABI provides group
15 settings where parents can connect with others
16 experiencing similar challenges, and seeks to improve
17 children's development, decrease their exposure to
18 trauma and maltreatment, reduce parental stress, and
19 boost parental social support and mental health. In
20 January, we announced a protocol for expanding
21 services to protect families at risk of, or
22 experiencing, domestic violence. Under the new
23 protocol, ACS's Investigative Consultants work on
24 cases with families receiving preventive services
25 where there are domestic violence risk factors and/or

2 criminal history, where a new adult has been added to
3 the household or has taken on a caretaker role, and
4 where there are children under seven years of age in
5 the household. And beginning next month, we will
6 procure a demonstration project to test new methods
7 for working with families experiencing domestic
8 violence. It'll serve 100 families, including 400
9 individuals who are experiencing domestic violence,
10 who are under court-ordered supervision, or who are
11 referred to or seeking ACS preventive services. It's
12 going to allow us to test a model where families
13 receive both preventive services and a clinical
14 therapeutic intervention for domestic violence. And
15 then finally, beginning this spring we're also
16 rolling out new preventive services focused on
17 supporting families that have very high service
18 needs, especially focusing on those who are under
19 Court Ordered Supervision or at risk of court
20 intervention. We'll add more than 1,000 additional
21 slots, including in evidence-based models such as
22 Functional Family Therapy and Child-Parent
23 Psychotherapy, when this service model is fully
24 implemented in Fiscal Year 19. All of these very
25 intensive services will be located in all five

2 boroughs and will require careful coordination
3 between preventive programs and our ACS child
4 protective teams to make sure that we're working with
5 families who are under court orders in particular.

6 And by cultivating strong collaboration, we'll
7 improve the experience for parents and children in
8 these especially urgent cases, while applying more
9 resources to stabilizing families. Our newest
10 division at ACS, which is our Division of Child and
11 Family Well-Being aims to help families much, much
12 earlier to engage families before they ever reach the
13 child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and reach
14 them with resources and services to help them thrive.

15 This new Division focuses on the factors that
16 contribute to family wellbeing, including health,
17 education, employment, culture, and it uses both
18 place-based and population-based approaches to engage
19 families and networks in their communities. CFWB's
20 scope includes the agency's Community Partnerships
21 Program networks, our Safe Sleep Initiative, our
22 early care and education programs, our primary
23 preventive services, and a new Office of Equity
24 Strategies that works to identify strategies to
25 reduce inequities, implicit bias, and other factors

2 that contribute to disparate outcomes for the
3 families and communities that we serve. One of the
4 first major initiatives, new initiatives of this
5 division, was the Fall 2017 launch of our Safe
6 Medication campaign, an effort to help parents and
7 caregivers ensure that medications and potentially
8 dangerous household items are stored out of
9 children's reach. In addition to the information
10 component of that campaign, we're distributing
11 medication lock boxes and bags to families that are
12 engaged with ACS and we'll eventually share them
13 across city agencies, and with programs that provide
14 in-home services of other kinds, because lock Boxes
15 and bags are easy and effective ways to keep
16 medication accessible to parents, but out of the
17 reach of children.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] As the
19 father of a one-year-old, I can attest to that, yes.

20 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Thank you very
21 much. It's common--

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] It's
23 real. It's real.

24 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yes, it's a
25 serious issue, but we don't really think about it

2 enough. You know, a lot of these things are very
3 healthy for us, but they are not good for our
4 children. Another initiative we are very excited
5 about is the launch of our Family Enrichment Centers
6 in the first half of this year. This is an
7 innovative new model for providing comprehensive,
8 community-focused support to families, and it's also
9 a family-centered primary prevention strategy that is
10 designed to reduce rates of child maltreatment and
11 increase family stability and wellbeing. Everything
12 about each of the three centers we're launching, from
13 its name, to its physical layout, to the services
14 that it offers, is being co-developed with families
15 and with communities. The FECs will be open to all
16 families in their communities and will provide a
17 range of services that support healthy child
18 development. The first pilot Center is now open in
19 the Hunts Point, and two additional pilot Centers
20 will be located in the Bronx and in Brooklyn. Now,
21 the foundation of our new Division of Child and
22 Family Well-Being is our early care and education
23 program. And since 2012, our EarlyLearn NYC program
24 has provided high quality, full-day early care and
25 education services each year to more than 30,000

2 children from birth through five-years-old. We're
3 proud that this program has become a pillar for
4 promoting healthy childhood development, while also
5 providing wraparound services to families, and that
6 has been a hallmark of EarlyLearn. Now, in the next
7 phase of the program and as part of the Mayor's
8 commitment to early education, our EarlyLearn NYC
9 contracts will be transferred to and integrated into
10 the Department of Education's Division of Early
11 Childhood Education in early 2019. This integration
12 will build on the important work done by EarlyLearn
13 programs today, strengthening the birth-to-five care
14 and education continuum in New York City and creating
15 a more seamless experience for children and families
16 into elementary school and beyond. The transfer of
17 EarlyLearn will also support the Mayor's 3K For All
18 initiative, which will ultimately offer free, high-
19 quality early education services to all three-year-
20 olds in New York City. As EarlyLearn transitions to
21 DOE, ACS will continue to administer the City's child
22 care voucher system. We'll continue our efforts to
23 bolster the quality of care in the system, which
24 serves 29,000 children under the age of five, in
25 collaboration with the Human Resources

2 Administration, the Department of Health & Mental
3 Hygiene, and the Department of Education. We are
4 committed to continued efforts to make child care
5 available to some of the most vulnerable families in
6 New York City, including many who are involved with
7 our child welfare system. Turning to foster care:
8 ACS remains focused on improving outcomes for young
9 people in foster care, and we are heartened by the
10 City Council's equal commitment to this priority. We
11 thank the Council for its leadership and partnership
12 in this effort and I want to especially acknowledge
13 Chair Levin and Public Advocate James for their roles
14 in shaping the work of the New York City Interagency
15 Foster Care Task Force, which was established through
16 City Council legislation, as Chair Levin just
17 indicated. The Task Force, which is chaired by ACS,
18 convened first in June 2017 with the goal of
19 developing recommendations to improve services for
20 youth in foster care and outcomes for those leaving
21 foster care. Last week, the Task Force released a
22 report containing actionable recommendations, several
23 of which we are already moving to implement. We at
24 ACS are committed to doing all that we can to advance
25 these recommendations, and we look forward to working

2 with the City Council, the Public Advocate, and our
3 sister agencies, as well as providers, youth,
4 parents, and advocates on these critical initiatives.

5 The recommendations that came from the Foster Care
6 Task Force are aligned with and build upon our Foster
7 Care Strategic Blueprint, which was released first in
8 2016, and the progress report we released last year,
9 and those documents identify ACS's key priorities and
10 strategies for improving case practice and results
11 for children and families in the foster care system,
12 including family reunification, kinship placement,
13 adoption, and supporting older youth. This focus,
14 combined with the unprecedented investments by the de
15 Blasio Administration to strengthen child welfare, is
16 yielding promising results. Through our No Time to
17 Wait initiative, ACS is implementing a range of
18 strategies to improve permanency outcomes for
19 children and youth in foster care. Last year, we
20 partnered with Casey Family Programs to conduct Rapid
21 Permanency Reviews, which looked at 2,500 children
22 who had been in foster care for more than two years,
23 and these reviews identified case-, agency-, and
24 system-level barriers to permanency for those
25 children. Based on the findings from that work,

we're streamlining administrative process and providing targeted technical assistance to our foster care agencies to help reduce time to reunification and accelerate adoption and kinship guardianship. In Fiscal Year 2018, beginning this year and scaling up over the next two years, ACS and the Dave Thomas Foundation have established an \$11 million partnership to expand an initiative called Wendy's Wonderful Kids, which is focused on adoption recruitment using a particular model to increase the number of older children and children with special needs who exit foster care to a forever family through adoption or through KinGAP. The majority of children who enter foster care in New York City return home to their families. In fact, in Fiscal Year 2017 more than 2,000 children were reunified, and 899 were adopted, and 378 children exited foster care to Kinship Guardianship. So, while there is more work to be done, we are making solid progress toward our goal of connecting children and youth in foster care to permanent, safe, and loving homes. And finally, with regard to foster care, we've expanded our Fostering College Success Initiative over the last year to help more young people who are

2 transitioning out of foster care pursue higher
3 education. In partnership with CUNY, we now have
4 almost 100 young people enrolled in college classes
5 and living in CUNY dorms at Queens College, College
6 of Staten Island, and City College. And we're
7 continuing to work in close collaboration with CUNY
8 to expand the program further in Fiscal Year 19. And
9 finally, moving onto juvenile justice: As you know,
10 extensive planning is underway to prepare for
11 implementation of the initial requirements of the
12 Raise the Age legislation by October 1st, 2018. A
13 citywide Steering Committee, chaired by the Mayor's
14 Office of Criminal Justice and including
15 representatives from multiple city agencies and the
16 State Office of Court Administration, has been
17 working to guide the overall city-wide planning
18 effort. As you can imagine, this is a significant
19 undertaking. Given the very aggressive timeline for
20 implementation of this important legislation, we're
21 working to quickly expand our continuum of community-
22 based preventive services for youth who are at risk
23 of delinquency, and working with the New York City
24 Department of Probation and others to increase
25 diversion and Alternatives to Detention programs

2 throughout the City. We're also working in close
3 collaboration with the Department of Correction and
4 in compliance with State Specialized Secure Detention
5 requirements to bring new 16-year-olds and 17-year-
6 olds as well as youth on Rikers Island in that age
7 cohort into our juvenile detention facilities and to
8 develop program models and services that are designed
9 to meet the developmental needs of older adolescents.
10 We're also partnering with our provider agencies to
11 prepare for post adjudication 16- and 17-year-olds
12 coming in to Close to Home program, and building on
13 our continuum of Alternative to Placement services
14 that are currently offered through ACS's Juvenile
15 Justice Initiative, which is the largest Alternative
16 to Placement program in the City. Now, Close to
17 Home, which is the core of our post-adjudication
18 work, is a juvenile justice reform that's allowed New
19 York City youth to be placed in juvenile justice
20 residential care in or near their home communities,
21 rather than in large institution-like settings
22 upstate. Most youth in Close to Home spend about six
23 months in small residential facilities around the
24 City, and are then reunited with their families under
25 ACS supervision through aftercare. In the five years

2 since Close to Home was launched, we have seen that
3 the success of a young person's reintegration into
4 the community rests largely on the strength of the
5 aftercare supports that they receive. So, with this
6 in mind, we've initiated a set of enhancements to our
7 aftercare program to improve outcomes for justice-
8 involved youth and bolster public safety. Through
9 these reforms, ACS will improve the transition from
10 residential placement to aftercare, we will
11 strengthen supervision to ensure that young people
12 attend school and participate in other important
13 programming, and we will follow up more aggressively
14 in the rare instances where public safety issues
15 arise. As you know, the City Council awarded 250,000
16 dollars in Fiscal Year 16-- 15, I'm sorry-- to
17 implement the Cure Violence Crisis Management
18 Initiative, and you've since increased the allocation
19 to 450,000 dollars. We have adapted this initiative
20 to tap into the network of Cure Violence providers to
21 reduce the likelihood of gun violence in the City and
22 to enhance borough-based support for ACS youth in
23 neighborhoods that are most at risk by addressing the
24 underlying contributors to violence. Cure Violence
25 providers engage youth in detention and placement

2 through workshops and individual meetings, and they
3 support youth as they re-enter the community. Right
4 now, ACS funds two additional Cure Violence contracts
5 between our two secure detention sites through an
6 intra-city agreement with the Mayor's Office of
7 Criminal Justice. The progress that I've just
8 described that we're making in our protective and
9 preventive work and in foster care and in juvenile
10 justice is largely the result of increased
11 collaboration across City agencies. We all share a
12 responsibility for protecting children and supporting
13 families, and I'm pleased to report that we've been
14 expanding our interagency partnerships. In March
15 2017, only a few weeks after I became Commissioner,
16 Commissioner Banks and I executed a Memorandum of
17 Understanding with the Department of Homeless
18 Services to share information between agencies about
19 children and families who are in the shelter system
20 and ACS-involved. The MOU requires ACS and DHS to
21 notify each other at critical points in a family's
22 case. For example, when a family receiving ACS
23 services enters shelter, when there is a change in a
24 plan to move a family from shelter to shelter, or
25 when there is a change in a child welfare case at our

2 end that may require a different level of
3 intervention by DHS. The agreement also requires
4 shelter providers to issue vital information to
5 families, such as information on availability of
6 child care and safe sleep practices. All staff at
7 162 DHS shelters citywide have been trained on these
8 new protocols. In August last year, ACS and the
9 Department of Education hosted a joint training for
10 our staff and their staff on a new tiered-response
11 protocol to share information about excessive
12 absences that may suggest underlying child welfare
13 concerns. Under this protocol, attendance records
14 are more closely reviewed, and there is a clear
15 process for quickly flagging cases where there may be
16 issues of safety or educational neglect. And just
17 last week, we announced that ACS and the Department
18 of Youth and Community Development have entered a
19 two-year MOU to increase the number of youth in
20 foster care who are participating in after-school
21 programs that can enhance their academic achievement
22 and their social skills. This is a direct response
23 to a recommendation from the Foster Care Task Force,
24 and we anticipate a number of additional interagency
25 initiatives in response to other Task Force

2 recommendations. Finally, just to give you an
3 overview of our budget: Our proposed Fiscal Year
4 2019 preliminary budget plan provides for operating
5 revenues-- expenses of \$2.57 billion, of which about
6 789 million dollars is city tax levy. Since the
7 beginning of the de Blasio Administration the City
8 has made, at full implementation, a 218 million
9 dollar investment in ACS, including 172 million
10 dollars to strengthen and improve outcomes for
11 children and families in our Child Welfare system.
12 The funding has bolstered our training capacity for
13 our staff and for provider agencies, has driven a
14 historic expansion of preventive services, supports
15 much needed technology updates for our frontline
16 staff, and has fueled the launch of several
17 groundbreaking innovations in service provision for
18 children and families in the City. So, as I reflect
19 on my first year at ACS, I remain honored and humbled
20 to serve the children and families of our City as ACS
21 Commissioner. The work that ACS and our partner
22 agencies are tasked with and carry out every single
23 day is nothing short of extraordinary, and I want to
24 take a moment to express my profound gratitude to the
25 thousands of individuals who keep our children safe.

2 I look forward to working with all of you over the
3 coming years, and we welcome your questions. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
6 Excuse, Commissioner. Thank you. I enjoyed reading
7 your book, I mean your testimony.

8 [laughter]

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: But want to also--

10 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: [interposing] It's
11 been a busy year.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: welcome Council Member
13 Ritchie Torres from the "Boogie Down" Bronx for
14 joining us this afternoon. I got to say I am
15 delighted from what I've heard here. I am also
16 delighted there's been a whole lot of improvements, a
17 lot of plans, a lot of implementation that's taken
18 place. As a former ACS case worker for 10 years, I
19 wish we had some of this stuff when I ws working. We
20 wouldn't have 50 cases at the time, 12 cases-- it's
21 definitely a success story to be touted about
22 throughout the City of New York and what we have been
23 able to accomplish. But I'm not going to talk much
24 more about ACS, because my conversation to you is
25 going to be about the juvenile justice system. And

as I've said to you and I will say to each and every one of you who are in the room, whether you're a union man or union sister, or you're an educator, or you're in a group home, or you're-- wherever you are in the foster care system helping out with children, our conversations are going to be about how do we be the responsible adults in the room to help our young people in crisis. I don't want us to be adversaries. I want us to be teammates that's making sure that we have a system that works so we can improve the lives of the future of New York. So, with that all being said, going into the Close to Home conversation, the state has maximized an appropriation of 41.4 million dollars to the City for its juvenile justice program, Close to Home. The estimate for Fiscal 2019 is only 30.5 million; however, due to the access in the Close to Home we know there's going to be more slots to our youth. Despite, we authorizing Close to Home for an additional five years, implicitly validating the success of this program, the state budget proposes cutting off funding for New York City for Close to Home. I'm baffled. In addition to, there is further evidence of the Close to Home effective from Columbia University,-- again, a shout out to all the students

2 here from Columbia for Finance class; thank you for
3 joining us today-- which found evidence that positive
4 youth development and public safety improvement since
5 the advent of Close to Home. That included a 53
6 percent reduction in the number of youth arrested in
7 the City of New York. You tied [sic] some great
8 numbers, and far you've been able to save lives from
9 2012 to 2016, compared to 41 percent from the rest of
10 the state. It means we got to be doing something
11 right in the City of New York. So, my question is, I
12 want to understand how does ACS track the quality-- I
13 have a number of question. Not going to be very
14 long, but I do have a number of questions that we
15 wanted to put together for the day. Just want to
16 know how does ACS track the quality of its Close to
17 Home providers? Is there a universal scorecard to
18 determine which providers are most effective, most
19 efficient, and if they're not delivering on what your
20 goals are, what do you do with them?

21 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Those are great
22 questions. Let me say a little bit, and then I will
23 turn to Deputy Commissioner Franco to give you more
24 details on the process. But all of our Close to Home
25 services are provided by non-proper providers. They

2 administer our-- both our residential placement
3 facilities and our after care programs, and I said in
4 my testimony, we're actually looking at some
5 significant enhancements to that program,
6 particularly in the aftercare area. But it is very
7 important that we make sure that we're maximizing the
8 investment that we and currently the state, and we
9 hope in the future the state, are making in that
10 program. We're seeing-- you know, if look at sort of
11 the macro level, we're clearly seeing success. As I
12 said, you know, fewer kids being arrested, fewer kids
13 going into the program, and some other metrics I
14 didn't mention like for example, fewer kids going
15 AWOL in the program. So, when we look at the program
16 as a whole, we're seeing almost every indicator that
17 we track moving in the right direction, but it's also
18 very important that we look at the performance of
19 each of our providers, and we have a, actually a very
20 really extensive and robust scorecard program to do
21 that which is administered by our Division of Youth
22 and Family Justice, and I have to say it really is a
23 very sophisticated methodology that allows us to
24 identify service quality issues early to work with
25 providers to correct them, and to make sure that we

2 sort of are constantly looking at how we can improve
3 the quality of services and the outcomes that are
4 being achieved by all of our providers. Let me ask
5 Deputy Commissioner Franco to talk a little bit in
6 detail about how that program works.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: Thank you,
8 Commissioner. You know, Close to Home actually is
9 where it's at because it actually was grounded on the
10 principles of foster care, and what we know that
11 actually works in terms of development of permanency
12 and better youth development outcomes. So, one of
13 the overlying basics about whatever ratio of any
14 provider is actually building on the great capacity
15 of metrics that actually have been developed
16 previously at ACS for our foster care providers. We
17 actually use the same set of tools with adaptation by
18 our Division of Performance and Measurement that
19 looks at the quality of case management for every
20 youth in Close to Home. Having said that, early on
21 in Close to Home, particularly under this
22 Administration, we understood that case management
23 quality and outcomes such as permanency were not
24 enough for a program that actually has a public
25 safety obligation. So, in the last four years we

2 have invested significant amount of money in actually
3 develop a cadre of inspection tools, to be completely
4 honest. We're actually-- it's not just what we
5 expect on behalf of the providers, but we have a team
6 of inspectors that actually go to the homes on the
7 weekends, on the nights unannounced to inspect
8 certain standards of public safety practice. On top
9 of that, two years ago with the leadership of the
10 Commissioner and others, we actually brought into New
11 York City performance-based standards which is
12 actually national set of juvenile justice standards
13 using over 72 jurisdictions. So, New York City
14 actually now has the capacity to look at our
15 performance, not just internally from a year-to-year
16 performance, but actually well we do compared to
17 other jurisdictions across the nation. Many
18 measures, particularly issues such as the use of room
19 confinement incidents, permanency, we actually lead
20 the nation.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: So, thank you. Thank
22 you for that. I heard you do some training. You do
23 some inspections to make sure that every-- the
24 service providers are in tack and deliver what they
25 need to deliver. What happens if that training is

2 not successful, and has there been an issue where in
3 the last four years that an agency said, "You know
4 what, I can't do this? I'm just going to not be
5 engaged."

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: It happens.
7 I mean, again, public safety and the safety of the
8 youth is actually our main--

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: [interposing] I'm
10 sorry, say that again.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: Public
12 safety and the safety of the youth that we serve is
13 our main responsibility. So, actually, based on the
14 case reviews that I mentioned before, based on our
15 inspections and based on real data related to
16 incidents, there's actually likelihood that a
17 provider that we feel-- that we don't feel
18 comfortable is doing well, we could actually close
19 intake, and we could actually have to put in place a
20 set of recommendations for them to improve their
21 practice. And we have done that in the past. We
22 tend to be fairly proactive looking at real data on a
23 weekly basis in terms of incidents and other matters,
24 and actually can work usually with the providers to
25 figure out if it's an issue of staffing, if it's an

2 issue of training, or if it's some other issue that
3 could be addressed.

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. I'm going to
5 move forward on some other questions, but I do--
6 we're going to get back there, because I do want to
7 understand what do you do if someone just doesn't cut
8 the mustard? Is there a timeline of saying, listen,
9 we try it with you for the last two years, three
10 years, this doesn't seem like you're able to deliver.
11 We need to make sure this money is spent better, so
12 you don't have to answer that question. Just think
13 about it, and I'll just move on. I want to talk a
14 little bit about secure detentions. DYFJ manages two
15 secure facilities in the City of New York, Crossroads
16 and Brownsville neighborhood in Brooklyn and Horizon
17 in Mott Haven neighborhood of the Bronx. As we know,
18 secure detention funds support the-- excuse me-- the
19 city-operated secure detention facilities that
20 alleged juvenile delinquents and offenders' cases are
21 pending in Family Court and Criminal Court. The
22 total admissions to detentions have dropped. You
23 were talking about the numbers from 2,755 in Fiscal
24 2015 to 2,126 in Fiscal 2017. So, my question is:
25 there currently is 98 children in the juvenile

detention system that you have. How many can-- how many youth can ACS expect to accommodate by October of 2018 and by October 2019, and how many are expected to be placed in secure or non-secure?

COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well again, let me start out and then Deputy Commissioner Franco can elaborate. So, the number that you cited, Council Member, actually includes who are in secure and non-secure detention. SO, in our two secure detention facilities the population fluctuates somewhat, but it's been mostly in the 50 to 60 range recently, and then we have another 30 or so kids who are in non-secure detention, and they are in residential facilities not--outside of our two detention centers that you mentioned, Horizon and Crossroads. So that number has been down because of the number of arrests in the City has been down. But we know that once Raise the Age implementation begins in October of this year we will have more young people coming into our system, and the City's plan is that both beginning October 1, 2018 newly arrested 16-year-olds, if a judge orders that they require pre-trial detention or pre-adjudication attention. And then beginning October 1, 2019, again, if a judge orders

2 that they require pre-adjudication attention, they
3 will be coming into our system and into our
4 facilities. In addition and of course that part of
5 Raise the Age applies across the state. The other
6 part of Raise the Age applies only in New York City,
7 is the requirement that all youth who are on Rikers
8 Island as of October 1, 2018 must be moved off of
9 Rikers Island, and that during the year from October
10 1, 2018 to October 1, 2019, any 17-year-olds who are
11 arrested although they remain legally to be
12 considered as adult criminals. They don't actually
13 transition into the juvenile system until 2019. They
14 cannot be on Rikers Island. So that the City's plan
15 is that they too will come into our system. So, the
16 City's plan as I think you know is that we intend to
17 utilize Crossroads and Horizon together with a
18 facility that is currently state-owned we have asked
19 the state to transfer to us, Ella McQueen in Brooklyn
20 as an intake and assessment center, and our
21 expectation is that with those three facilities we
22 will have the capacity to handle our current
23 population, newly arrested 16-year-olds beginning this
24 year, newly arrested 17-year-olds beginning next year
25 and the cohort of young people, 16 and 17-year-olds,

2 who are on Rikers Island now, as well as those who
3 are-- 17-yr-olds who are arrested over the course of
4 that intervening year that we've been sort of calling
5 the gap year. But what we've had to do in our
6 planning is to think both about the incremental
7 increase in young people coming in as a part of the--
8 the really fundamental part of Close to Home as well
9 as the cohort of young people on Rikers who will need
10 to moved off Rikers into other facilities as of
11 October of this year.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay, thank you.
13 Thank you for the answer. I do want to move onto my
14 colleagues who may have questions, but I just want to
15 ask you one more question in regards-- in Fiscal Year
16 18 there was-- it's been noted that there's over 300
17 million dollars that you have to improve facilities.
18 Specifically, we talked about Crossroads and Horizon.
19 Just want to get an idea how far along in spending of
20 that 300 million that has been spent, and what's
21 remaining, and what will you continue to do with
22 whatever is remaining?

23 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Very good
24 question. We are currently engaged in the initial
25 phases of what we're calling "Make Ready Work" so

2 that as of this October we will be ready to have a
3 larger number of young people come into both
4 Crossroads and Horizons. So, the money is currently
5 being spent on both facility upgrades and
6 improvements necessary to provide the programming
7 that 16-year-olds, newly arrested 16-year-olds, as
8 well as 16- and 17-year-olds from Rikers Island will
9 require. So, we're currently spending money out of
10 that 300 million dollar allocation for initial Make
11 Ready activities so that by October 1, 2018 we'll be
12 ready to basically absorb into our system those young
13 people, but the work will continue after that because
14 we know there's more work the will need to be done
15 that we are not going to be able to complete by that
16 point. So, the work will continue for another year
17 or even more after that period of time, but the
18 commitment that we have-- and we're working very
19 closely with our colleagues in the Department of
20 Design and Construction to make sure that by this
21 October, all essential work has been done so that 16-
22 and 17-year-olds can be absorbed into Rikers Island
23 and into Horizon and Crossroads. In addition, once--
24 if we are successful in our request that the state
25 transfer to us Ella McQueen, we anticipate that there

2 will be renovation work that needs to be done in that
3 facility. We don't know for sure because we so far
4 have not been given access to it. So, we don't know
5 what the extent of that work will be or what the cost
6 of that work will be, but we certainly anticipate
7 that there will be some substantial amount of
8 renovation required there, and that presumably would
9 also come out of that capital allocation.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: So, I heard you say a
11 whole lot of stuff. My question is, the 300-- if I
12 missed it-- the 300 million that's on the table, how
13 much has been spent and how much do you have left as
14 of today? That's what I'm trying to understand.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARRISH: Hi there.
16 For the two facilities, Horizons and Crossroads,
17 we've been authorized to spend 104 million dollars.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: As of today there's
19 104--

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARRISH:
21 [interposing] As of today, authorized--

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: [interposing] million
23 that was spent.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: to spend 104 million
25 dollars. We have committed already 74 and a half

2 million dollars in encumbrances, and pre-
3 encumbrances. So, these are contracts going out the
4 door through DDC, and we spent-- we've liquidated far
5 less than that, but as you can see, we're on a very
6 intense schedule of a commitment of 74 million
7 dollars.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: And to what
9 the Commissioner mentioned before, our focus now and
10 the expenses that you heard before, it's Make Ready
11 Work which actually is a lot of those significant
12 amount of repairs that those facilities needed anyway
13 that actually make them health [sic] and safety for
14 October 1st. We actually are working and actually
15 have been finalizing a set of new packages of design
16 to do further improvements of the facilities to meet
17 the programmatic needs of 16- and 17-year-olds years
18 to come.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. So, that 300
20 million is enough, and you'll be finished hopefully
21 by October 1st, but the plan is continue to work if
22 you're not finished by October.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: The plan
24 would be to continue working. By October 1st we're
25 going to be only ready to do the health and safety

2 items the Commissioner mentioned before. We will
3 continue to do programmatic enhancements afterwards.

4 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: The, you know, we
5 have to have completed by October 1 is, as Deputy
6 Commissioner Franco just said, health and safety
7 work. Obviously, safety is the priority. So, we
8 have to make sure that anything that's essential for
9 safety of either young people or staff has got to be
10 completed, and then we also have to do the work that'
11 necessary for us to be able to comply with the
12 requirements of the state regulations that will
13 govern these facilities. So, the commitment is that
14 all of that will be done by October 1, and then we
15 will continue to do work to expand and enhance
16 programming in the facilities that we think is going
17 to be necessary. So, our expectation is that all of
18 that work will be completed within the 300 million
19 dollar allocation.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, I thank you for
21 that, and before I turn it over and call on my
22 colleagues, we spoke about Ella McQueen. Is the
23 state-- what's the reality with that, and when are
24 you going to have access. What's the conversation
25 looking like with them with the state?

2 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, those are
3 great questions, and we may know more after this
4 week, the final week of state budget negotiations.
5 The Governor proposed-- we initiated our request to
6 the state that they transfer Ella McQueen to us
7 middle of last year. So that request has been
8 pending for some time. In the Governor's Executive
9 Budget the Governor requested the ability to close
10 Ella McQueen without going through a normally
11 required 12-month notification period to incumbent
12 staff and unions. That-- so, that proposal is in the
13 discussions. In their initial responses, neither
14 house of the legislature adopted that proposal, but
15 it will be part of the final budget negotiation. So,
16 our hope is that the final state budget that emerges
17 will authorize the closure of Ella McQueen without a
18 notification period and that the Governor and the
19 Executive will then be willing to enter into
20 negotiations to transfer it to the City.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. Thank you. At
22 this time I'm going to ask some of my colleagues who
23 have questions to share with you right now. I think
24 we're going to do-- how many on the clock? We could
25 do three minutes on the clock, please? First, we

2 want to [inaudible] Council Member Torres who has
3 questions right now. Don't worry about the time.
4 Just do your thing.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I might break the
6 rule. I have a few questions about the
7 implementation of Raise the Age. As you know,
8 Commissioner, the law on Raise the Age requires the
9 City of New York to transfer 16- and 17-year-olds to
10 these new youth facilities, these specialized secured
11 detention centers by October of 2018. And as you
12 know well, correctional violence against youth
13 offenders has been the subject of a federal
14 investigation. It's been the subject of a federal
15 court settlement, concern about the culture of
16 violence at Rikers Island was one of the driving
17 sentiments behind Raise the Age. Despite all of
18 these facts, despite all the lessons learned from the
19 experience of Rikers Island, the City plans to staff
20 these new youth facilities with adult correction
21 officers rather than ACS workers who specifically
22 specialize in handling youth offenders. There's a
23 well-founded concern among advocates and elected
24 officials that the City runs the risk of exporting
25 the Rikers Island correctional culture of violence to

2 these new youth facilities, and in doing so defeats
3 the very rationale for Raise the Age. Right? Our
4 objective as a city should be to create a humane
5 alternative to Rikers Island, not to create rebranded
6 microcosms of Rikers Island. So, the City seems
7 intent on staffing the new youth facilities with
8 adult correction officers, which I believe is a
9 mistake, but what action has the City taken? The
10 Raise the Age law was another enacted in April 2017.
11 What action has the City taken between April of 2017
12 and March of 2018 to ensure that these correction
13 officers are undergoing the training appropriate for
14 these SSDs, for these new facilities?

15 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, first of
16 all, Council Member, I very much appreciate the
17 concerns you're raising, and we have heard them from
18 many advocates and other voices across the City, and
19 we take them very seriously, and the first thing I
20 want to say is that it is our commitment, and when I
21 say our commitment I mean not just ACS's commitment,
22 but the City's commitment, that the current culture
23 in our juvenile facilities both Crossroads and
24 Horizons which is basically juvenile-appropriate
25 services for juveniles will not change. And we are

2 working very closely with our colleagues in the
3 Department of Correction to make sure that that
4 happens. The Raise the Age legislation does require
5 that the category the state is creating which will
6 ultimately be the category under which we expect
7 certification which is called Specialized Secure
8 Detention. It does require that those facilities be
9 co-administered by ACS and by DOC.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: But the law does
11 not require--

12 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: [interposing] It
13 doesn't require.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ACS to staff with
15 correction officers. That is a choice that the City
16 of New York has made.

17 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: It doesn't
18 prescribe-- exactly-- the level of involvement of
19 each agency. It just requires that both agencies be
20 involved in the operation of the facilities. The plan
21 that we have underway will require that for a
22 transitional period, which we hope to make as short
23 as possible, Department of Corrections staff will be
24 taking the primary responsibility at one of our
25 facilities at Horizon, and the reason for that is

2 that we-- as we've been talking about today-- we have
3 a very low population of young people at Horizon and
4 Crossroads--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] I
6 just want to interject because I do have time
7 constraints.

8 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Sure.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: My question was,
10 if the city is intent on staffing these follow-up
11 with correction officers, which again I think is a
12 mistake, what training have those correction officers
13 undergone between April of 2017 when the law was
14 enacted and today?

15 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yeah. Well, we're
16 working and I will-- Deputy Commissioner Franco,
17 we've been working very aggressively in work groups
18 with DOC and other partners. He can talk about more
19 details than I can. But there are really two things,
20 two important steps to the process-- three really.
21 One is to make sure that the specific individuals who
22 will be working in our facilities are individuals who
23 have been trained, who have the expertise and who
24 have the inclination to work with juveniles. So, the
25 Department of Corrections will be individually

2 picking those staff who will be transferred to and
3 working in Horizons. Number two: they will receive
4 the training and we will be providing very
5 significant support to DOC--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] So,
7 they have not received training yet.

8 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: I have to turn to
9 Deputy Commissioner Franco on the actual status of
10 the training.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: I mean, I
12 think at the present moment, folks who actually work
13 with young people in the Department of Corrections do
14 go by additional training, but having said that, the
15 law particularly requires anyone who is going to be
16 working in the special secure detention facilities to
17 abide by the regulations set by the state, and those
18 regulations in spirit and in practice require anyone
19 who is going to be working with these young people to
20 abide by kind of juvenile justice standards. So, we
21 had actually-- we're working very hard between the
22 Department of Corrections and ACS to set -- develop a
23 set of policies that will guide the practice of
24 anyone who works in our facilities. And those--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] But
3 it sounds like--

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: policies--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] It
6 sounds like from April 2017 to March of 2018 there
7 has been no training of these correction officers.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: We just got
9 the final set of-- actually, we haven't even
10 finalized the--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] Have
12 you even designed the training?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: We actually
14 working on that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: So you have not
16 even designed the training?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: Well,
18 actually, there's a lot of things that we actually
19 know. The-- whoever work with young people in
20 Specialized Secure Detention facilities have to abide
21 by the standards set by the regulations.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Right, but
23 standards on paper are one thing. It's training that
24 ensures that we actually abide by those standards. It
25 our practice and at the level culture.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: And the first
3 type is--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [interposing] And
5 there's been no training over the course of a year.
6 It sound like you have not even designed a training.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: We actually
8 are getting the policies to be reviewed by the state
9 that will lead us to design.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Are the-- but
11 when did those-- but I think the regulations were
12 known since last year.

13 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, let me
14 explain, Council Member, if I could, what we have
15 been doing and the reason for that. So, the
16 regulations were-- the draft regulations were issued
17 by the state in December, three months ago. Those
18 were draft regulations. Since then, we have been
19 continuing to receive clarifications from the state
20 on them. We still don't have final regulations, and
21 those regulations were critical because they
22 specified things like staff to young people ratios.
23 They specify things like the training requirements
24 for staff members. So, without those regulations, we
25 didn't even know what kind of staff the state was

2 going to require us to have in the facilities.

3 That's number one. Number two, we began-- beginning

4 after the law was passed in April of last year,

5 really under the leadership of the Mayor's Office of

6 Criminal Justice was to do an extensive citywide

7 inventory of facilities that could potentially be

8 appropriate from moving kids off Rikers. It wasn't

9 assumed from the beginning that the plan would be

10 what is our current plan now which is that we intend

11 to utilize Horizon, Crossroads, and Ella McQueen for

12 that purpose. But we wanted to see if there were

13 other facilities available around the City that would

14 be appropriate for this purpose and that could be

15 online by October 1, by the very aggressive deadline

16 in the statute. So, the Mayor's Office of Criminal

17 Justice conducted an extensive inventory, looked at

18 more than 50 sites across the City. The ultimate

19 outcome of which was because-- particularly because

20 of land use review requirements. There was no other

21 option available to the City to meet the October 1,

22 2018 deadline other than the current Horizon,

23 Crossroads, Ella McQueen plan, but that process took

24 some time. So it really wasn't until the very end of

25 last year that we both had at least an initial set of

2 regulations, drafted regulations. We had some sense
3 of where the state was going, and we had been through
4 the process that demonstrated there was really only
5 one facility option available.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: But it's not an
7 all-or-nothing proposition, right? We knew
8 something. We knew that the law did not require the
9 City to staff these facilities with correction
10 officers, and we knew that these new kinds of
11 facilities would require new kinds of workers with
12 new kinds of training, and it seems like no
13 groundwork was laid over the course of a year. So,
14 ACS workers, how many ACS workers would be required
15 to staff these facilities if the City were to go in
16 that direction?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: I mean, the
18 first phase just to be able to safely manage
19 Crossroads, we need 120 staff by August of this year,
20 and then we have to actually bring on board and
21 retain around a rate of 50 per month to be able to
22 take over the criminal justice system.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: How many in
24 total? I'm sorry, I didn't-- I'm not sure--
25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: One hundred
3 and twenty by August of this year.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: One hundred and
5 twenty, okay.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: And then we
7 have to attract and retain around 50 per month for
8 the next couple of years.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And it's a point
10 I'd made before, I think when there is either a
11 legal-- because we originally said that it was
12 impossible to relocate 16- and 17-year-olds from
13 Rikers Island by March of 2018. That was the
14 original position of New York City, but we're going
15 to get it done because there's a legal mandate. UPK,
16 we're able to implement the largest UPK program in a
17 matter of months because there was political will,
18 and where there's political will and where there's a
19 legal mandate, magic can happen in New York City, and
20 I feel like the story here is not a lack of capacity.
21 I think it's a failure of political will beyond your
22 paygrade, but that's my-- I think we can hire 120
23 people by October or August of this year.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Council
25 Member.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. Thank you.

4 Wanted to go to Council Member Bar-- to recognize
5 Council Member Barron from being here, and I believe
6 she has a question as well. We're doing three
7 minutes on the clock, and we will have a round two
8 for any other Council Members that have more
9 questions. Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
11 Chair, and thank you to the panel for being here.
12 Crossroads is in the neighboring district to mine,
13 and what is-- is that one of the sites where you have
14 definitely made a decision with the juvenile
15 population will be sent?

16 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yes, Crossroads is
17 currently one of our two juvenile facilities--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]
19 Right.

20 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: and will continue
21 to be.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, what is the
23 capacity at Crossroads?

24 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: One hundred and
25 six beds in total. Now, there are reasons why, you

2 know, it's not possible to fill every single one of
3 those beds, and we wouldn't intend to. You have to
4 maintain separation between population, boys and
5 girls, different levels of offenders, but in theory
6 the facility has a population of 106 beds.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, how many--
8 you said you don't think you can go that. You won't
9 go that high because of requirements to do
10 separation. How many detainees do you anticipate
11 will be at Crossroads?

12 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, it'll be
13 some number less than that. It's hard to say because
14 we don't know exactly--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] How
16 many detainees are there?

17 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Currently at
18 Crossroads?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right, if Rikers
20 had to be moved.

21 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Oh, at Rikers,
22 about 130. It fluctuates a little bit, but on
23 average 130-140.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. So, will
25 students-- will students, you know I'm teacher. Will

2 the detainees-- and they are students as well-- be
3 placed in consideration of where their home is or
4 their home address so their parents will be able to
5 have close ability to facility to do that?

6 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: That's a good
7 question. So, the new 16-year-olds who, under Raise
8 the Age because of raising the age of criminal
9 responsibility, will now be treated as juveniles
10 rather than as adults. as they move through the
11 system and enter Close to Home they will, in fact,
12 just as others in the Close to Home program, they
13 will be situated in residential facilities that are
14 close to their homes. So, for them, the answer will
15 be yes. The population on Rikers Island, while the
16 law says they have to be moved off Rikers Island, the
17 law also says they continue to be treated under the
18 adult criminal law and the adult criminal system.
19 So, they will never move into the Close to Home
20 program, which is a juvenile program. Even though
21 they can't be on Rikers Island, they will continue to
22 be adjudicated as adults under state law.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: How does that
24 impact on my question of where they'll be placed?

2 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, that would
3 mean they will be tried in criminal court and then if
4 they are convicted and sentenced, they would serve
5 their sentence in the adult criminal correctional
6 system.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: Council
8 Member, I mean, if your question is referring to pre-
9 trial, I mean--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]
11 Right.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: now we have
13 the capacity in New York City to place actually young
14 people from Queens and Brooklyn in Crossroads. Young
15 people usually from Manhattan and the Bronx in
16 Horizons. Some of that flexibly will go away. I
17 mean, the regulation from the state required to
18 separate those young people who are going to be
19 adolescent [sic] offenders from the young people who
20 are juvenile delinquents and juvenile offenders, and
21 for practical purposes they may be adolescent
22 offenders placed in Horizons than there would be at
23 Crossroads. So, we may lose some of the flexibility
24 that we have to have all the young people from
25 Brooklyn and Queens in Crossroads. Having said that,

2 our intent is trying to manage the multiple demands
3 of the adolescent offenders, the juvenile
4 delinquents, the juvenile offenders, something that I
5 know is important to you, age, because they have
6 different developmental stages, and proximity to
7 home. So, we will--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]

9 Thanks.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: always strive
11 to do the best that we can around all of those
12 factors.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. And
14 Mr. Chair, one final question? What are the
15 requirements for the ratio of adults to the
16 detainees? Is that clearly defined from the state?

17 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, as they're
19 coming into Crossroads, is there a defined ratio?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: Yeah, the
21 state actually requires a ratio of six youth per
22 every one staff, which actually is lower than what it
23 used to be under the juvenile detention regulations.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Thank
25 you, Mr. Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: No, thank you for your
3 questions, Council Member Barron. We've been joined
4 by Council Member Mark Gjonaj from the Bronx. Right
5 now, we'll turn the mic over to Council Member
6 Perkins.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Thank you, Mr.
8 Chair. I want to get some clarification. So, 16 to
9 17-year-old would be absorbed at Rikers Island or
10 somehow-- what is that?

11 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yeah, the law is
12 very complicated.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: The law is
14 complicated.

15 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: So, there-- yeah.
16 There are really three--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: [interposing]
18 Alright, can you make it simple?

19 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: I will-- well, as
20 simple as I can, and that-- because there are three
21 different categories. So, beginning in October this
22 year, 16-year-olds who are arrested will now be
23 treated as juveniles, not as adults and they will be
24 our responsibility if they require pre-trial
25 detention and if they are adjudicated to commit an

2 offense, they'll go in our Close to Home program.
3 That's newly arrested 16-year-olds. The law also
4 says that 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds who are on
5 Rikers Island in October have to be moved off Rikers
6 Island, all of them. And so they also will be
7 absorbed into our juvenile detention facilities and
8 we hope the facility the state will be transferring
9 to us. So, that's a requirement. And then, newly
10 arrested 17-year-olds, next year, will still be
11 treated as adults, but they cannot be on Rikers
12 Island. After one year in October of 19, the 17-
13 year-olds also will be treated as juveniles and they
14 would come into our system and potentially also go
15 into Close to Home.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: But they have to
17 do a year in the joint at Rikers Island before they
18 come over?

19 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: No, they-- neither
20 16- or 17-year-olds are permitted under law to be on
21 Rikers Island at all after October 1st of this year.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: I thought I
23 heard you say something about 17-year-olds will be--
24 what?

2 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: They cannot be on
3 Rikers Island, but for one year-- it's very odd kind
4 of glitch in the law-- for one year they're still
5 treated as adults, under the adult criminal law and
6 prosecuted as adults, but they cannot be detained on
7 Rikers Island under the law.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: They'll be
9 prosecuted as an adults, but not detained on Rikers
10 Island.

11 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: That's correct.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Okay, and where
13 will they be detained?

14 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: They will be
15 detained in our facilities.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And do you have
17 numbers, population of young people who are presently
18 on Rikers Island in this age range?

19 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: We do. As I said,
20 it fluctuates a bit from day to day, but it has
21 generally been recently in the 130 to 150 range.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And is there
23 budget implications that you-- what does that cost?
24 How does that-- do your budget figure out--
25

2 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: [interposing] For
3 us?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: How much does
5 that budget--

6 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yes, there are
7 significant budgetary implications as you would
8 imagine. There are the capital costs that we were
9 discussing earlier to renovate the facilities because
10 they will have more kids and older kids in them, and
11 then the staffing cost. So, we have estimated that
12 the cost of full implementation of Raise the Age will
13 be about 200 million dollars a year, and that's a
14 combination of operating costs and capital costs.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Two hundred
16 million dollars per year to implement it.

17 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: That's correct.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: And that doesn't
19 count sustaining it?

20 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, that it
21 would be 200 a year each year into the future.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Each year, you
23 don't think that number will grow?

24

25

2 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: That's-- I think
3 that's our expectation of what the cost will be at
4 full implementation, is that right?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARRISH: As we said
6 earlier, we save over 300 million in our capital
7 budget for multiple years in the future, and our
8 belief is that we'll spend at least 75 million of
9 that between now and October, and perhaps as much as
10 104. So, that's the capital budget. the 200 million
11 dollars, the expense budget number that is a number
12 that has been a citywide estimate for the cost of
13 Raise the Age in the expense budget, and we're
14 currently now in deep deliberations with the Office
15 of Management and Budget about what-- how much of
16 that would be allocated to the ACS Budget. Those are
17 discussions that are going on that will-- you'll hear
18 more about in the Executive Budget when it is
19 published.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Just so I'm
21 clear, so there's 300 million for-- is the capital
22 for-- let's say-- what does that mean? Preparing the
23 facilities? Could you sort of delineate that a
24 little bit?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: Yeah, I
3 mean, I think as the Commissioner said before, that's
4 for construction purposes. That means so far we're
5 actually focusing on Crossroads and the Horizons, as
6 we said before, on health and safety items. We
7 actually working now on the next phase of the signing
8 enhancements to meet the needs of 16- and 17-year-
9 olds. And again, as the Commissioner said before, we
10 don't know how much money will be needed for the
11 repairs of Ella McQueen if we get it, when we get it.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So, I'm a
13 little-- so where-- are these adolescents on Rikers
14 Island at all?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: currently,
16 yes, they are today.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: So there will be
18 capital improvements or capital expenses for the
19 facilities for them on Rikers Island?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: No, the
21 capital expenses that we're talking about today, I
22 mean, within ACS are the capital expense that will
23 be-- where the Commissioner talked about improving
24 our facilities to be ready to take on these kids.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: The present
3 facilities--

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: [interposing]
5 Need help. They need a lot of repair.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Need 300 million
7 or so in preparation for the young people that are
8 going to be-- those facilities are not on Rikers
9 Island. They're--

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: They're not.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: They're in the--
12 and where are they at?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: One of them
14 is in Brooklyn. One of them is in the Bronx.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Okay, and what
16 are those two facilities? That-- what is the name--

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: [interposing]
18 Why don't--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: You never named
20 like--

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: Yeah, yeah, I
22 mean, hopefully you can come. The one in Brooklyn is
23 called Crossroads.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Crossroads.
25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: The one in
3 the Bronx is called Horizons.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: What Horizon?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: Horizons.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Are you good, Council
7 Member?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Well,--

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: [interposing] We can
10 come back for round two, you feel like?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Okay. If you
12 want I'll go along with what you have.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay, no problem. But
14 you mentioned about, Commissioner, and Deputy, you
15 mentioned about the 200 million dollars as an
16 estimate, correct, of how to Raise the Age. How much
17 of that fiscal responsibility is born to ACS versus
18 probation, correction, law Department and other
19 policy agencies?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: I think--

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARRISH:

22 [interposing] I think the only people know that
23 question right now are the Office of Management and
24 Budget. We have all-- we're asked in early February
25 to submit packages, estimates of requested funds.

2 That process is ongoing right now with the Office of
3 Management and Budget as part of the Executive Budget
4 preparation, which we'll see in April. So, we don't
5 have the answer to that question. These are
6 deliberations that are happening right now.

7 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: When we get back
8 together again in May to talk about the Executive
9 Budget, we'll have much more detail on it.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. Thank you.
11 I'd like to turn it over to Council Member Holden
12 right now.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yes, I'd like to-
14 - thank you, Commissioner, by the way. Terrific
15 work. It sounds wonderful and we are, you know,
16 making some progress obviously from the years back
17 when we had so many problems with the unit.

18 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, thank you
19 very much.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I want to talk
21 about the Close to Home again. Could you describe a
22 typical facility, Close to Home? How many rooms?
23 What the 16-year-old or 17-year-old will get? Do
24 they get their own room? Do they get, you know,-- is
25 it a jail?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: You know,
3 it's hard to describe, but you know, these are the
4 same young people that used to be in state facilities
5 five years ago. Now, they actually are in a setting
6 in the community that actually is staff rich [sic]
7 more than any institution in New York-- United States
8 where actually their schedule is programmed every
9 minute of the day, where they actually have to show
10 that they're earning the right to go home. They
11 actually have to prove that by actually participating
12 consistently in groups, demonstrating the ability to
13 regulate their behavior and emotions completely
14 different than ever before, and actually they
15 actually are giving opportunities to demonstrate that
16 they can do well in the community by home passes
17 [sic], and actually that involves not just the young
18 person, but also the family. So, the program is
19 actually based on the parameters that you have the
20 ability within the ecology of New York City to show
21 young people how to do better and it's working
22 because of that. I mean, young people will usually
23 describe it the following way to me: "In a large
24 institution I can just make the time and get away
25 without learning anything. In a Close to Home

2 setting there's people on top of me every minute of
3 the day. I'd rather do what they say."

4 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Let me just add
5 that Deputy Commissioner Franco's invitation to
6 Council Member Perkins is a very serious one. We
7 would be delighted to show you in the facilities. I
8 have visited many of them myself, and really it's
9 hard to appreciate the quality of the services that
10 young people get and the experience without actually
11 seeing.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, that was
13 my next question, actually, I wanted to visit a Close
14 to Home facility.

15 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: We would be
16 delighted to arrange that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Which one is the
18 model facility that you think in the City of New
19 York?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: You know,
21 one of those things that actually Close to Home has
22 is that they're 31 different homes, and we in ACS
23 carefully assess the needs and the risk of each one
24 of the youth and determine which one of those sites
25 would be best to meet those risks and needs. So,

2 each one of them is different. Some actually homes
3 are based on a philosophy and a model that is all
4 about building individual skills. Kids are kind of
5 in individual rooms and they have a lot of individual
6 therapy. Many other programs are actually based on
7 positive peer networks, and actually all the work is
8 about groups and groups and checking in and trying to
9 work with a cohort of kids who learn new skills
10 together.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Alright, so when
12 it's not working out, one facility is not helping the
13 juvenile, they might be transferred to another
14 facility?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: You know,
16 one of the things that we're really proud of, early
17 on in Close to Home there was a lot of movement which
18 are detrimental to the relationships and to the
19 therapeutic interventions that we want to do. last
20 year, we actually had less than one percent of
21 movement laterally between the Close to Home sites,
22 and actually there was no movement up in meaning
23 [sic] of worse [sic] to limited-secure or secure.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. I just
25 have one more question for the Commissioner. You

2 mentioned about identifying students who are absent a
3 lot in school. How does-- is that somebody that-- do
4 you identify the students that's in your system that
5 you've had experiences with or just random students?

6 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, usually it
7 is the Department of Education that identifies them,
8 because they, of course, in the first instance would
9 know.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right.

11 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: And you know, if a
12 child is not coming to school repeatedly that might
13 or might not indicate that there is some underlying
14 child welfare issue, that there's an issue with the
15 parents, we don't know. It could just be the child
16 is truant and issues that DOE handles. So, what we
17 have tried to create with the Department of Education
18 is what I described as a tiered response protocol so
19 that all the staff, the teachers, the administrators,
20 anyone who notices a pattern of non-attendance can
21 let us know that in ways not-- there's always the
22 possibility of they're making a formal report to the
23 state hotline, and they can do that, and they
24 frequently do do that, and then that requires a full
25 child welfare investigation. We think in many cases

2 there may be more efficient and formal ways for them
3 to alert us as an issue and sort of to deal with the
4 issue with the family. So, we've tried to put in
5 place sort of a range of ways for us communicate and
6 interact with DOE in situations where there are
7 attendance issues, but you know, there may be
8 different reasons behind that attendance problem.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: How many
10 investigators? You said you hired more
11 investigators.

12 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Right.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: How many more
14 this past fiscal year?

15 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: We hired-- in the
16 last 12 months we have hired 600-- make sure I have
17 the numbers right for you.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARRISH: Child
19 protective investigators.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I can't hear you.

21 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Child protective
22 investigators you're referring to. The ones I
23 referred to in my testimony.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I'm sorry?
25

2 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: The child
3 protective investigators that I referred to in my
4 testimony--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] Oh,
6 okay, yes, yes, yes. Because that was the area that
7 the City was really lacking in previous years.

8 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: That is correct.
9 That is correct. So, we have hired 633 in this
10 fiscal year, and we'll be hiring 200 more before the
11 end of the fiscal year. I'm sorry, that includes the
12 200. That's for the whole--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] And
14 I know this might be a tough question, but what's the
15 typical caseload for each investigator?

16 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Currently, our
17 average caseload is 12, which is a reduction from
18 what it had been recently, and it is a major
19 reduction from what it was a number of years ago.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Council
22 Member. I just want to ask one big question, long
23 question. It regards [sic] backing up with Council
24 Members' concerns, some of the advocates who have
25 been concerned about correction officers moving into

2 the transition of Raise the Age. And my question
3 goes to how will you look into hire this new staff
4 that you're going to bring in? how do you have a
5 transition of ACS workers or correction-- and I want
6 to be real clear, and I was an ACS worker, as been
7 known, and I know that in the past a lot of ACS
8 workers kind of transitioned to being a correctional
9 officer because of the pay, not that they say, "I
10 always wanted to be correction officer." But because
11 of the pay. So you-- I don't want us to eliminate
12 the pool of quality people who might be able to
13 deliver on the new position, but I understand if
14 someone wants to transition from one agency to
15 another, they're still going to be looking for a
16 salary that's comparable to what they're making so
17 they can survive as well. So, what does that look
18 like? What does that plan look like? What does the
19 numbers look like of cost, of salaries, you know,
20 what is the plan?

21 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yeah. No, I
22 appreciate that question very much. Well, first of
23 all, I'll say the DOC staff who will be working in
24 our facilities on a transitional basis will remain
25 DOC staff. They won't become ACS staff. So,

they'll stay in their current job classification as current simple servant title, you know, current compensation and so on. But on the ACS end, in order for us to be able to recruit the numbers of staff that Deputy Commissioner Franco described, it is clear to us that in our current simple service title which will be called "Juvenile Counselor," we will not be able to recruit the number of people that we need, and that is based on historical experience. We don't think that frankly the compensation is going to be adequate to recruit that many people, and so we are in the process of working with our colleagues across City government in DCAS and OMB and the Office of Labor Relations to create a new title, a new civil service title, with an adjusted compensation schedule that we think will enable us to do the aggressive hiring that Deputy Commissioner Franco described, which is, you know, 175 staff by September and then 50 more repeatedly in order that by 2020 we'll have enough staff to fully handle the responsibilities of Horizon and Crossroads without Department of Corrections supervision. So, we're in the final stages of developing what that new title will be, what the compensation will be, and our hope is to

2 begin recruiting under that new title very, very
3 soon, and that's actually an area in which we could
4 use all of your support because we'll need to do
5 aggressive outreach and marketing on that to make
6 sure we attract the highest caliber people for the
7 position.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: And I would-- I don't
9 want to assume anything, but I-- at that point of
10 hiring this new staff, they would at that point get
11 what additional training that they may need because
12 they're going into a new role, new responsibilities,
13 new compliances so they can understand when they come
14 in that it's a new perspective for them as well as
15 them having the talent. But I say all of that-- you
16 mentioned speaking with OMB and, you know, trying to
17 figure out with some of your partners, has there been
18 a conversation with the people who do the work in the
19 labor force, your union brothers and sisters? Are
20 they at the table with you figuring out the numbers
21 that make sense, because again, they represent the
22 New York City worker who is out there on the
23 frontlines.

24 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yeah. No, that's a
25 great question. Well, first of all I will say the

2 development of the specifications for the new
3 position were heavily influenced by input we've
4 gotten from the current staff. I've gone out with
5 Deputy Commissioner Franco, with our union president,
6 done Town Hall meetings in both Horizon and
7 Crossroads, heard from the staff about, you know,
8 what they think is working and not working in terms
9 of training. So, that certainly influenced the
10 specifications. We will be-- and we do this because
11 the way the City does it through the Office of Labor
12 Relations. Once we have a specific proposal for the
13 new title, reaching back out to the union to discuss
14 that with them before we finalize anything.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay, thank you. I'd
16 like to turn the mic over from the Bronx, Council
17 Member Mark Gjonaj.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you,
19 Chairman. Commissioner, the state budget proposes
20 cutting all funding to New York City for Close to
21 Home. What is the contingency plan for Close to Home
22 should the state cut go through?

23 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, my hope is
24 that the state cut will not go through. We will know
25 that presumably this week because the state budget

has to be adopted by April 1st. We have been aggressively educating members of the state legislature about the adverse impact this would have. Deputy Commissioner Franco and I were in Albany last week. We were in Albany the week before that. So, we're doing everything we can to make sure that the cut doesn't happen, and I know it's an important part of the City's legislative agenda in Albany. So, my hope is it won't.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: These are uncertain times. Let's say that it is cut.

COMMISSIONER HANSELL: If it does happen-
-

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: [interposing] What is your contingency plan?

COMMISSIONER HANSELL: If it does happen, then my guess is we'll be back to you with a conversation as part of the Executive Budget in a month or so about what the City's going to be able to do about that. I mean, there's no question. We cannot implement the requirements of Raise the Age. We cannot take responsibility for more kids coming into the system without state funding, without that funding.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: That was the
3 point I wanted to hear. Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. Just one
6 question before I turn it over to-- we have a round
7 two. We're going to Perkins, and then I'm going to
8 turn it over to Chair Levin. I heard you just
9 mention that this really couldn't get done if we
10 don't get the state funding. Now, what-- can you
11 tell me what are some of the current rules that might
12 not even qualify you for getting some of-- getting
13 state funding?

14 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: I'm not sure I
15 understand the question, Council Member.

16 CHAIRPERSON KING: I was informed that
17 there may be some rule that might prohibit you from
18 receiving the state funding that will allow us to
19 implement.

20 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Okay. Thank you.
21 Thank you very much. Now, I get your question. So,
22 right, there are two different funding streams that
23 we believe the City should qualify for and will need.
24 One of them is the Close to Home funding. The other
25 is the funding to support the implementation of Raise

2 the Age, and as we've told you, we expect that just
3 on the operating side, it will ultimately cost the
4 City 200 million dollars a year to fully implement
5 Raise the Age. When Raise the Age was enacted, the
6 Governor made a commitment that the state would fully
7 fund all local expenses associated with Raise the
8 Age. When the Governor actually proposed his budget
9 in January, he proposed to allocate 100 million
10 dollars statewide for Raise the Age implementation,
11 which even if it were available to New York City
12 would clearly not cover our cost. But the condition,
13 and I appreciate your question, the condition that is
14 attached to that funding is that it is only available
15 to counties in the state that are under the two
16 percent tax cap. That cap doesn't apply to New York
17 City. So, New York City is not eligible for any of
18 that 100 million dollars. The state has said that
19 New York City could apply for a waiver from that
20 prohibition, but our expectation is that the chances
21 of the City being successful with that waiver and
22 actually receiving any funding on the Raise the Age
23 side is minimal. So, our expectation under the
24 Governor's budget is that we would receive zero
25 funding for Close to Home and zero funding from the

2 state for Raise the Age so that we basically would be
3 doubly disqualified the funding to support the
4 implementation of this program.

5 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, you know, you
6 have advocates of all of us who will be working with
7 and make sure that we get that funding, and I do call
8 on the Governor and Speaker Carl Heastie who was
9 instrumental in getting the Raise the Age passed, you
10 know. If we passed a piece of legislation here in
11 the City of New York, we're responsible for
12 delivering if there's a financial responsibility to
13 it. We did not pass Raise the Age, so I'm really
14 calling on the state to be responsible because
15 they're the ones that said, "Hey, we need to do this
16 while we support it, but it's your legislation. It's
17 your rules. It's only fair to the City of New York
18 that you fund it so we can deliver on the legislation
19 that you passed in Albany. With that all being said,
20 my final question to you is in regard to contractual
21 transparency. Now, as I understand, there's about 62
22 contracts, about 100 million dollars that's in the
23 contract, in the Fiscal Year 2019 Preliminary Budget.
24 now, I don't under-- I don't know the number of what
25 is how many contracts are for juvenile justice, but

2 if you are willing to have some transparency to let
3 us understand how many contractors actually applied
4 under ACS to juvenile justice and what that number
5 looks like under those contracts, and are you
6 delivering on that number to that contract, and if
7 not, what can be done to deliver?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: I mean, your
9 question is about the procurement process. I mean, we
10 have a significant number of contracts as we speak.
11 We're actually working on a new RFP around mentoring
12 and advocacy that actually was open competitive, but
13 other things that we actually been doing recently at
14 ACS is not just doing an RFP, but actually doing a
15 concept paper beforehand to allow actually maximum
16 input by the provider community and feedback before
17 we right an RFP. We did that for the mentoring and
18 advocacy program. We actually had a very successful
19 three [inaudible] conference with more than 100
20 people attending on the phone or in person. It's our
21 commitment as we move forward to tap into the
22 knowledge-base of the not-for-profit community before
23 we redact or create anything.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. So, my question
25 was, we know that 62 general contracts. I'm trying

2 to understand how many of them apply specifically to
3 juvenile justice? I mean, either there's 12 or 29?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: I don't have
5 the number.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay, maybe you can--

7 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: [interposing] We
8 can certainly get-- I mean, 60-- the universe of
9 contracts at ACS is a much larger number than that.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: We can get you the
12 specific number and value of contracts associated
13 with Raise the Age.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. I thank
15 you for that. I'd like to turn it-- today's
16 conversation back over to Chair Levin and thank you
17 again.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
19 Chair King. Thank you, Commissioner. So, I know
20 that Council Member Perkins has a second round of
21 questions. I'll try to keep my questions somewhat
22 focused here. I want to thank everybody who is
23 waiting to testify. Now we're an hour and 20 minutes
24 past when we thought we were going to be opening for
25 public testimony. So, I'll try to keep it brief

2 here. Commissioner, just I wanted to ask, within
3 ACS' budget why there were no needs identified in the
4 Prelim, and whether we could expect some new needs as
5 part of the Exec?

6 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yeah, we actually
7 did receive some additional funding as part of the
8 January plan for additional staffing at our
9 Children's Center. That was a key need that we had
10 identified that we worked with OMB to fund. We are
11 in discussions with OMB about potential new needs for
12 the Executive Budget. I don't have a finality on
13 those decisions yet, but we're certainly having
14 conversations about them. As you know, one of the
15 areas in which we're interested in talking further
16 with the Council is implementation of some of the
17 recommendations of the foster care taskforce. The
18 two that we've implemented so far either did not have
19 a budgetary consequence, or we'd already had the
20 resources in our budget to implement, but for us, but
21 for us to be able to implement some of the others
22 would require some additional resources, and we
23 expect to have some discussion with you about that.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: One thing that I just
25 want to make sure that this is clear on the record,

2 and then I'm taking a step back here to the juvenile
3 justice side. But Close to Home was never a pilot
4 program, correct?

5 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Certainly not to
6 our knowledge and not to the recollection of anyone
7 who was involved in the process at the time. I know
8 that's something that the Executive has indicated,
9 that the reason to withdraw funding at this point is
10 that the five year pot as expired, but we can't find
11 either any contemporaneous documentation that said it
12 was intended to be a pilot program, and in speaking
13 to everyone, all the principals who were involved in
14 the negotiation at the time, nobody recalls that.
15 And I think the strongest evidence that that's not
16 the case is that the state immediately began
17 proceeding to close upstate juvenile facilities which
18 you wouldn't think you would have done if you thought
19 you--

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] It was
21 just a pilot.

22 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: would reverse the
23 process at some point.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, right. The
25 idea being-- I mean, like, could you-- this is-- I

2 mean, from a practical perspective going through five
3 years of Close to Home and then reverting back to the
4 prior iteration would never be a practical type of
5 thing to do, right?

6 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well it would be
7 extremely difficult to do, but you know, the truth is
8 I don't think anyone has suggested that
9 programmatically-- the Governor has not suggested
10 that. The legislature has not. We certainly don't
11 think it would be. I think everyone is in agreement
12 that it was the right direction for the state to move
13 in, for the City to move in, that it's working well,
14 and that we should continue it.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Let's see. Moving
16 over, and I'm going to be jumping around a little
17 bit, so I apologize for that. Child care, early
18 childhood education: So, one of the challenges that
19 I think we've seen over the last few years with the
20 roll out of UPK is that EarlyLearn has struggled to
21 be able to keep its enrollment, because four-year-
22 olds are-- many more four-year-old now are going into
23 UPK programs that are in our Department of Education
24 settings. How-- maybe take us a little bit though
25 what the challenges are now and what we're doing to

2 make sure that EarlyLearn is meeting it's enrollment
3 targets and its quality targets.

4 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yeah, great
5 question. I will turn the question to Deputy
6 Commissioner Vargas. I will only say that one of
7 our-- our hopes and expectations from the EarlyLearn
8 transfer is that the Department of Education will be
9 able to bring its additional outreach and marketing
10 resources into filling the currently vacant seats in
11 EarlyLearn. So we hope it will benefit from that.
12 But Deputy Commissioner Vargas can speak to our
13 efforts thus far to address the issue.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: So, with
15 EarlyLearn, some of the work that we've been doing
16 over the course of the last couple of years that have
17 come to fruition recently is of the first pieces, the
18 conversion with the Office of Head Start to early
19 Head Start to seats. So, the City now officially has
20 160 early Head Start seats which served infants and
21 toddlers in a variety of different settings, and we
22 knew that there was a need for expansion of infant
23 and toddler seats, so we were really excited to be
24 able to work with our partners at the federal office
25 of Head Start to create those seats, and those seats

are fully enrolled. We've also been working very closely with the Department of Education and their outreach team through their Pre-K and 3K efforts to also bring Pre-K and 3K children into the EarlyLearn program, and that has been a very successful partnership. Around quality, we continue to do the work that we rolled out several years ago right after I got here, about three years ago after the health and safety audit, and I'm happy to say we have successfully, through the Office of Head Start, we've had three audits since. Every single audit has had zero findings and zero concerns, and that's, you know, that's a big feat for the City of New York. We're really proud of that, and that just speaks to the work we've been doing around quality-- to create a quality system in EarlyLearn.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there any logistical consideration or concern around Department of Education being the applicant for Head Start rather than ACS as part of the social services district when EarlyLearn is transitioning over next year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: So, we're all part of the City of New York and we have been

2 working closely with our partners at the Department
3 of Education to make sure that the City submits a
4 proposal that's a solid proposal and really just
5 positions the City well to receive the maximum number
6 of seats that we can actually get.

7 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: And let me just
8 add, Head Start is one of those very rare programs in
9 which funds flow directly from the Federal Government
10 to local providers, not through the state, and
11 contracts are directly from the Federal Government.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

13 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: So it doesn't
14 require that a state be an applicant as it would for
15 example for child care funding. A locality can be an
16 applicant as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I know that
18 there's a-- can you fill us in a little bit on what
19 the status is in terms of discussions with Department
20 of Education? We know that Accenture is a consulting
21 firm that's working on this transition, but what is
22 Accenture doing and how is this process going so far?

23 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: I'll say a couple
24 things, and Deputy Commissioner Vargas [inaudible].
25 So, I think, you know, what we're really interested

2 in is looking at the transition not just from the
3 perspective of city agencies that have responsibility
4 for the program, but also from the perspective of the
5 parents that have to navigate the program and the
6 providers that have to work within the program. So,
7 what we're trying to do with the Department of
8 Education and with the support of the consultants is
9 to figure out how we can make the transition work as
10 seamlessly as possible for the users of the program
11 and be as efficient as possible for the two
12 departments that have to implement it. So, you know,
13 we're looking at how do you best structure
14 eligibility functions, for example, for childcare,
15 and enrollment functions, things like that. So, it
16 will inform a lot of the City's decisions about where
17 those things will be situated in the future and how
18 they'll be allocated between us. Some of the
19 decisions, you know, we talked about, for example,
20 the number of staff that we transferred from ACS to
21 DOE. Some of those decisions have been made, but
22 there are still a lot of details that have not yet
23 been, and we expect that the recommendations we get
24 from the consultants will help us figure out how to,
25 you know, implement those remaining changes in a way

2 that works most efficiently for us, but also that
3 works best for the consumers of the program.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: One of the concerns
5 around staff, so the administrative staff that's
6 currently at ACS managing this sizable program of 600
7 million dollars, is that-- is there an assurance that
8 all of ACS staff that are currently working with
9 EarlyLearn will stay with, I mean, or at least the--
10 I mean, if they choose to move on, they can move on,
11 but that all of the staff lines will be moved over?

12 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yeah. We're
13 treating this as what's called a functional transfer
14 under City Civil Service Rules. So, basically what
15 happens when a function, in this case EarlyLearn,
16 goes from one agency to another, the staff who are
17 associated with that function go from one agent to
18 another. Now, it's not always-- that's not always
19 the simple thing to determine, because sometimes
20 staff have split responsibilities. So, we're going
21 to the process initially with DOE to decide which
22 staff are in fact part of that function, and then
23 once we've sort of figured that out internally, then
24 the Office of Labor Relations will reach out to the
25 unions who represent those staff to begin discussions

2 about which staff we expect will transfer, what the
3 rights are of that staff in that transfer process,
4 and then ultimately notification to those staff.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: But the
7 expectation is that it's part of the transfer of the
8 function; the staff who support that function will go
9 with it.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And I don't-- I might
11 not want to know the answer to this, but does that
12 also include Deputy Commissioner Vargas?

13 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: I am very happy to
14 tell you that it does not include Deputy Commissioner
15 Vargas.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Alright, very
17 good. Because we love having you with ACS. Last
18 time there was an RFP a lot of concerns came out of
19 the process. I don't know if anyone was here for
20 that. People maybe in the back. I was. I can-- I
21 know that a number of Council Members were. I know
22 that OMB Director Hartzog was-- and I had a lot of
23 conversations with her at the time. and frankly,
24 what ended up happening was that programs got dropped
25 from EarlyLearn or before it was EarlyLearn and then

2 into EarlyLearn they got dropped, and the Council
3 ended up having to pick up about 60 million dollars
4 annually worth of childcare programs in order to keep
5 programs that were neighborhood-based, had been in
6 the community for 30 or 40 years. How has that
7 experience informed this process?

8 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, I wasn't
9 here then, but I have heard a few things about the
10 process, and actually, I think even in our initial
11 hearings last year I heard some concerns from Council
12 Members. Our-- actually, our plan and our intention
13 is to extend the current EarlyLearn contracts beyond
14 the point at which the program will transfer to DOE.
15 So, the current contracts will be in place at least
16 until the Fall of 2019, and it will actually be DOE's
17 decision as to how they want to move forward with re-
18 procurement of those contracts. So, we, you know,
19 we-- as part of our discussion with them about the
20 program in support of the program issues around the
21 last phase certainly have come up, but the decisions
22 about how to structure the next procurement process
23 will be made by DOE, not by ACS.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Switching over to
3 vouchers for a second. Is there currently a wait
4 list for vouchers, and if so, what-- which vouchers?

5 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: There is, and I
6 can let Deputy Commissioner Vargas speak of the
7 details. We, you know, we have-- we received
8 additional funding in the budget this year for
9 additional special childcare vouchers. I'm happy to
10 say that we have now made those all available to
11 families, and actually, that we have-- while there is
12 a waitlist, we have actually succeeded in reaching
13 out to the vast majority of families on that wait
14 list and offered them vouchers. So, most of the
15 families who have been waiting have had the
16 opportunity to receive a voucher for their children.
17 But you want to speak numbers?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: Yeah. So,
19 we've reached out to over 22,000 children, a little
20 fewer in terms of the number of families, but
21 represents 22,000 children on the voucher wait list,
22 and we've been able to-- as families kind of move out
23 of the baseline permanent funded seats, we've been
24 able to extend about 200 this fiscal year permanent
25

2 seats to the families that we engaged with the money
3 that we received for this fiscal year.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: DO you have a sense
5 of how much funding would be needed in total to bring
6 the entire voucher wait list down to zero?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: I don't have
8 that number, and I think we'd be happy to get back to
9 you with that number.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. But in terms
11 of mandated vouchers, there's mandated voucher.
12 There's no waiting list for mandated vouchers.
13 Everybody--

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: [interposing]
15 That's correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: that's mandated has an
17 entitlement to a voucher.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: That's
19 correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so that number
21 essentially goes with the demand associated with--

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: [interposing]
23 Cash assistance, yes, correct.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Changing over
25 to preventive for a moment. Last year, ACS made a

2 significant investment of about apartment 30
3 additional -- 30 million additional dollars for
4 preventive. Can you share with us what would happen
5 to our preventive and our protective services in New
6 York City if the state budget cuts were to happen?
7 What would this look like? Are we doing-- are we
8 running scenarios to see how we would deal with this?

9 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well--

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] How bad
11 would it be?

12 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: As I said before
13 with regard to the Close to Home funding elimination,
14 maybe I'm an internal optimist, but my hope is that
15 we will be successful in persuading the state
16 legislature that this would be a terrible thing to
17 do, a terrible thing to do in New York City, and a
18 terrible precedent to set for the rest of New York
19 State. So, my hope is very much that it will not
20 happen, but you know, we believe and the numbers I
21 cited in my testimony I think support our belief that
22 our ability to reduce the number of children in
23 foster care to New York City to record low levels and
24 to reduce it much faster than it has gone down in the
25 rest of the state, and frankly, counter to the trend

2 that we're seeing in the rest of the country where
3 the number of children in foster care has been going
4 up for the last five years, most people think related
5 to the opioid epidemic. Our ability to do that in
6 New York City, we believe, is directly related to our
7 unprecedented investment in preventive services, and
8 our ability to serve families, address safety issues
9 for children, but address them in the ways that keep
10 families together, rather than separating children
11 from families. So, our fear, and I think I fear is,
12 you know, well-supported by the experience that the
13 state had in the mid-90s and the late 90s is that
14 were we to have to reduce our investment in
15 preventive services, we would very likely see a
16 reversal of that decline in the foster care
17 population, and increase the number of the children
18 in foster care, and it would be-- you know, it would
19 put pressure on all of the other parts of our child
20 welfare system, and it would decrease our ability to
21 meet the needs that families have.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Would we have to move
23 evidence-based slots over to general preventive slots
24 because there would be-- because the evidence-based
25 slots are more expensive?

2 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: We haven't even
3 begun to look at contingently planning that detail.
4 Our hope very much is that we won't have to.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Just to be clear, you
6 agree with the IBO number?

7 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yes, we do, and
8 it's not that our number was wrong, just to be fair.
9 Our number was calculated before the January plan
10 adjustment which has to do, as I understand, mostly
11 with fringe benefit calculations.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: The IBO looked at
14 it post-January plan, added those in, and came up
15 with a higher number, and we do agree with it.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. SO, then the
17 num-- the difference is 129 to 161 million.

18 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: That's correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: On model budgets, the
20 experience thus far been positive? I know you spoke
21 to the issue that salary increase are on the table,
22 that's all part of that. I mean, there's-- I know
23 that there's--

24 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: [interposing] Yeah.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: There's essentially a
3 menu of options that providers could choose from in
4 terms of how they want to implement their model
5 budget.

6 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: That's correct.
7 They were given essentially a menu of four different
8 options: compensation increases, changing supervisory
9 ratios, adding sort of support from case aids, and
10 improving their quality improvement/quality assurance
11 activities. And you know, we're just now in the
12 process of implementing the budget-- the contract
13 amendments. So, can't speak yet to the impact of the
14 model budget enhancements. I can certainly say that
15 the feedback that we've gotten from the provider
16 community about the process has been uniformly
17 positive.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With regard to child
19 protection, the-- according to the MMR, the number of
20 children with repeat substantiated investigations for
21 the first four months of FY18 versus FY17 went up by
22 3.2 percent. Do you-- can you attribute this to any
23 particular reason? One thing that struck me was that
24 the first four months of FY 17 were before the Zymere
25 Perkins case, and so--

2 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: [interposing] The--

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I don't

4 know if we would be seeing the same-- I guess MMR

5 doesn't re-- the PMMR does not-- there's not a second

6 PMMR for the second four months. There's just the

7 full year.

8 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: A full year, yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, we won't see the

10 second four months.

11 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: That's right, and

12 the full-year data is always more meaningful than the

13 four-month data, but our hypothesis is exactly what

14 you're suggesting, which is that the later data, the

15 FY 18 data, was post the Zymere Perkins fatality

16 after which the number of reports we received, as you

17 know, went up significantly, and so the number of

18 indicated investigations went up as well. So, it's

19 our expectation that that is probably the reason, but

20 I will say, you know, never the less we're concerned

21 about it. And so for example, it is one of our core

22 ChildStat metrics, is number of repeat

23 investigations. We look at it every week with every

24 zone, and where we see, you know, on a more micro-

25 zone-based level concerns about that, it's something

2 we ask the zone to take a close at and see what kind
3 of corrective action might be needed.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How are you
5 addressing attrition among CPS? So, it's-- I think
6 what we've seen is that there seems to be a dip
7 between you have CPS that have been with ACS for a
8 couple of years, up to maybe three years, and then
9 there are CPS that have been with ACS for longer than
10 six or seven or eight years, but in between is when
11 we see a drop in retention. How are we looking to
12 address that?

13 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, we see, you
14 know, fairly rapid attrition in each cohort of new
15 CPS that we hire within the first two years of their
16 hiring. We lose, from my perspective, far too many
17 of our CPS far too early in their tenure with the
18 agency. It is a very serious concern of mine, and
19 it's something that I think it's essential that we
20 get a handle on, and we have been implementing really
21 a multi-faceted plan to do that. We're looking at--
22 obviously, we're doing more hiring as we need to do,
23 but you know, if we were losing fewer, we wouldn't
24 need to hire as many. So, we're really looking at--
25 and we've done, you know, we've done surveys. We've

done exit interviews. We've collected a fair amount of information about why child protective specialists leave, and we're using that input, as well as the Town Hall meetings that I've done since I've been Commissioner, to hear about what the concerns and the frustrations of child protective workers are, and we've used all of that information to develop a multi-faceted plan to address, improve retention, and decrease attrition. So, we're looking at improving our training. We are looking at how we can improve the transition from training from the academy where they spend the first couple of months of their experience through on-the-job training into full caseload carrying, and so we are, for example, putting coaches and staff development coordinators into the borough offices so they can help smooth that transition from training into the field. We're improving our training manuals. We're going to make them more accessible. We're shortly going to make them web-based and searchable. So it'll be easier for child protective specialists to access guidance when they need it and policies when they need them. we have looked at some of the administrative issues that created frustrations for child protective

2 specialists and made the job more complicated like
3 the need for better transportation options, and we've
4 done a lot to improve transportation so that when
5 they're going out to do visits, home visits, or going
6 out to work with families or with children, they have
7 more transportation resources available than to do
8 that. We have focused, as I said in my testimony, on
9 technology, which I think is very important. I think
10 there's a lot we can do to make the work more
11 efficient, and to make some of the, sort of, back
12 office work about, you know, doing case notes and
13 record-keeping that is required, it's part of the
14 function, but we can make it a lot more efficient, a
15 lot less time consuming than it currently is. We
16 have hired our first-ever Wellness Coordinator at ACS
17 who is looking at ways in which we can make the
18 workplace a more attractive and appealing one for all
19 of our staff, but CPS in particular. We're improving
20 our staff appreciation program. We're making sure
21 that recognize staff that really are doing a good job
22 or going above and beyond in their work. So there's
23 a vast number of things that I think we can do and
24 that we have to do in order to make our child
25 protective specialists feel like this is a place they

2 want to work, they want to stay, they want to make a
3 career, and they want to move up the ladder, and I'm
4 committed to making sure that we do that.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I think Council-- or
6 Chair King has, a former CPS, I think--

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: [interposing] I just
8 got a question for you. you've identified-- can you
9 tell us three things you've identified why people
10 left, because you said you've done some surveys and
11 research, and is there-- would there be a financial
12 number attached to the improvement to keep the
13 retain-- of just the three things that you-- came out
14 of your survey?

15 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Yes. So, well,
16 yes, we learned a lot of things. We heard a lot
17 about the quality of supervision that they received
18 in the field, and so we have enhanced our courses on
19 supervisory skills in our Workforce Institute. We
20 heard concerns about not just caseload-- obviously
21 caseload is an issue, people feeling like they have
22 too many cases, but also about the equity of the
23 distribution of the caseload, whether it's being
24 fairly distributed, and also whether what we're-- the
25 responsibilities that we're asking Child Protective

2 Specialists to perform are responsibility that we
3 really need child protective specialists to do, or
4 whether we could provide more kinds of ancillary
5 support to them. and so we are embarking on-- this
6 is actually with support that we got from the Council
7 in the last budget-- a work load study to see if
8 there are better ways that we can structure the work
9 of Child Protective Specialist o be fairer and, you
10 know, more efficient as we distribute it across, as
11 you know, our very large workforce. So, those are a
12 couple of examples of things that we heard, that we
13 learned in the surveys and the Town Hall meetings
14 that I've done that were directly addressing.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: So, I guess the second
16 part of the question, is-- [off mic] Oh, I'm sorry.
17 The second part now that you've identified it, is
18 there any money that you think that you don't have or
19 that you do need that attaches to your solution,
20 that's attached to the solution?

21 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Some of it we have
22 gotten from you already, which we appreciate, are
23 from the City already, and if there are other things,
24 we'll certainly come back to you and talk about them.

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Chair.
3 Three more questions, and I know that you have to
4 leave. There was, I think, state legislation, state
5 law around expanding the ability to compensate for
6 KinGAP up to the age of 21, but I think that
7 localities have to request to be able to do that
8 retroactively. Is that true?

9 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: I will ask-- you
10 are correct. the state law that was just enacted and
11 signed into law by the Governor does expand on the
12 amount of time in which some kids came into the
13 program early could remain in the program to the age
14 of 21. There are some costs associated with that,
15 and I'll turn to Deputy Commissioner Farber to speak
16 to that.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Hi, Council
18 Member. So, as the Commissioner said, the new law
19 both extends KinGAP to be available to fictive [sic]
20 kin. So that's friends who might not be blood
21 relatives, which is a very good thing, as well as now
22 all children that exit the foster care system to
23 KinGAP regardless of what age they achieve that
24 KinGAP can get payments to age 21. I think you're
25 asking about the children who have previously exited

2 the system to KinGAP, the local districts have the
3 opportunity to go back and revise those agreements,
4 and the City is currently exploring that.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, to allow them
6 back in, or between the ages of 18 and 21.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: To revise
8 the-- right. Currently their agreements would end at
9 age 18.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: The new law
12 would allow us to--

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing]

14 [inaudible]

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: extend those
16 agreements to age 21 and we're currently considering
17 that.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Excellent.
19 And maybe we can follow up at the Exec for that.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Sure.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: One of the other--
22 the other two are not foster-- no, one of them is
23 foster-related. Busing for-- busing to school. So,
24 this has been a challenge. I think that youth in care
25 in addition to all the challenges that they face,

2 have an increased probability that they'll be absent
3 from school more, and part of that has to do with
4 being able to get to the school where they have ties
5 to the teachers and friends and school community, and
6 if they're placed at a foster home that is, you know,
7 outside of the borough where they were or further
8 afield those challenges become more stark. Are we
9 exploring- I mean, it's challenging because it
10 involves a lot of coordination with the Department of
11 Education, but making sure that every youth in care
12 has the ability to be bused to their home school no
13 matter where it is.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Absolutely.
15 That's the right of a child, and also, you know, one
16 of our values of course is keeping children in their
17 home schools, and so we actually do fairly well on
18 that. I think it's somewhere around-- I don't have it
19 in front of me-- but somewhere around 70 or 80
20 percent of children who are entering foster care are
21 remaining in their home school, and I believe that's
22 better than what it looks like nationally, those
23 statistics. But so all children are eligible for
24 transportation, so we work with the DOE to identify
25 whether that child can get on an existing bus route,

2 and if that can't happen, then we work with our
3 foster care agencies to find other modes of
4 transportation. We also, as part of the new need that
5 the Commissioner just mentioned, that actually
6 includes an additional resource pertaining to
7 transportation as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great. So that's
9 something that hopefully we can-- I mean, it's-- in
10 terms of a budget impact, is that an ACS budget
11 impact or is that a DOE budget impact? If it
12 involves new additional bus service, is that
13 something-- the cost borne by within an ACS budget
14 line or is that a DOE budget line?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: I have to
16 check with our finance folks, but I believe it's a
17 shared cost, but we can get back to you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I mean, I think
19 if-- I mean, if it's-- if the difference between 70
20 percent and 98-100 percent is a cost associated with
21 that, then we should really look at seeing how we can
22 get from here to there between now and adopted.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: Yeah, I
24 don't think that's a cost issue. So, children--
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] We do or
3 we don't?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: No, not.
5 There would be other reasons why a child might not go
6 to their home school. You know, you make a best
7 interest determination, and in some cases there are
8 other factors that would indicate that it doesn't
9 make sense for the child to go to that-- to go to
10 their home school. So, it would not be a cost issue.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. If there are
12 any cost issues, we should talk about it.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FARBER: We will
14 certainly let you know.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. And then last
16 question, Commissioner. You mentioned in your
17 testimony an MOU between ACS and DHS or HRA, DSS
18 about working around children within the homeless
19 system that are involved with ACS. Do we have a
20 sense of how many? In particular, I am concerned
21 about children that are placed in the hotel setting,
22 and the reason is that as we're phasing out of
23 cluster sites, more-- we have expanded the number of
24 families that are being placed in hotel shelter. The
25 City is looking at getting out of, kind of, this per

2 diem-type situation and into a contracted situation.
3 The level of services that are able to be provided in
4 a hotel setting are fundamentally different than what
5 would you expect in a Tier II setting. Tier II you
6 would have a lot of onsite services. You could have--
7 - I mean, I've been to a WIN Tier II that has a SONYC
8 program onsite. So, you know, there's wrap-around
9 services. When you're placed in a hotel, you know,
10 I'm very concerned that you do not have access to--
11 you may be affiliated with a not-for-profit provider
12 that is four miles away, and you know, checks in once
13 every two and a half weeks or whatever and there's
14 just no real relationship there the same way like you
15 have with onsite not-for-profit provision. So, do we
16 have a sense of how many ACS-involved children or
17 families are in hotels?

18 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: We don't. We
19 don't. However, we very much share your concern, and
20 what I will tell you, and actually I hope soon we
21 actually will have some data to share with you on
22 this, but building on the MOU and the new
23 relationship, the new protocols that we've had in
24 place with DHS around families and shelter for some
25 months now, we are actually embarking on a couple of

2 new pilot projects with DHS, one of which is focused
3 on working with ACS-involved families, especially
4 families in our preventive services who may be at
5 risk of homelessness, to see what we can do to make
6 sure that they're connected with services to prevent
7 them from actually becoming homeless, before that
8 happens, and the other is to look at how we can work
9 with DHS to identify ACS-involved families who are in
10 the shelter, particularly in hotels, and prioritize
11 them for rehousing on exactly the theory you said,
12 frankly. Obviously, no family, we don't any family in
13 a hotel, and the Department of Homeless Services is
14 trying to end that program, but in the meantime there
15 are reasons why ACS-involved families may be
16 particularly vulnerable. So, we are working with DHS
17 specifically around an effort to identify and
18 prioritize ACS-involved families in commercial hotels
19 for rehousing. And as I say, I hope we'll have some
20 data to share with you on that project soon.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And maybe it's a wise
22 policy to make sure that any family that's high-risk,
23 ACS-involved, preventive, protective, foster-involved
24 family not be placed in a hotel setting. So, you
25 know, there's no-- there's plenty of-- I mean,

there's' Tier II capacity that comes on every day. It's not a lot, but maybe we should make sure that if you are identify by ACS as high-risk, that you just make sure that those-- you have first dibs on a Tier II setting, and that you not-- the situation not exacerbated by ever having to go to a hotel, because honestly, like, we'll see how this all goes, but I don't have a lot of confidence in the structure of being in a hotel setting as being conducive to healthy outcomes for children that are within a high-risk situation.

COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, I, you know, I certainly appreciate your point. That would obviously be a DHS policy decision, not an ACS policy decision, but I'm happy--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] But--

COMMISSIONER HANSELL: to raise it with our DHS colleagues.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: could be informed. Lastly, and I just-- I was excited to hear in your testimony about the pilot program around domestic violence-involved families and providing them with therapy, and I'm trying to find what page that's on. But that was-- oh, on page 14. The demonstration

2 project is testing methods for [inaudible] domestic
3 violence. This demonstration project will serve 100
4 families and 400 individuals with therapeutic, with
5 clinical therapeutic intervention. HRA runs a
6 domestic violence shelter program that has around 800
7 families. They don't all have clinical therapeutic
8 intervention on-site. We had a whole hearing about
9 this four months ago where we talked about-- there's
10 a lack of-- there's not comprehensive baseline
11 clinical therapeutic intervention for families,
12 children experiencing the trauma of domestic
13 violence, then the trauma of homeless, and it's
14 something that we need to-- not only do we need to do
15 it, but it's actually very achievable, because that
16 universe is actually not-- I mean, that's, you know,
17 it's 800 families. It's not 12,000 families. So,
18 it's something that we could actually really do. I'd
19 be very excited to use this demonstration project to
20 look at how that can be implemented for on-site
21 clinical therapeutic intervention in domestic
22 violence shelters run by HRA. I saw some nods over
23 there, so.

2 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: It's a very
3 interesting idea, and again, another one we'd be
4 happy to discuss with our colleagues.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great, great, okay.
6 Thank you. I'll turn it back over to my Co-Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, thank you,
8 Commissioner, and your team. It was great hearing
9 from you today. We're all looking forward to
10 continue the conversation whether it's a program or
11 whether it's budget, or it's program budget, we just
12 want to make sure that we're on the same page to help
13 improve New York and the next generation of New
14 Yorkers who are just having some life challenges
15 right now. So, again, thank you again for your
16 testimony and we'll go to the public right now.
17 Thank you, again. God Bless.

18 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Thank you both
19 very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you all. So,
21 in five minutes we're going to start public
22 testimony. I just have to grab some lunch or else
23 I'm going to fall over.

24 [break]
25

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Hi, everybody.

3 Alright, we're back. We are now officially two hours
4 and 15 minutes late. Thank you all for your amazing
5 patience. I will call up the first panel now. I
6 want to thank my colleague, Chair Andy King. I think
7 he had to run across the street for a vote and he
8 will be back. First panel, I will call up Catherine
9 Trapani, Homeless Services United; Christi Perfit
10 [sp?] from City Harvest; Michelle Jackson, Human
11 Services Council; Susan Stetzer from Community Board
12 Three in Manhattan; and Stephanie Gendell, Citizen's
13 Committee for Children. Again, we thank everybody
14 for your patience. So, I we'll have three-minute
15 clock, you know, give or take.

16 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Hi, good afternoon.

17 My name is Catherine Trapani. I'm the Executive
18 Director of Homeless Services United. Thank you,
19 Chair Levin for your immense patience today. I know
20 this is a long hearing. Our written testimony has
21 quite a bit of detail about the needs of the homeless
22 services provider communities. So, I'm just going to
23 hit some highlights, and I hope that the rest of it
24 will be entered into the record. HSU, or Homeless
25 Services United, as you know, represents the

2 nonprofit provider of shelter prevention, outreach,
3 and aftercare services for homeless folks. We heard
4 a lot about some of the investments that the
5 Administration has made, and many which we're
6 appreciative of, but I just want to go over a few
7 things, specifically regarding model budget
8 implementations, because I want to make clear what's
9 in it and what is not in it for the record. What has
10 been really helpful are the investments in
11 maintenance to improve shelter conditions. That
12 money was expedited in FY18. We thank the Council
13 for really advocating for that last budget season,
14 but the implementation of the full model budget has
15 actually been stalled. Only five providers have
16 approved new budgets, which means none of the money
17 that you allocated last year is out the door. So for
18 folks that have questions about why we haven't seen
19 results in the system that might be why. In fact,
20 we're at a point where the process has been so
21 stymied with delays that this coming FY19 fiscal year
22 providers are being pressured to sign contracts based
23 on values that date as far back as the 1980's before
24 model budgets were even a concept, because DHS can't
25 get it together to register the contracts on time.

They won't be registered by July 1, unless they put in the old amounts now. I know that's a little confusing, but what that really means is that despite the Council's efforts, the money is still not where it needs to be, providing enhanced services to homeless New Yorkers. Even if that were not the case and they were able to administratively figure out how to do model budgets, model is sort of a misnomer because it doesn't include money for salary parity, as you pointed out before, for enhanced services to homeless folks living in the shelters. It does not include money for fringe rate. It does not include sufficient funding for indirect costs and other things, and so we'd like to see all of those investments made in the sector if we really hope to get to where we need to be. Critical services that are left out of model budget include medical services. We're having a crisis with opioid overdoses. The City is moving away from co-locating medical services in shelters. We think that's a mistake. Medical services should be prioritized in shelter budgets and making sure that there's on-site care so that prescriptions for things like Buprenorphine could be made to folks that need it.

2 Employment and education of recreation services have
3 all been cut for years. PEGS [sic] dating back to
4 2010 never got put back in despite the need for those
5 services in the shelter, and finally, there needs to
6 be continued investment in permanent housing options,
7 rental assistance programs. Your questions about the
8 LINC streamlining were dead on. We really are
9 looking for that money. It looks like that there's
10 been cuts to the amounts of rental assistance in the
11 HRA budgeted targeted to single adults, even though
12 that population is at a record-high. There's clearly
13 a lot more HPD can do. All of these investments in
14 permanent affordable housing need to be coupled with
15 investments on the shelter side. It's not an
16 "either/or" question. It's an "and/both" so that
17 there's a meaningful safety net so that when people
18 are coming into the system in a crisis there's a
19 place that's safe and appropriate for them to be, but
20 most importantly an exit game for them on the other
21 end. So, the details of that are in my testimony. I
22 won't take up any more of time. I know I'm over, but
23 thanks so much for holding this hearing and hearing
24 us all out.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, and just
3 in the coming months, you know, we're going to be
4 doing hearings on supportive housing on street
5 outreach and single adult systems. So, all those
6 things we want to work--

7 CATHERINE TRAPANI: [interposing] Looking
8 forward to working with you on that.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And model budgeting.

10 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Yeah, please.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With the contracts.

12 CHRISTA PERFIT: So, hi, I'm going to try
13 to do the same and just jump into it. I know my
14 written testimony has more detail. I'm Christa
15 Perfit, Senior Manager of Healthy Retail at City
16 Harvest, and I'm here to talk about our continued
17 concern for those hungry communities we serve. At a
18 mounting-- the time of mounting uncertainty regarding
19 the federal support, we're looking to the City to
20 help us and help us with low-income New Yorkers who
21 are striving to balance food security, personal well-
22 being and costly housing. The need for food
23 assistance in New York City is staggering. We all
24 know there's a lot of need for SNAP. There's need
25 for food pantries and soup kitchens. Twenty percent

2 of New York City residents receive SNAP benefits.

3 The program brings millions of dollars into the City

4 to support families and retail businesses where they

5 shop. Every SNAP dollar can expand into a \$1.80 into

6 the local community. So, we're nervous that the

7 Trump Administration is proposing to drastically

8 reduce that, and we want to look to the City for

9 support there. As most people know, City Harvest has

10 been around for years. We do food rescue. We work

11 in community engagement through our Healthy

12 Neighborhood initiative to try to build lasting food

13 landscape changes. We know we can't tackle hunger

14 alone. New York City is one of the few local

15 municipalities in the country that directs-- I'm

16 sorry-- funds to emergency food programs, which we

17 love, and we're looking at EFAP. I'll skip to the

18 punchline. We're hoping to see the FY19 budget at

19 the 22 million dollar mark. And in addition to

20 emergency food, we also always want to mention the

21 retail space. We know that access to affordable and

22 healthy food is crucial, and as we work in the health

23 retail program, but also as a founding member and Co-

24 Chair of the Healthy Food Retail Action Network,

25 we're working on a campaign, and help looking for the

2 City to help us with this initiative towards
3 supporting SNAP, the Healthy Food Financing
4 Initiative and the Healthy Corner Store programming.
5 You'll hear from the American Heart Association as
6 well. Their ask is what I'm echoing right now, but
7 we hope that the City will seek to support these
8 three key programs. Finally, alongside Feeding
9 America, we're opposing stricter time limits to the
10 SNAP who are able-bodied without dependents. We know
11 that there are already strict rules in place, and we
12 should not make existing harsh rules even worse by
13 taking away state flexibility and exposing more
14 people to time-limited benefits. On behalf of City
15 Harvest and the Healthy Food Retail Action Network,
16 we remain optimistic and eager to work with the
17 Administration in support of this genuine effort to
18 alleviate hunger for all New Yorkers. Happy to
19 collaborate, and we would love to work with you
20 further, and thank you so much for your determination
21 in addressing the pervasive hunger that continues to
22 threaten our great city.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much,
24 Ms. Perfit. Thank you for all the great timing, and
25 thank you to City Harvest for all the amazing work

2 that you do in working in collaboration with all
3 other advocacy and provider community on making sure
4 that no New Yorker goes hungry. So, thank you.

5 MICHELLE JACKSON: My timing won't be
6 that good. I can't beat that. I'm Michelle Jackson.
7 I'm the Deputy Director and General Counsel for the
8 Human Services Council. We're an association that
9 represents about 170 human service providers and
10 umbrella organizations, many of whom you'll hear from
11 today in the room on a myriad of issues. I want to
12 thank Chairperson Levin for the opportunity to
13 testify for sitting through this long day. I too
14 will shorten my testimony. You know the state of the
15 sector. We testified it before. You're very privy to
16 that information. It's not doing well. It's doing
17 better than it was, especially thanks to the Council
18 and the investments that were made last year.
19 There's about 300 million dollars that were supported
20 by the Council for investments in nonprofit
21 contracts, human service contracts, across the city
22 for to raise indirect rates to around 10 percent,
23 which was a huge historic investment for Cost-of-
24 Living Adjustments and also for some of the model
25 budgeting, not just in the DHS area, but in five

2 program areas total. This year, we're-- first of
3 all, to address kind of where those are, while that
4 was a historic investment and providers needed that
5 cash infusion, unfortunately there is not an infusion
6 of cash. We're in March and most providers are
7 reporting that they haven't seen the COLA and
8 indirects [sic] in addition to the model budgeting,
9 which we understand would take a little bit longer.
10 So, we would like the Council's help in kind of
11 facilitating a process, not just for this year, but
12 the COLA will be next year as well, to have providers
13 not have to wait eight or nine months to see that
14 increase. Many of them are either delaying giving
15 those raises, because they don't have cash flow, or
16 they're doing that to the detriment of their cash
17 flow when a lot of them don't have reserves and cash
18 flow that can support giving out, you know,
19 supporting the City for eight months while those
20 amendment need to be made. So, in addition, there's
21 still a number of areas. That's a good chunk of
22 change that gets at some of the issues, but we're
23 still seeing-- you know, we would like to see some,
24 not just money invested, but principles in terms of
25 how contracts-- human services contracts are

2 established in the City. For example, a 15 percent
3 indirect rate on all contracts. The average indirect
4 rate should be between 15 and 25 percent. So, we've
5 gotten kind of to 10. We need to get to 15.

6 There's a lot of RFPs that have arbitrary caps on
7 fringe rates. We would like to see 37 percent at
8 least, which is the Department of Labor standard and
9 lower than the City's own fringe rate, by the way, so
10 that providers can retain and attract talent and be
11 able to keep up with some insurance costs, and then
12 we would like to see increases in the budget this
13 year, particularly into areas that the nonprofit
14 Resiliency Committee is also looking into, both in
15 occupancy cost. Rent goes up every year, and a lot
16 of these contracts are not adjusted, and live beyond
17 their RFP lifespan. So, providers are now able to
18 kind of do those cost-escalations. So we'd like to
19 see a 10 percent increase on all contracts in the
20 occupancy area, and then 10 percent increase in
21 insurance areas, not health insurance, but casualty
22 and liability, because that's another area where
23 nonprofit have reported a lot of increases. So, that
24 will help us get to kind of fully funding these
25 contracts while we also look at model budgeting and

2 looking how we can work with the agencies to get at
3 more of these underfunded issues. So, I'm happy to
4 answer any questions you have.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. I mean,
6 it's-- obviously, it's an area that we're-- we have
7 to delve into further, and we were only able to
8 scratch the surface I think at today's hearing, but
9 you know, I'm very concerned about-- you know, this
10 is our opportunity to right-size all of these human
11 services contracts. You know, this is-- we need to
12 get it right this time around or we're going to be
13 losing capacity, and you can't. You know, I always
14 like to say, like, you can't really do more with
15 less. They always say, you know, do more with less,
16 that's utter nonsense. You cannot do more with less.
17 You have to be able to support the people, because
18 I'll also make this clear, we could never as a City
19 do the work that we require be done and that our
20 citizens of New York City ask us to be done. We
21 could never do it as a city. We rely on the not-for-
22 profit network to do all of the things that we talk
23 about, all of it. We could never ever, ever, ever do
24 without our not-for-profits, and we need to make sure
25 that they are able to keep and retain and attract

2 good, quality staff that's experienced and that can
3 grow with an organization and stay with an
4 organization as a career, and not just as a stop
5 along the way. That's essential.

6 MICHELLE JACKSON: Thank you. And thank
7 you for your questions today and for your attention
8 to the model budget process in particular, because
9 there's a lot of potential there, but we cannot-- we
10 haven't met it yet.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes. Yes, agreed.
12 Thank you.

13 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Good afternoon. My
14 name is Stephanie Gendell. I'm the Associate
15 Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy at
16 Citizens' Committee for Children. We want to thank
17 you for your commitment and tenacity and for your
18 leadership. Our organization touches on all the
19 issues that have been addressed today, so I'm just
20 going to sum them up as quickly as I can. They're
21 all in the testimony. On child welfare, we are
22 asking for five million dollars to improve the busing
23 for foster children. The number 70 to 80 percent is
24 the percent of kids that came up earlier who are
25 going to their home schools, but it's also been

2 reported only 50 percent of the children, the foster
3 children who are found in need of busing are getting
4 busing. So, we want to ensure the other 50 percent
5 get it. We will also be asking the City to opt into
6 amending the KinGAP contracts to ensure all young
7 people up to age 21 who are eligible can receive that
8 assistance, and we can discuss all of that more as we
9 get to the Executive Budget. As it relates to
10 juvenile justice, as others have already expressed,
11 we're concerned, very concerned about DOC staff being
12 in the ACS facilities. ACS has done an incredible
13 job in those facilities, and we're really worried
14 about it being undone. As it related to early
15 childhood education, we are still looking for salary
16 parity for early childhood providers. It is really
17 hurting the EarlyLearn system. We released a PSA
18 today on that that we can share with you. In terms
19 of the transition of EarlyLearn over to DOE, one of
20 our concerns that we just want to highlight is
21 ensuring that DOE pays attention to children zero to
22 three in family childcare, Homebase care. Those are
23 areas that are a big part of EarlyLearn, but not
24 something DOE has any experience in. And our last
25 request there is to ensure that all homeless children

2 in shelter be automatically categorically eligible
3 for childcare which currently they're not. As it
4 relates to homelessness, we have a whole slew of
5 recommendations in the testimony. In short, they all
6 really focus on trying to promote the well-being of
7 children. The best thing to do would be to keep
8 children out of shelter altogether, and then when
9 they're in shelter get them out more quickly.
10 They're now in for over a year, well over a year.
11 I'm just going to highlight one of-- due to time--
12 one of the recommendations that we actually think
13 would be budget-saving. Currently, when children are
14 placed far from their home school and over 50 percent
15 of school-aged children are not placed in the borough
16 where their school was. So many children are bused.
17 Their parents-- elementary school children-- their
18 parents can receive a metro card, a weekly metro
19 card, while they're waiting for busing to be
20 arranged. At the end of the week, they need to get a
21 new metro card either from the family assistant who
22 comes on site who stops by at a hotel, or go to a
23 borough office where DOE staff spend a significant
24 amount of time distributing metro cards. So, we
25 could alleviate this problem by giving people monthly

2 metro cards instead of weekly metro cards. That
3 would be 75 percent less work and actually cost less
4 money in the long-run. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because you save
6 money on a monthly metro card.

7 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, as always,
9 Stephanie, thank you very much for the-- all the
10 recommendations. I look forward to reading the
11 testimony and all of the ideas. Just on behalf of
12 the City Council, the entire City Council, I want to
13 wish you a happy birthday. Yay.

14 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Thank you.

15 SUSAN STETZER: My name is Susan Stetzer.
16 I'm District Manager for Manhattan Community Board
17 Three and I will just read highlights from the
18 testimony. Community Board Three is home to over 15
19 shelters and we have supported all that have come
20 before our board. However, we believe the best
21 security should go hand-in-hand with the shelters.
22 For the past several years, CB3 has had its number
23 two expense budget priority to increase DHS funding
24 for DHS peace officers and include the Third Street
25 Men's Shelter as a designated shelter, but we are

2 told that this shelter is not one of the worst, and
3 therefore there is not enough funding. Only shelters
4 managed directly by DHS or micro-shelters [sic] have
5 DHS peace officers. We should not have to host one
6 of the worst in the City to have proper security for
7 the community and for the men in the shelter. We
8 have had to Third Street Shelter residents testify at
9 a Community Board meeting about the horror of drugs
10 in the shelter. Three years ago a resident died
11 after an altercation between two residents in the
12 shelter. There is open drug dealing on the block,
13 victimizing the shelter residents and there are
14 quality of life problems reported by business and
15 neighborhood residents. We have had police and
16 outreach workers report that street homeless men
17 refuse services at shelters and stay on the street
18 for safety reasons. We do not blame the shelter for
19 this. It's run by very dedicated people. It is the
20 nature of a large facility and it deserves the best
21 protection. We are thankful that the current
22 administration has greatly increased services for the
23 homeless, but pinching pennies in the wrong way is
24 not proven effective in resolving the street homeless
25 problem, which has increased 40 percent in the last

2 published Hope Count. Many communities are nimby
3 about hosting shelters. Not providing the best
4 security will not reassure them. Many street
5 homeless don't feel safe in shelters and remain on
6 the street for safety. Saving money by not providing
7 this best security at men's shelters is not effective
8 in the long-run. Community Board Three has been
9 advocating and will continue to advocate for DHS
10 peace officers at the Third Street Men's Shelter
11 which requires increased funding for DHS to implement
12 this. They have increased funding for private
13 security, but in my testimony I have a list of 11
14 actions that can be performed by DHS police, but not
15 by private security, which by law can only observe,
16 detect, and report. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
18 for your testimony. Thank you. So, I want to thank
19 this panel again for your amazing patience, for
20 staying all day, and for all the great work that you
21 do and continue to do. We look forward to taking
22 your suggestions. Hopefully as many of them as
23 possible are going to be implemented in the Executive
24 Budget, and if they're not, we look forward to asking
25 them again at the Executive Budget to implement all

2 these great ideas. So, I want to thank you again.
3 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I really
4 appreciate all the good work you do. And again,
5 happy birthday, Stephanie.

6 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Next panel:
8 Jesse Laymon from New York City Employment and
9 Training Coalition; Treada Stampus [sp?], Food Bank
10 of New York; Ariel Seranski from UJA Federation of
11 New York; Kaitlyn Hose [sp?], LiveOn New York; and
12 Edline Jaquette [sp?] from FPWA. And the following
13 panel, just so that you know, will have Maria Wallace
14 [sp?] from Picture the Homeless, Jasmine Edmunds
15 [sp?], Picture the Homeless, Jasmine Budnella from
16 Vocal New York, Jose Rodriguez, Picture the Homeless,
17 and Scott Hutchins [sp?] from Picture the Homeless.

18 JESSE LAYMON: I think I'm first at bat.
19 Hi, thank you once again for this hearing, and you
20 know, you win the prize for marathon man today. I'm
21 not going to read my whole testimony, except to say
22 that where it starts and says good morning. You can
23 forget that.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We do this every year,
25 by the way.

2 JESSE LAYMON: I'll touch on-- I wrote my
3 testimony as a few questions that we really wanted to
4 see answered from DSS, in particular HRA, and a few
5 of these questions were raised by you and by
6 Councilman Lander, and thank you both, Council Member
7 Lander not here now, but for raising those issues
8 when Commissioner Banks was here. So, I'll just
9 touch on them briefly and why we thought they were so
10 important to raise, and why we do think that it would
11 be important to come back and have another hearing
12 about employment and training issues with regard to
13 HRA. So, the first question we had, and the
14 Commissioner answered not thoroughly to our
15 satisfaction, is you know, is HRA doing enough to
16 help people ultimately get off of public assistance
17 with jobs? And what's going to happen with the
18 70,000 or so people that need employment and training
19 services if those are not fully invested in? I wasn't
20 deeply impressed by his testimony which seemed to
21 indicate that he thought it would be okay because the
22 state would ultimately just pick up the tab long-term
23 after the federal government didn't, and I don't know
24 that we can count on the state forever to do that.
25 We need to help people get jobs. Toward that end, we

2 also have a question about what is HRA doing to help
3 the people that need the most assistance getting
4 jobs, in particular education and training programs
5 for people that didn't get enough education from the
6 K-12 system or that are immigrants who need English
7 language services. There's not enough of that funded
8 through HRA's budget, and that's something that we
9 really think that HRA need to take some leadership
10 on. And then finally, as an outgrowth of that, the
11 Mayor has a Career Pathways plan which was the
12 inspiration for the current set of contracts that HRA
13 has for employment and training, but while that is
14 the inspiration, we're not sure that it is carried
15 through to the budget. In particular, Career
16 Pathways calls for 60 million dollars annually in
17 bridge program funding for people that are lacking in
18 basic skills or education. HRA originally toyed with
19 having a career bridge program under their contracts,
20 and then scrapped it and did not fund that. There is
21 not nearly enough bridge programming in the City
22 across agencies. Less than 10 million of the 60
23 million dollar annual commitment has been fulfilled,
24 and so we need to see HRA do a part of that. With
25 the remainder of my time, I'll just say that we also

2 support a few of our other member organizations and
3 allies that are here today. I know the Daycare
4 Council and the Campaign for Children are here to
5 talk about the need to invest in daycare. If we did
6 that, there might be less of a need to invest in
7 adult and young adult workforce development years
8 down the line. I know that-- who else is here? I
9 know that there are folks here from the Writer's
10 Alliance and from CSS to talk about Fair Fares. It
11 would be easier to help people get a job if they
12 could afford the subway fare. There's lots of things
13 that it's going to take to get more New Yorkers
14 employed, and you know, we stand with all of our
15 members and allies that are here fighting for those
16 things as well. Thank you.

17 ARIEL SHARANSKY: Good afternoon,
18 Chairperson Levin. My name is Ariel Sharanksy [sp?].
19 I'm an Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA Federation.
20 Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for
21 holding this hearing. So we thank the City Council
22 for its efforts and commitment to increasing the
23 funding to help New York City's most vulnerable
24 individuals. You have our written testimony which
25 goes into a lot more detail. I'm just going to take

this time to highlight three areas that haven't been discussed yet. So, the last panel, salary parody between ACS and DOE teachers was mentioned. Also, investment in human services contract was mentioned. However, salary parody across DFTA contracts was not brought up. So, with attention being given to senior center staffing through the model budget process, UJA requests that the Council advocates implementing increases in salaries for all DFTA-funded contracts. Underfunded contracts mean that providers are left to wrestle with the inequity of paying different salaries to staff doing the same jobs which leads to a lot of staff leaving, which also results in lower service access and quality for New York seniors. With the aging population growing, the City should recognize the need to attract skilled individuals to the geriatric field. Next, I would like to mention the Ella Louisel [sp?] Holocaust Survivor Initiative. New York City is home to about 45,000 Holocaust survivors, almost half of which are living at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, and as these survivors age there needs become a lot more complex due to what they suffered from during the Holocaust and also just as a result of getting older.

2 So, we request that the City Council increase
3 investment to 3.5 million for this important
4 initiative, and we really thank you for your support.
5 We know that the Council has really advocated for
6 this initiative. The last area I'm going to mention
7 is food insecurity. So we know that rates of food
8 insecurity are very high throughout the City. Among
9 Jews, there are over 500,000 people living in poor or
10 near poor Jewish households, and because of the high
11 cost of a kosher meal, these households often run out
12 of SNAP benefits very early in the month. So, in
13 addition to expanding access to EFAP, which I'm sure
14 is going to be mentioned next, it's also essential
15 that the City invest resources to ensure that food
16 pantries are equipped with enough food to serve their
17 clients, especially culturally competent food. Along
18 those same lines, it is imperative that the City
19 invests in the agencies that run congregate or home-
20 delivery meal programs. UJA, through our network of
21 providers, is the largest purveyor of kosher food.
22 We know that these programs serve not only to feed
23 the clients, but also as an important point of entry
24 in terms of older adults and social needs. So, it's
25 really important that we invest increased resources

2 in these programs, and UJA recognizes, as
3 demonstrated by our digital trace food pantry system,
4 that we really believe in the importance of food
5 choice and access to culturally competent meals. So,
6 we also mentioned in our testimony asks related to
7 aging, supporting human services sector, workforce
8 development, youth and early childhood programs. Our
9 can read that all in our written testimony. Thank you
10 for the opportunity to testify.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much,
12 and thank you for bringing up the Holocaust
13 initiative. You know, I represent a large Orthodox
14 neighborhood in South Williamsburg, and I think
15 sometimes we forget that there are still thousands of
16 Holocaust survivors that live in New York City, and I
17 just was at a-- I was at a Shiva with a gentleman
18 whose sister passed away-- he was in his 90s-- this
19 weekend, and he was a Holocaust survivor. So, I
20 think that we lose track of the fact that this, in
21 fact, is happening in our city, that Holocaust
22 survivors are aging and are often struggling to get
23 by. And after everything that they in their lives
24 have gone through, to have that happen on our watch
25

2 is totally unacceptable. So, I want to thank you
3 very much for your support of Holocaust survivors.

4 ARIEL SHARANSKY: Thank you for your
5 support.

6 TRIADA STAMPAS: Good afternoon,
7 Chairperson Levin. Thank you for being here to hear
8 us. My name is Triada Stampas. I'm Vice President
9 for Research and Public Affairs at Food Bank for New
10 York City. And before I say anything else, let me
11 say thank you to you and to the entire rest of the
12 City Council. It is through this body's advocacy,
13 leadership and persistence over the past several
14 years that has helped secure major gains against
15 hunger in our city through increases in emergency
16 food funding, universal free school meals, and
17 supports for benefits outreach, creation of a campus
18 pantry model that is unique in the nation for its
19 inclusion of household and hygiene items. Those are
20 just the highlights, but your support has been
21 consistent and invaluable in moving the needle. The
22 City Council has been an important partner for Food
23 Bank since day one. In fact, it was the City Council
24 President in June of 1983 who successfully negotiated
25 funding in that year's city budget to help open the

2 doors on our warehouse in the Hunts Point Market in
3 the Bronx. And the very next year, because the city
4 had a food bank, HRA created EFAP, the Emergency Food
5 Assistance Program to create a year-round supply of
6 nutritious food for the growing numbers of food
7 pantries and soup kitchens that were cropping up
8 throughout the City in the early to mid-1980s. We're
9 very proud of our partnership with city-- that our
10 partnership with city government endures to this day
11 and has only grown. And so today, we do things like
12 work with HRA to mediate SNAP cases that have had
13 adverse decisions, and we provide HRA with trend
14 analysis of those mediated cases that has become
15 especially important through the benefits Re-
16 engineering process, because it allows HRA to
17 pinpoint issues in the customer experience, and
18 course correct very quickly as they've been rolling
19 out the improvements through benefits reengineering.
20 I know this committee held its hunger hearing only a
21 few weeks ago. It was nevertheless disappointing
22 that Emergency Food Assistance barely received a
23 mention in the Commissioner's budget testimony this
24 morning, and I do appreciate that multiple members of
25 your committee affirm the position that EFAP food

2 funding should be baselined at 22 million dollars and
3 that the budget dance over survival resources for
4 vulnerable New Yorkers should end. We appreciate
5 your continued leadership on this issue. We also
6 urge continued investment in other anti-hunger
7 solutions, including the food access benefits
8 initiative and the Campus Pantries initiative. My
9 written testimony goes into greater detail, so the
10 last point I will raise here is that we're having
11 this conversation in the context of a meal gap in our
12 city of 225 million missing meals at a moment of
13 great uncertainty for Federal Nutrition Assistance
14 Benefits. There are forces in Washington that would
15 like to see SNAP, which is our nation's first line of
16 defense against hunger, weaken to the point of
17 ineffectiveness, bolstering the last line of defense
18 against hunger, which is our city's network of food
19 pantries and soup kitchens is one part of our
20 collective responsibility to each other as a city, on
21 behalf of the nearly 1.4 million New Yorkers who have
22 their means, their means of survival threatened.
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Triada.

25 Nice to see you.

2 TRIADA STAMPAS: Good to see you, too.

3 EDLINE JACQUET: Hello. Thank you. My
4 name is Edline Jacquet, and I'm the Director of
5 Policy at the FPWA, the Federation of Protestant
6 Welfare Agencies. We are an anti-poverty policy and
7 advocacy organization with a membership network of
8 170 human service and faith-based members. So, in my
9 testimony I go in-- written testimony go into more
10 detail about a number of initiatives, but I just
11 wanted to really focus on three, which are to kind of
12 reiterate what my colleagues in the earlier panel and
13 in this panel talk about in terms of the human
14 services contract, and the investment in the
15 nonprofit sector, which we think is critical-- I
16 mean, it's critical to our members, but mostly
17 critical to the communities they serve essentially
18 because these organizations are providing essential
19 services, yet they're dealing with it from being like
20 a chronically underpaid and under-resourced sector.
21 In dealing with the, like, fixed cost that every kind
22 of organization has to deal with from rising rents,
23 insurance and other expenses, especially the
24 underfunding of, you know, contracts and overhead,
25 and we totally kind of underscore our support for,

2 you know, one of the former previous panels said
3 about the consideration of just the base 37 percent
4 fringe rate and human service contracts, as well as,
5 you know, we strongly urge the council to be
6 supportive of-- as FPWA is a part of both the Human
7 Services Advancement Group, as well as the Nonprofit
8 Resiliency Committee, to include in your response a
9 200 million dollars ask for FY19 to help with these
10 issues of addressing the underfunding of contracts.
11 The other thing that we really wanted to focus on
12 that I wanted to focus on my testimony today is the
13 importance as FPWA is also a member the Campaign for
14 Children, the importance of the summer program
15 funding, and the really the-- you know, we've gone
16 through this kind of whole thing every several years
17 in a row where the Mayor cuts the 20 million dollars
18 from summer programming, particularly for-- which
19 will impact 34,000 middle school children, and you
20 know, as everyone knows, summer programming and
21 summer camp is like extremely important to help
22 prevent learning loss, but also to make sure that
23 people-- children have a safe place to be, and also
24 provides access to speak to what my former colleague
25 was saying here about like the importance of food and

2 meals for children. So, that is a big-- a huge
3 priority for us and that would be one thing that I
4 would also want to emphasize, the importance in
5 investing the 15 million dollars for the Summer Youth
6 Employment Program to cover-- to help to cover also
7 the minimum wage increase from FY18, and the
8 importance of year-round employment and employment
9 programs. The other thing I wanted to kind of
10 underscore is the model budget and DFTA, and we
11 encourage-- we would love to have the Council's
12 support in encouraging that timeline for the model
13 budget implementation of DFTA be moved up to FY20.
14 So, thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, I want to thank,
16 obviously, all the work that you all do in making
17 sure that all-- right now, this is kind of the first
18 step in our budget process. Obviously, we're coming
19 to it somewhat late in our-- in the cycle of the
20 Preliminary Budget hearings. This is one of the last
21 ones, but we need to obviously focus on the areas
22 that we could have an impact in this budget year, and
23 so all the things that you've all brought up I think
24 are-- need to remain priorities over the next several
25 months. And so, you know, if it requires being out

2 there on the steps of City Hall and having rallies on
3 the issues that matter to us, you know, count me in.
4 I'm there. So, I look forward to continuing to work
5 with you all over the next couple of months to make
6 sure that our FY19 budget is a fair budget in New
7 York City.

8 EDLINE JACQUET: Thank you for--

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Thank
10 you. Thanks. So, a little bit of a change in plans,
11 because we're going to move over to an ACS panel
12 next. Joyce McMillan, Child Welfare Organizing
13 Project; Lisa Caswell, Day Care Council of New York;
14 Kate Rubin, Youth Represent; Gisele Castro, Exalt
15 Youth, and Alexis Sanders, also Exalt Youth.

16 JOYCE MCMILLAN: Here we go. Good
17 evening. Thank you, Council Member Levin and King
18 for having this session today. It's very important.
19 My name is Joyce McMillan, and I am the Director of
20 Programming at Child Welfare Organizing Project. I
21 have a written testimony so I can get through it
22 within my three-minute limit. I have had billions of
23 dollars-- if I had billions of dollars, I can assure
24 you, I would improve the lives of many and destroy
25 none. Unlike ACS, who destroys most of the lives

2 they touch, especially the lives of the vulnerable
3 children they claim to protect. This is not my
4 opinion. It is a fact based on their own statistics.
5 The OCFS website says 39.3 percent of children
6 receive neither preventive nor CPS services before
7 entry into the foster care system. ACS released stats
8 at the press conference earlier this week, and those
9 stats say only 35 percent of children in foster care
10 graduate high school, while the citywide graduation
11 rate is 70.5 percent. That is half, half, just half
12 of the citywide rate. How are children going to
13 thrive without even a minimum level of education?
14 They can't, yet ACS continues to run rampant,
15 destroying lives under the guise of protecting
16 children and asking for more money. I don't mind ACS
17 having money if they're utilizing that money for
18 preventive services, as preventive services we know
19 will prevent children from entering care. ACS holds
20 press conferences to talk about children who die at
21 the hands of their parents or their parent's
22 significant others, but where are the statistics for
23 children who die in the care of ACS, for the children
24 who are raped in their care, who are beaten in their
25 care, and so on? Why don't we have those statistics?

Why don't we even talk about them? Who has asked for them? I know I have, and I've never seen or heard that they've existed. Foster care is the new Jane Crow. Like slavery, foster care separates families of color and creates massive amounts of stress, fear, insecurities, depression, and trauma, all of the components that will ensure failure. So how exactly is ACS spending their budget if almost half of the children in their care were never given an opportunity to remain safely at home? And the outcome for those children is worse than if they remained at home. Is ACS going to destroy more lives with the money and widen the gap of disproportionality? A portion of the money should be earmarked to enlist the health and assistance of experts like myself to change the outcome for children and their families by ensuring children and families are not torn apart in the first place, to make sure families have a safe place to turn for support, a place that is not contracted and controlled by ACS. ACS has a slogan, "See something, say something." I see they are not doing what they say, protecting children. I see children suffering under their control. I'm going to say something.

2 I'm saying something now. In honor of the families
3 and children who ACS has failed, hold them
4 accountable. In honor of the families that never had
5 a chance to remain intact, hold ACS accountable. In
6 honor of the children whose parent's rights was
7 terminated leaving children legal orphans, hold ACS
8 accountable. For the child whose parent had no
9 rights to protect them from the abuse they were
10 suffering while in foster care, hold ACS accountable.
11 For foster care system has uncanny resemblance to the
12 prison industrial complex. They both have set visit
13 days and times. They are both strip searched. ACS
14 will tell you children are not strip searched, but
15 unless they're taking their clothes off in a medical
16 environment, they are strip searching them. They
17 both eat what they are served, and they both live in
18 new environments where they are removed from
19 everything they know and love. This list goes on and
20 on. What I see is a system that sets people up for
21 failure, and I'm saying something about it. Any
22 system that is to protect children should in no way
23 mimic a system that tortures adults. Also, why is it
24 common practice to strip search when about 90 percent
25 of the children are removed for reasons of poverty

2 anyway? Poverty is lack, not neglect. The framing
3 alone is how they target specific demographics. I
4 live comfortably. I'm neither rich with excessive
5 finances, nor poor. My needs are met. However, I am
6 rich with compassion, empathy, care, and concern for
7 others. I am concerned that ACS is being allowed to
8 operate billions of dollars budget with no
9 transparency or accountability to communities that
10 they are destroying. The one thing I know is if
11 foster care was a good thing, there would be no
12 placements available for children of color. We would
13 only get in through affirmative action. These are
14 pictures of a child that was in foster care that was
15 beaten and bruised and battered badly, and there has
16 been no accountability, and the family does not know
17 what happened to their child. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Joyce.

19 [Applause]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

21 GISELE CASTRO: Good evening. Thank you
22 so much, Chair Andy King and Council Member Levin for
23 having us this evening. My name is Gisele Castro,
24 and I am the Executive Director of Exalt Youth. We
25 work with young people citywide. We work with young

2 people who are involved in the juvenile justice
3 system, and today I do not want to take up too much
4 time. I just want to give a brief overview of the
5 work that we have been able to do with young people
6 ages 15 to 19, and that has been to provide them with
7 a thriving learning environment. It's an educational
8 internship model, and we have been able to have 99
9 percent of our youth engaged in school, and for those
10 who came into our program with an open felony cases,
11 at least six percent of our youth have a sentence
12 reduction. But more importantly, what we have been
13 able to see is that our youth are not returning to
14 the system. I would encourage you [inaudible] testify
15 at the last hearing, you know, to provide services
16 and funding to organizations who are providing I
17 would say equity and opportunities for young people
18 who are justice system-involved. And without further
19 ado I would love to welcome and present one of our
20 young graduates who graduated a few months ago, but I
21 am not going to take up too much time because I would
22 really love for her to share her experience with us.
23 Thank you so much.

24 ALEXIS SANDERS: Good afternoon,
25 honorable members of the New York City Council.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Alexis Sanders. I am 17 years old. I

live in the Bronx, attend Juda Veskey [sp?] High

School, and I am a recent graduate of the Exalt Youth

program. Before I found Exalt, I would define myself

as an outcast, fighting and lashing out. I could

admit I needed help, and I got arrested. When I

first got to Exalt, I still had the same bad

attitude. I didn't really think Exalt could do

anything for me. I was out of school. I didn't

really care about anything after my mother passed

away, but Exalt stood by my side. I traveled to Exalt

office in Brooklyn from the Bronx every Monday

through Thursday for 16 weeks. They helped me find

alternative schools, got me an internship, and even

got my case closed for me. They showed up when I

didn't. Getting out of the criminal justice system

was all I wanted, and Exalt helped me do it. I know

this organization is really what helped me, because

before they welcomed me in, I wasn't enrolled in

school, I was failing all my classes, and didn't

really plan a future for myself. As I sit here

today, I'm proud to say, I attend school every day,

and I have the highest GPA in my school. I plan to go

2 to college after I graduate and pursue a career in
3 film. Exalt truly did make a big impact in my life,
4 because fighting solves nothing. I don't see myself
5 behind bars, in the back of a police car, or in
6 handcuffs anymore. I see myself making great movies
7 and being happy while [inaudible]. This is a unique
8 organization where people care about you. They
9 always greet you with a smile and encourage you, even
10 when you are dealing with serious hardships. Being in
11 the classroom at Exalt is nothing like a classroom in
12 school. You learn about things like how to reverse
13 the school-to-prison pipeline and how to end
14 generations and cycles of poverty. This
15 organizations is truly unique. When I think about
16 things Exalt did for me, getting my case closed,
17 getting me back into school, and providing me with a
18 paid internship, it makes me realize that more young
19 people like me need access to Exalt. I hope you
20 agree and will help make sure every young person gets
21 a chance to do what I'm doing, chasing after my
22 dreams and staying free and clear of the justice
23 system. Thank you.

24 [applause]

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I just wanted to say
3 thank you, Alexis, for not only for your testimony,
4 but for telling us your story, and congratulations on
5 your success, and I look forward to seeing your name
6 on the marquis at the-- by that time I hope there's
7 still movie theaters, but you know, even if it's on,
8 you know, Netflix, I hope to see your name. Gisele,
9 I just want to thank you for inviting me out to Exalt
10 a couple of months ago and sitting down with one of
11 your cohorts who really opened my eyes, and I've been
12 bragging about Exalt ever since, and so everywhere I
13 go I tell people about Exalt. And just for the
14 record, can you tell me how much city funding you
15 receive over Exalt?

16 GISELE CASTRO: Currently? None.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: None. None. So, we
18 need to change-- we need to make sure that Exalt and
19 programs like Exalt are part of the equation in what
20 we're doing around--

21 GISELE CASTRO: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: what we're doing here
23 in the City Council and the City of New York.

24 GISELE CASTRO: Thank you so much,
25 because we are growing and we are scaling the

2 organization. We just launched a strategic plan and
3 it is to serve more young people. Just very quickly,
4 you know, we have seen an increase of young people
5 coming in from the Bronx, and that also means that,
6 you know, we have to get a much larger space. So,
7 thank you so much.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: I just want to say
9 thank you. Thank you, Sister. Thank you. I always
10 have a phrase that people pay attention to people who
11 participate. Your participation in your own life has
12 turned your life around. The people in this room who
13 participate in the City of New York improving lives
14 have shown when they show up the world turns. So,
15 thank you for turning your life around, because now
16 you will be the example when you create your first
17 film. I'm looking forward to being there as well,
18 and telling your story again to empower, inspire and
19 deliver success to the next generation. Thank you.

20 LISA CASWELL: My name is Lisa Caswell.
21 I'm from the Day Care Council, and I'd just like to
22 acknowledge my fellow testifiers. It's an honor to
23 sit with them having spent 20 years in preventive
24 services in particular and for the work you're doing.
25 And it's an honor to testify in front of you, Steve

Levin. You continue to inspire us by your memory of everything we say and your convictions. So, thank you. I'm just going to summarize what we have to say. There's colleagues of mine who will speak about this as well. We have five issues. The Day Care Council is almost 70 years old going back to World War II and we have labor relations and mediation policy. We have a new Early Childhood career ladder and employment initiative and a professional training institute. Right now our biggest issues have to do with continuing to support the UPK expansion, but not lose all our kids. We've had providers who have had to reseal four-year-old classrooms four times last fall, because the DOE's recruiting kids directly from those nonprofit settings. So, I know they're making efforts, but it's still a problem for us. It's impacting utilization. Major issue I'm sure you're familiar with is the issue of salary parody. It's destabilizing the entire system that we've spent so many years building up. Right now, a similarly qualified, certified Master's Degree teacher, when they start out the gap is 13,784. By five years they could be making 15,413 dollars more working with the DOE, and if they'd gone to the DOE after 15 years,

2 they would have been making 40,612 dollars more, and
3 they wouldn't have had to work longer hours, a full
4 day. They wouldn't have had to work in the summer.
5 So, we'll be out there in front of you on the steps
6 on the 11th. We hope we have your support. It's a
7 really big problem. Another thing that's happening
8 is the state's got a new rating system for all of its
9 child care programs and it's affecting the programs
10 that are located in NYCHA badly, because they have no
11 control over their facilities' repairs. So the DOHMH
12 folks come out and give them a lot of trouble for
13 violations that they can't control, and this could
14 now also affect their new rating with the state. So,
15 we've met with DOHMH, and they're doing greater
16 collaboration with NYCHA, but I'm sure you're
17 familiar with everything that NYCHA's going through,
18 but this is a really big problem for the child care
19 programs that fought hard to be located in those
20 facilities. Next we have-- related to our role in
21 labor, the last labor contract with 1707 involved
22 accepting a health plan called MetroPlus which
23 restricts the staff to providers in the Health +
24 Hospitals Corporation, but there's not enough choice.
25 So, they're going back, those of them who are

2 eligible, which it's bad enough that they're eligible
3 for Medicaid, and they're going back to Medicaid
4 because they have broader selection. That's
5 happening in almost half of our members. And the
6 last thing is we were given two and a half million
7 dollars by the City to do a career ladder. It's
8 going really well. We've launched it. It's having a
9 big impact, but unless they make enough money
10 there'll be no reason for them to go after these
11 advanced degrees. They're going to leave us anyhow.
12 So, that's it, and thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Lisa, and
14 thank you so much for the Day Care Council's
15 continuous focus on making sure that there's pay
16 parity within the system, not accepting short change
17 or half-measures, but fighting to ensure that
18 everybody that's working within our Early Childhood
19 Education system has the opportunity to have a career
20 in that field, and that wouldn't be happening if it
21 wasn't for the advocacy.

22 LISA CASWELL: I'd like to acknowledge
23 the rest of my colleagues in Campaign for Children
24 for that.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Absolutely,
3 absolutely. Thank you so much for keeping the
4 attention on it. To Alexis, and Gisele from Exalt,
5 thank you. Thank you again. Thank you for telling
6 your story. To Joyce, I just want to make sure-- I'm
7 on the record here saying I support CWOP. The
8 Council supports CWOP. The work that CWOP does is
9 instrumental in making sur that parents that are
10 involved in the child welfare system have a voice,
11 have resources, know their rights, because as you
12 point out time and again, the system itself is geared
13 against those parents. Institutionally parents are
14 put in-- that are involved in the child welfare
15 system, because tragically their children are removed
16 from their household, have such obstacles and hurdles
17 put in front of them, and an organization like CWOP
18 and Rise, those organizations that are there as
19 resources for those families is essential to making
20 sure that the system become fair in the future. So,
21 thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: I just want to put on
23 the record for all of you, what I want to say to the
24 Day Care Council and CWOP, I want to say to both of
25 you, we have a responsibility in the City of New York

2 to take care of our children, and I'm going to say to
3 Chair Levin, the next time that we have ACS in the
4 room that they need to hear your story before they
5 leave, because while I appreciated the book I read
6 this morning, we need to understand a little bit
7 about some of the flip-sides. Not all-- not
8 everything is always rosy and sunshine, and as a
9 previous worker I understand that families have
10 challenges. The system has challenges, and they need
11 to hear your story so they can really put it in the
12 pot when they start making decisions. I say you go
13 to uncover to recover, and you have uncovered some
14 things today that I think the Commissioner also needs
15 to hear as well. As far as Day Care Council, I got
16 to say again, there's two things that I think our
17 budget should always reflect that advocates should
18 never even have to come before the City Council, and
19 that's funding to take care of children and funding
20 to take care of our seasoned individuals, our seniors
21 in our neighborhoods. They are our most vulnerable
22 in our communities, and we need to make sure that we
23 protect them, and if we value education and
24 development of a three-year-old, there's no way that
25 you decide that there's not pay equity between the

2 UFT workers and as well as the DC1707 because they do
3 the same work to the same population, and in turn,
4 they need to be able to provide for themselves and
5 their children to stay motivated. So, you can trust
6 that you have our support in advocating and doing all
7 that we can do to protect our children in the City of
8 New York. Thank you for your advocacy. Thank you
9 all.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, next panel,
11 Jasmine Edmunds, Picture the Homeless; Maria Wallace,
12 Picture the Homeless; Jose Rodriguez, Picture the
13 Homeless; Jasmine Budnella I think might have left,
14 from Vocal New York, but I just wanted to recognize
15 her for the record, and Scott Hutchins [sp?], Picture
16 the Homeless. Whoever wants to begin?

17 JOSE RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Good evening. My
18 name is Jose Rodriguez, and I'm a member of Picture
19 the Homeless. I'm here to talk about Picture the
20 Homeless' Business of Homelessness Report, our
21 findings and recommendations and to ask the City
22 Council to utilize this year's General Welfare budget
23 to provide homes instead of shelters for New York
24 City's homeless residents. As a formerly homeless
25 person, I have personally experienced the waste and

2 dysfunction of shelters, city-run and contracted
3 alike. When I lived in the contractor shelter on
4 126th Street, I was told that I didn't qualify for
5 any housing assistance, even though I suffered from a
6 range of severe medical issues. In my experience,
7 counselors are not trained in accessing housing
8 providers who allocate housing for homeless people in
9 shelters. I was able to find housing on my own,
10 through a state affordable housing program my
11 counselor had no information about. It's been my
12 experience that some counselors were able to refer
13 people to appropriate housing on a regular basis, and
14 other counselors appear to have no training. People
15 that complain that they were not receiving housing
16 assistance were often transferred to other shelters
17 even though they had no behavior issues. I suffer
18 from diabetes, and when I was at Bellevue when my
19 sugar was low in the evenings, staff provided me with
20 snacks, but when I was at the nonprofit contractor
21 shelter when my sugar was low they told me that all
22 you could do-- all we could do was call EMS. Food
23 was not allowed in the facility. It appears that the
24 contractor shelters do not comply with DHS protocol
25 and rules concerning severe medical issue, or they

2 use their own judgement. The Business of
3 Homelessness Report was conceived with the belief
4 that despite the multiple funding sources provided to
5 maintain the shelter industrial complex, these
6 valuable resources can be better spent to create
7 permanent homes for the most vulnerable New Yorkers
8 living in shelters on the street, doubled-up on
9 someone 's home as well as those about to lose their
10 home. Picture the Homeless made recommendations in
11 the Business of Homelessness Report. In order to
12 shift funds to prioritize providing truly affordable
13 homes for low-income New Yorkers and to better manage
14 existing shelters and train staff appropriately.
15 More and more people are calling shelters their home
16 at great public cost and personal loss. Shelters
17 were designed to be a safety net. However, they're
18 becoming homes for the most vulnerable low-income New
19 Yorkers. I'm here to ask the New York City Council
20 to please find ways to make housing a priority, not
21 shelters. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

23 SCOTT HUTCHINS: Thank you, Mr. Levin. My
24 name is Scott Andrew Hutchins, and I have been living
25 in the New York City shelter system since May 25th,

2 2012. I spent much of 2011 in Housing Court
3 unemployed with a physical challenge and unable to
4 pay my rent. The City refused to help me stay in my
5 1,075 dollar and 18 cent apartment as long as I was
6 not a job that paid enough to pay the rent going
7 forward, but now that I'm in the shelter system,
8 they're willing to pay around 1,300 to 2,000 dollars
9 more than that, plus 300 dollars a month on a storage
10 unit, plus restricted SNAP benefits of 16 dollars so
11 that I can have a wiry cot wrapped in vinyl and a
12 locker in a room full of other men and eat food that
13 has a negative impact on my health in a system that
14 doesn't work for anyone except for shelter providers.
15 Our report shows that the City's spending on shelters
16 is unsustainable at over two million dollars per day.
17 The cost to build permanent housing for every
18 homeless person will be exceeded by shelter spending
19 in only seven years. It therefore cannot be
20 reasonably argued that it is too expensive to house
21 every homeless person rather than put them in
22 shelters. It is simply an issue of political will.
23 We learned in our research that many shelter
24 executives are raking in six figure incomes while
25 leaving homeless people in squalor. This suggests

2 either a system of cronyism or a lack of oversight in
3 how shelter money is spent. The shelters within DHS
4 system are poorly regulated, inconsistent in
5 character, and have very little oversight. In
6 addition, shelters know weeks in advance when
7 inspections that are supposedly are a surprise are
8 coming. The shelters should be required to support
9 their spending with outcomes, and the City should
10 have for corrective actions for shelter-- the City
11 should have corrective actions for shelters that do
12 not meet expectations. Unlike the federal money that
13 goes in the family shelters, the adult shelters and
14 adult family shelters are 82 percent and 69 percent
15 respectively funded with City money which is
16 expungable [sic] and can therefore be spent on
17 housing. This moneys should be reapportioned into
18 spending on housing for people making 10, 15, 20, and
19 30 percent of area median income. The voucher
20 program should be revamped into a universal program
21 with specific training for those in housing
22 specialist positions to actually help get people into
23 housing. As homeless people, we found solutions to
24 homelessness in the City's own data. We would like
25 to see the funds used to help us in a way that

2 actually helps us rather than keeps us in second-
3 class housing for years at a time. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. So you
5 have to push the button.

6 MARY CROSBY: Thank you. Good evening.

7 Chairman Levin and Committee Members, all of you who
8 advocate for the homelessness. That's hard work
9 that's much appreciated even by those who can't be
10 here today. My name is Mary Crosby, and I'm also a
11 member of Picture the Homeless and the Metropolitan
12 Council on Housing. Picture the Homeless has-- the
13 research committee has researched the homelessness
14 crisis and the relationship to housing in New York
15 City. The team has done an outstanding job
16 documenting their findings in the report that they
17 released today, the business of homelessness. I urge
18 you to read it and consider the findings. Thank you
19 also for the financial report you presented today,
20 which is also very illuminating. Illumination is
21 what is needed most of all. Today, I wanted to
22 reinforce these two reports by saying that we need to
23 increase transparency and accountability from DHS and
24 HPD as much as their operations remain a black box
25 mystery. Increased scrutiny and oversight is

2 required because without complete information
3 appropriate remedies cannot be found to what we all
4 agree is an ever-growing crisis. When I entered the
5 shelter system in 2015 I was given a required
6 physical, including blood tests, and was told that my
7 health was excellent and my test results were
8 remarkable for a woman my age, 69 at the time. Now
9 nearly three years later I have gained 10 or 20
10 pounds, have high blood pressure, grey hair,
11 increasing hair loss, skin problems, eye problems,
12 allergic reaction, reduced mobility, and my nervous
13 system is shot. This is in large part due to the
14 constant 24/7 stress of shelter living where it is
15 challenging to get a good night sleep and maintain a
16 healthy diet. I hope to recover. But I'm not alone.
17 We can be sure that equally serious issues and worse
18 effect the 60,000-plus other residents in the shelter
19 system, men, women, and yes, children. In my
20 experience residents have heart attacks when they're
21 in the shelter. Some survive and some do not. Yes,
22 people die in shelters. Shelter life is tough, and
23 as they say, only the strong survive. This is the
24 human cost of warehousing the homeless. The cost to
25 the taxpayer for shelter warehousing is approximately

1.4 billion. The City is paying approximately 100 dollars per day for my stay in the shelter, which comes to approximately 36,500 dollars a year, or approximately 3,000 dollars a month. My LINC IV voucher has an apartment allowance of \$1,268 and this amount has not increased since 2015, although the asking rent in New York City is up 33 percent, according to the latest housing vacancy survey. The media spin on homeless is that a majority of the homeless are mentally-ill or drug-addicted, and that this is the reason for the inability to move the homeless into permanent housing. This has not been my observation. In 2015, a social services supervisor told a room full of shelter residents that they had no rights because they did not pay rent and did not pay taxes. Did you recognize the clerk at the store who helped you, the bank teller who cashed your check, the waitress, the nurses' aid, security guards your building, the cleaning crew at your office, the teacher of autistic children, the former librarian, or the former manager of a shelter as being homeless? Perhaps not. These are some of the men and women that I have met while in a shelter. All are homeless New York tax payers who cannot

2 afford luxury housing built in New York City. This
3 is why we need stronger rent laws and greater
4 accountability from HPD. We need enforcement of the
5 current rent laws. I applaud the Council for their
6 efforts to exercise greater oversight and consider
7 stronger measures to ensure the needed transparency
8 and attention to the housing needs of the homeless.

9 I continue with and experience with applying for
10 lottery apartment which is very curious because
11 although it was built under the-- these buildings
12 under the Ella [sic] program at HPD Senior Program,
13 they apparently would not accept any recommendation
14 by my housing specialist, and she basically has said
15 she will no longer try to pursue any recommendations
16 on maybe half, because it would take too long. So,

17 in conclusion, I wanted to say that while I agree
18 with the general recommendations of the Picture the
19 Homeless report to take fungible dollars from the
20 shelter budget and apply them to affordable housing.

21 My concern is that dollars taken from shelters may be
22 given to HPD without reform, and I would encourage
23 you to look into that and consider it, but make sure
24 that they're, you know, law-abiding and free of
25 corruption before you give them any more money. Many

2 new ideas are proposed, and I believe this is the
3 time when break-through solutions will be found to
4 make permanent affordable housing for the
5 homelessness and other low income New Yorkers. Thank
6 you for the opportunity to testify today.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

8 MARIA WALLACE: Good evening.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good evening.

10 MARIA WALLACE: Good evening, everybody.
11 My name is Maria Teresa Wallace [sp?]. I am a leader
12 with Picture the Homeless. I am testifying this
13 evening regarding how the shelters are run as a
14 business and are not serving the residents to get the
15 help they need, to get out and into permanent
16 housing. The money you invest for a shelter should
17 be used for housing. I know the system is like a
18 revolving door. I was in the system twice. The first
19 time I was in the system with my family, but
20 unfortunately things changed and I went in again with
21 my husband as an adult couple. I got accepted for
22 the VANISH [sic] program, but the program only lasted
23 two years. I had to go back into the shelter system
24 after the government discontinued the program. My
25 husband and I stayed in the system for four years

2 until we finally got our place. During that time the
3 City was spending 3,000-4,000 per month for our
4 shelter stay. That adds up to almost 17,000 dollars,
5 enough to have paid my rent as a monthly basis,
6 furnish an apartment, or even by a home. But that's
7 just my example. Let's look at the cost for
8 everybody else that's going through this. I'm going
9 to do the math for you. In a shelter housing 40
10 families where DHS spends roughly 5,000 dollars a
11 month per family, the cost of the shelter would be
12 around 20,000 dollars a month-- 20,000 dollars a
13 month. It is incredible that it costs that much, but
14 why? We know how the money is being spent and used.
15 I know there are guidelines that the shelters have to
16 follow, but they are not doing it. For example,
17 shelters are supposed to provide metro cards to
18 households on public assistance to make it to
19 appointments, but they are not doing that. They are
20 supposed to provide toiletries to shelter residents,
21 but all I ever received was a roll of toilet paper
22 every month or every other month. My shelter had
23 mice [sic] running around in the basement, but the
24 shelter operators would get upset when I told them
25 about the violations. If an emergency happens at

2 night, no repairs would be made, because after 10 or
3 11 o'clock there was no maintenance worker on the
4 site. I was lucky to have a real great caseworker who
5 made sure I made it to all my appointments, but I
6 know that's not the case for everybody, for everyone.
7 We're asking that instead of investing the funding
8 into shelters that provide temporary housing, we
9 should be putting this into permanent housing. For
10 the amount we are spending on shelters, we could
11 house people in an apartment. We need housing, not
12 shelters. Thank you.

13 [applause]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I want to thank this
15 panel. I want to thank Picture the Homeless for
16 providing insight into the system that is lacking
17 from what we hear from the Administration, what we
18 know at the Council. We're looking at-- this is a
19 budget hearing, we look at a lot of numbers.
20 Sometimes we look at policy. We're looking at a lot
21 of ideas, but it's important that there's a
22 perspective brought to the table that is what's
23 happening on the ground and what's happening in
24 reality, and so I want to thank Picture the Homeless.
25 I just want to thank you all for putting the work in

2 on the policy recommendations that you have done,
3 which I think are phenomenal and very helpful, and I
4 look forward to working with you to implement them.
5 So, thank you very much and thanks for your patience,
6 too. Thanks. Okay, we're going back to ACS panel.
7 G.L. Tyler, DC1707, Lorita Watson [sp?], Friends of
8 Mosholu Parklands, Kevin Kuros [sp?], Community
9 Connections for Youth, Wendy O'Shields from Urban
10 Justice Center Safety Net, Shelley Anderson,
11 Sheltering Arms, and Elizabeth McCarthy, Sheltering
12 Arms.

13 G.L. TYLER: Good evening. My name is
14 G.L. Tyler, the Political Director for District
15 Council 1707. And thanks to the succinct remarks by
16 Lisa Caswell, I won't speak on wage parody at this
17 time. However, when EarlyLearn was introduced in
18 2012, the Bloomberg Administration suspended the
19 vacation [sic] banks that my members of Local 205
20 enjoyed. Members, actually hundreds of members, have
21 not received their justification pay, up to 60 days
22 since 2012. We've contacted ACS for a very long
23 period of time, and they have been callus to the
24 needs of these members, and basically have not given
25 them that money. That money in total was estimated

2 between 12 and 15 million dollars. So, we're asking
3 the City Council to take a look at this and perhaps
4 even hold a hearing to see why ACS has been reluctant
5 to give these members the justification of pay, and
6 plus, I want to bring up another issue. We have 10
7 daycare centers currently that have either lost their
8 leases or are ready to close, and we want the Council
9 to take a look at that as well, because ACS has not
10 been-- again, they've been very difficult in trying
11 to find new sponsors. So, we're looking for your
12 help. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Tyler,
14 and thank you for all the work that your union and
15 the members of your union do.

16 G.L. TYLER: Thank you.

17 KEVIN KUROS: Good evening. Thank you
18 for the opportunity to let us speak. My name is
19 Kevin Kuros. I work for Community Connections for
20 Youth in the South Bronx. My role there is a liaison
21 where I coordinate partnerships between system
22 stakeholders and community organizations that are
23 looking to create alternatives to incarceration for
24 our juvenile youth. My problem and issue that I'd
25 like to address today is the ACS' move to bring

2 correctional officers from Rikers Island to the
3 Horizon facility. As an individual, I myself was
4 arrested as a youth 14 times, and I spent 30 days in
5 Rikers Island, and I could attest to the fact that
6 the presence of correction officers brings a hostile
7 environment to that of a young individuals. However,
8 today I am able to work with Horizons and helping
9 them facilitate workshops and help these youth
10 transform their lives as individuals so that they
11 could be productive members of society. However, I
12 feel that after the Raise the Age implementation goes
13 into effect and bring in these COs from Rikers
14 Island, I feel that will be a negative effect to the
15 work that's already being done at Horizons with the
16 partnership at Community Connections for Youth. So, I
17 ask the City Council to hold ACS accountable because
18 I recall at the hearing with ACS, nobody could answer
19 to whose decision is this that the Cos would be
20 coming from Rikers Island to Horizons. So, we need
21 to do-- look into that deeper as to why is this even
22 being an issue. When I was at Horizon-- I'm speaking
23 for Horizons, that's the one location we have a
24 partnership with, but when I was there last week
25 there was only nine individuals in the entire

2 facility with two intakes that showed up that night.

3 So, my other issue is, why are we bringing in

4 correction officers who may not be equipped or

5 trained to deal with this population. Not only that,

6 but we're bringing them-- I think the number was 175-

7 - to work with about only 100 youth that are coming

8 out of Rikers Island. So, to me, the number is

9 disproportionate. Of course-- and financially as

10 well, because when you look at it, we already know

11 that it costs about a quarter million dollars a year

12 to house these youth in detention centers, where

13 creating community partnerships with let's say the

14 organization I work for, the cost of diversion is a

15 fraction, so about 10,000 I'd say. So, I just ask

16 that you hold them accountable, and that's-- I do not

17 want to see correction officers from Rikers Island at

18 Horizon Detention facilities. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much for

20 that testimony. It's very important and we're

21 working-- want to continue to work on that.

22 KEVIN KUROS: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

24 WENDY O'SHIELDS: My name is Wendy

25 O'Shields and I'm testifying as a New York City

2 welfare and homeless rights advocate. I'm a member
3 of the safety-- of the Urban Justice Safety Net
4 Project/Activist. HRA, please ensure that each SNAP
5 and job center office are adequately staffed. HRA
6 applicants and recipients often wait hours to see
7 customer service and typically lose an entire day
8 trying to resolve a single issue. Phone lines are
9 not answered and voicemails are full because the HRA
10 centers are not adequately staffed. Staff frequently
11 work mandatory overtime until 9, 10:00 p.m., or
12 later. This is no good for all concerned. Please
13 increase the budget to hire more frontline support
14 staff to immediately process paperwork. New York
15 State licensed social workers should be hired to
16 interview HRA applicants and recipients, and this
17 will allow professional interviews complete and
18 uninterrupted. New York-- New Yorkers that visit HRA
19 centers seek vital, life sustaining services. During
20 the benefit qualifying period, please process
21 applicants for emergency SNAP, a one-time cash
22 benefit, and a clothing voucher during the
23 application interview. This will help some necess--
24 this will help provide some necessities during the 30
25 to 45 day application process. Additionally, there

2 are resources in the NYC community that can help the
3 HRA applicant or recipient when their food, clothing,
4 and other necessities are low. Consider handing out
5 the below information to New Yorkers, especially
6 during the application period. Please see my
7 attached documents. Accountability for DHS: there
8 are significant variations between the amount of help
9 that residents get depending on which shelter they
10 reside. Some shelters don't have a housing
11 specialist, and some have them, but residents do not
12 have appointments scheduled. If there is a housing
13 specialists, often there aren't enough and they are
14 not well-trained in locating NYC apartments. What is
15 the job description of the City of New York
16 Department of Homeless Services Housing Specialist?
17 Are your DHS nonprofit homeless shelter vendors
18 required by contract to employ a housing specialist?
19 How many housing specialists are required per 25 DHS
20 shelter homeless residents? How are housing
21 specialists accountable for placing DHS shelter
22 homeless residents and independent permanent housing?
23 Please clarify the role of the DHS shelter homeless
24 resident housing specialist. Please increase the
25 budget to hire specifically housing specialists with

2 the proper training in locating independent permanent
3 housing. The ratio of one housing specialist per 25
4 DHS shelter homeless residents will begin to turn the
5 tide on homelessness in the City of New York. I
6 thank you for considering my suggestions to assist
7 HRA and DHS with their accountability to New Yorkers.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
9 and just on that last point, I actually apologize. I
10 know that the gentleman from Picture the Homeless
11 brought it up as well. Housing specialists are--
12 there needs to be-- they need to be better resourced,
13 better trained, better funded, better trained, better
14 trained, better trained, and have more support,
15 because that's the lynchpin to making sure that-- if
16 we're under claiming our housing assistant vouchers
17 by 20 million dollars a year, 25 million dollars a
18 year, maybe that's because we don't have enough
19 housing specialists to find people apartments that
20 are doing it, you know, or not trained or resourced
21 enough. So, anyway. Very good point. I forgot to
22 bring it up during the testimony with the
23 Commissioner. I mentioned it many times before, but
24 we got to keep on fighting for that.

25 WENDY O'SHIELDS: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thanks so much for
3 bringing it up. Thank you.

4 MIKAYLA TERRELL: Good afternoon. My
5 name is Mikayla Terrell. I'm the Grants Manager at
6 Sheltering Arms, speaking on behalf of Elizabeth
7 McCarthy, the CEO of Sheltering Arms. I'm joined
8 today by Shelley Anderson, a group teacher in one of
9 our Pre-k for All classrooms. Thank you, Chair
10 Levin, for the opportunity to testify today.
11 Sheltering Arms is one of the City's largest
12 providers of education in youth development, juvenile
13 justice, child welfare, and community and family
14 well-being programs for the Bronx, Manhattan,
15 Brooklyn, and Queens. We operate 11 Early Childhood
16 Education Centers, one of which you visited that are
17 located in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the
18 City and serve a total of 1,500 children through
19 those centers and family day care. I know we've
20 heard about it today, but we're going to be speaking
21 on salary parity for the record. the future of these
22 centers are at risk because city contracts pay our
23 teachers tens of thousands of dollars less per year
24 than teachers in DOE-run programs, despite the fact
25 that teachers in nonprofit centers like ours provide

2 full day services year-round while DOE programs run
3 for the school day and get winter, spring, and summer
4 breaks off. Let me reiterate. Teachers in nonprofit
5 programs receives tens of thousands of dollars less
6 per year while working significantly longer hours.

7 This unconscionable parody has become a crisis
8 Sheltering Arms and for other community-based
9 organizations who educate and care for communities'
10 youngest and most vulnerable students. This
11 inequitable system impacts not only the teachers in
12 our centers, but the low-income communities of color
13 we have a mission to serve. We are here to urge the
14 Committee and City Council to require the Mayor's
15 Administration to deliver salary parody for ECU [sic]
16 teachers in our EarlyLearn Centers so that they are
17 equally to their comparably credentialed teachers in
18 public schools. There's been no response and no
19 action from the Mayor to our consistent call for
20 equal pay, for equal qualifications. We now urge the
21 Committee on General Welfare to hold hearings into
22 these completely unjustifiable disparities and to
23 hold the Administration accountable. The public
24 deserves and explanation. The families and teachers
25 impacted by these blatant inequities are your

2 constituents. Sheltering Arms, like other community-
3 based providers, has experienced an exodus of
4 qualified teachers from our centers. CBOs across the
5 City continually train high-quality teachers who then
6 leave for better benefits and higher pay at DOE. It
7 then takes us at least seven months to hire a
8 qualified teacher for these programs. Without
9 correction, CBOs like us will continue to invest in
10 new teachers only to lose their talent to the DOE.
11 The impact of this chronic disparity is clear. We're
12 forced to close classrooms in order to maintain staff
13 ratios leaving low-income children and families
14 without the early education opportunities that they
15 so desperately need. This exodus has only been
16 exacerbated by the Mayor's expansion of Pre-K for All
17 and 3K for All. The introduction of Universal Pre-K
18 meant that the City opened classrooms in even the
19 wealthiest districts, creating more teaching
20 positions in DOE-run programs. Teachers then left
21 our centers for shorter days, shorter years, and more
22 money. The poor kids in our centers have been left
23 in the gap, and we're forced to close classrooms
24 despite waiting lists. To answer a question from
25 earlier today, the reason our enrollment is low is

because we don't have the teachers to staff them, not because there aren't kids to meet the services. The City Council has proven itself an ally of the human services sector, and we urge you to take leadership on-- a leadership role on this issue, to hold a hearing into this unjustifiable and inequitable system and demand that the Mayor provide the necessary funding to eliminate these salary disparities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

SHELLEY ANDERSON: Good evening. My name is Shelley Anderson and I'm a group UPK teacher at Sheltering Arms, Mother Hale's Learning Center in Harlem. I earned my Master's Degree through a scholars program that the City had in Early Childhood Education at Hunter while working fulltime in a Pre-K center, and I was able to obtain my New York State Initial Teacher License as a result. Part of my repayment for my scholarship is a requirement to teach in a CBEC, Community-based Early Childhood Center, for three years. This has brought me to Sheltering Arms and I've been teaching there now. Teaching Pre-K is really special work. Young children learn about their community and themselves

2 through their own personal experience through
3 exploration, through play, and they explore things
4 with their senses: seeing, touching, smelling, and
5 sometimes even tasting the things in their world.
6 It's been really rewarding to see my classes develop
7 academic learning, social skills and self-expression.
8 It's also been very rewarding working multi-cultural
9 communities where the families come from all parts of
10 the world, including Santa Domingo, West Africa,
11 Jamaica, China, and Eastern Europe. This has been
12 one of the most challenging positions that I have
13 ever had as a pre-k teacher. The hours, the
14 commitment, and the responsibilities are significant
15 for all teachers, but the burden for us is more than
16 our peers in DOE. I perform the same academic
17 responsibilities, however, for less salary and
18 benefits. My work days are far longer than theirs.
19 They start at 8:00 a.m. with children arriving and
20 they end at 6:00 p.m. when they go home.
21 Additionally, our school year is 12 months of the
22 year without any time off for summer, winter, or
23 spring breaks. In addition to maintaining teaching
24 and-- in addition to teaching and maintaining the
25 health and safety of the children there is a mountain

2 of administrative responsibilities, documentation,
3 reporting, student observations, and parent meetings,
4 and most of this work is done in extended hours at
5 home, after work, and on the weekends. The salary
6 and benefits discrepancy between me and my peers at
7 DOE is not fair, and given this disparity there's
8 little reason why a teacher would choose to work in a
9 community-based program instead of the DOE. Without
10 my scholarship requirements and some year-end
11 incentives to stay at Sheltering Arms, I don't know
12 if I would have continued work with there as long as
13 I have. Our children are so important and our
14 teachers are so important. Please let teachers like
15 me continue to teach for outcomes without worrying
16 about our incomes. We'd like teacher equity in our
17 payment. Thank you very much.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. And thank
19 you for a sobering perspective on this, and the only
20 reaction that I can come up with is it's outrageous.
21 It's outrageous that you're asked to work year-round,
22 10 hours a day, every single day for significantly
23 less pay. There is zero justification, and there can
24 be zero justification for that inequity, and the
25 longer this goes on, the-- not only the less

2 defensible, but the worse the wrong is, and so we
3 will be focusing on this issue as part of the move
4 from ACS to Department of Education. I will not in
5 any way support a move from ACS to Department of
6 Education or a new RFP, and I'm in my last term, and
7 I have-- I don't-- doesn't matter to me. I'm not
8 worry about upsetting people, but there's no way that
9 I will support such a transfer if it does not include
10 full pay equity across the board, particularly-- it's
11 particularly galling considering the increased hours
12 and school year that you must be responsible for.
13 So, thank you. Thank you very much.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And thank you for
16 teaching our young children.

17 SHELLEY ANDERSON: You're very welcome.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I want to thank this
19 panel very much. Thank you so much for all the work
20 you do and for all the issues that you've raised,
21 thank you. Next panel: Gregory Brender, United
22 Neighborhood Houses; Andrea Bowen, Transgender and
23 Gender Non-Conforming Solutions Coalition; Robin
24 Vitale [sp?], American Heart Association; Kirk
25

2 Wilson, the Bowery Hotel CB3; and John Sentiger
3 [sp?]; Covenant House. Okay, whoever wants to begin?

4 GREGORY BRENDER: Now, it's on. Thank you,
5 Chair Levin for sticking through the hearing, for
6 your great questions, and for the opportunity to
7 testify. We also don't want to support any transfer
8 that doesn't continue to have you having oversight
9 over it for what a great champion you've been for
10 early childhood programs. I'm Gregory Brender from
11 the United Neighborhood Houses. We are the
12 federation of settlement houses, multi-service,
13 multi-generational community centers that work to
14 empower the communities that they're in. And I think
15 in true organizer fashion I'm in the lucky position
16 that the thing I was going to say today have been
17 probably said more eloquently by people before me,
18 particularly the teacher from Sheltering Arms who
19 just spoke. So, I have written testimony focused
20 really entirely on the importance of early childhood
21 salary parody, something that we know the Council has
22 supported for many years, calling in FY17 for 33
23 million to be devoted as additional start money that
24 has not gone in there, not there yet. Only 19
25 million will be there by FY2021 in the Preliminary

2 Budget. And so we just want to reiterate the call to
3 have a hearing specifically on the impacts of salary
4 parody, and reiterate the ask the City Council demand
5 that the City take immediate action to address this.
6 Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Greg.

8 KIRK WILSON: Hi. I'm Kirk Wilson. I'm
9 the General Manager of the Bowery Hotel. We're on
10 Bowery and Third Street. We're here to reiterate
11 what Susan Stetzer was saying from Community Board
12 Three. Here to ask for additional funding for DHS
13 Peace Officers instead of private security,
14 specifically for Third Street Men's Shelter. Private
15 Security by law is there to observe, detect, and
16 report only. DHS Peace Officers, on the other hand,
17 are trained by NYPD. They can arrest. They can use
18 non-lethal weapons. They're trained on de-
19 escalation. They carry hand-cuffs. They can patrol
20 and arrest on the entire block. They can approach
21 and ask the clients to refrain from congregating and
22 issue summons for public urination, trespassing,
23 disorderly conduct, etcetera. Private security
24 guards can't do any of those things, unfortunately.
25 The issues we deal with at the Bowery on a weekly if

2 not daily basis are urination in our entrances and
3 exits, harassment of our staff, harassment of our
4 guests. We find a lot of used needles in our
5 doorways on Third Street. There's a lot of
6 congregating on Third Street in our doorways, and
7 also on the corner of Second Avenue and Third Street.
8 We have clients coming in the building; we ask them
9 to leave; they don't want to leave. We've seen
10 weapons brandished on Third Street amongst the folks
11 who are congregating there. So, we strongly urge the
12 City Council to consider approving additional funding
13 for DHS Peace Officers specifically in the Third
14 Street Shelter. Thank you.

15 ROBIN VITALE: Good evening Chairman. My
16 name is Robin Vitale. I serve as the Vice President
17 of Health Strategies for the American Heart
18 Association here in New York City and we're here to
19 address a concern that was really clearly identified
20 by the Office of Food Policy from the Mayor's team
21 where approximately 1.2 million New Yorkers live in
22 communities that are low-income and have struggled
23 with limited access to healthy food. Our testimony
24 outlines three proposals that we are pushing for the
25 City to invest into public agency programs that will

2 help to address one of these concerns under your
3 purview in General Welfare. I do want to draw your
4 attention to the first which is to specifically look
5 at SNAP, particularly SNAP incentives. As one of the
6 earlier panels mentioned, we are very concerned about
7 some of the rhetoric that is coming out of our
8 Federal Government. We want to make sure that the
9 fantastic innovative work that has been achieved by
10 the City around SNAP, particularly with Health Bucks,
11 is able to be sustained and preferably expanded. We
12 know right now we are not able to meet the full
13 demand of Health Bucks for the City; however, it's
14 wildly popular and obviously tremendously impactful.
15 We know that one in five New Yorkers receive SNAP
16 incentives at the moment, and it is a wonderful bonus
17 for the economy as well. For every five dollars in
18 new SNAP benefits, you generate approximately nine
19 dollars in new revenue for the local economy. It
20 impacts the entire food system, but from our purview,
21 obviously, we're very concerned about how it impacts
22 New Yorkers' health, the same New Yorkers that live
23 in these vulnerable communities have extremely high
24 rates of heart disease, diabetes, and other diet-
25 related illnesses. So, we are very hopeful that the

2 City can invest in the SNAP expansion program with a
3 15 million dollar investment. We think this is--
4 it's not going to address the full need for what
5 could be done with Health Bucks, but it will help to
6 move us in the right direction. So, we respectfully
7 request your support of that.

8 ANDREA BOWEN: Good evening, Chair Levin.
9 I thank you for your passion and fortitude for making
10 it through this hearing, and thank you for supporting
11 the cause that I am here for. I am a consultant
12 working on behalf of what we're calling the
13 Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Solutions
14 Coalition, which includes Anti-violence Project,
15 GMHG, Sylvia Rivera Law Project. I have three
16 colleagues with me from Sylvia Rivera Law Project who
17 will be testifying later. Several other
18 organizations listed in my testimony. We appreciate
19 that you came out when we released a policy brief
20 last fall called Solutions out of Struggle and
21 Survival, and so those policy brief recommendations
22 came out of a community consultation process where
23 organizers went into all five boroughs and talked to
24 nearly 600 people from the TGNC community to see what
25 was needed. Out of that came many, many different

2 policies and budget solutions. We've narrowed those
3 down to six that we want to focus on for this budget
4 season. The complete list we've appended to the end
5 of the testimony, but there are two that relate to
6 HRA that I want to detail for you today. First, is a
7 TGNC employment program. So, TGNC people face unique
8 barriers to the job market. There's some statistics
9 listed in my written testimony, but it's important to
10 note that like when you're applying for a job, what
11 if your legal name doesn't match, you know, how you
12 go, you know? What happens if your legal name
13 doesn't match how you identify in public? What
14 happens if you just came out of the closet and your
15 previous references don't know who you are? How do
16 you deal with those kinds of problems? How do you
17 deal with macroaggressions in the office? So we want
18 to put together-- we're recommending 6.46 million
19 dollars for a program, one part that would benefit
20 youth, one part that would benefit adults that could
21 guide TGNC people through how to deal with those
22 challenges, provide subsidized wages to place people
23 in jobs, and then provide case management services to
24 get people through those jobs, and then in more
25 permanent placements later. The other proposal--

2 both of these-- all of these proposals, again, come
3 out of community consultation. One of the things
4 that came out of the borough forums was a need for
5 rental assistance that was more permanent and that
6 could specifically support the community given its
7 long history of facing homelessness and problems with
8 rent. So, we're proposing 4.1 million dollars for a
9 TGNC rental program pilot that would target the
10 community and provide also funding for case managers
11 who can help people in finding placements and in
12 finding-- and dealing with potential discrimination
13 problems with landlords, and the rest is all in my
14 written testimony. Thank you for your time.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Sorry,
16 before-- Andy, have-- is this gone to like members of
17 the Council? Is this kind of like Finance Committee,
18 you know, or?

19 ANDREA BOWEN: Thanks for asking about
20 that. I forgot to mention. So, we've been talking
21 about-- we brought these to the Mayor, and Mayor
22 Staff, and agency staff, and so we've been working on
23 that, and so our-- we've brought this to the
24 attention of Finance and we've been testifying a lot
25 and bugging a lot of people. In the event that these

2 don't end up in Exec, we'd like to see the money
3 given to agencies to then procure out. So, we'd like
4 Council's assistance in helping us with that process.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'll make sure that
6 the word gets out.

7 ANDREA BOWEN: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'll bring a copy
9 with me.

10 JOHN SENTIGAR: Good evening. My name is
11 John Sentigar [sp?] and I am a member of the Advocacy
12 Team at Covenant House New York. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to testify today. Covenant House New
14 York is the nation's largest nonprofit adolescent
15 care agency serving homeless, runaway, and trafficked
16 youth. On a nightly basis we provide shelter to
17 approximately 250 young people, including pregnant
18 women and mothers with their children, LGBTQ youth,
19 commercially sexually exploited youth, and
20 trafficking survivors. Our youth are primarily
21 people of color and approximately a third of our
22 youth have spent time in the foster care system.
23 Many of our youth have experienced abuse or neglect
24 at the hands of parents or other caregivers, and
25 disproportionately high percentage of our youth

2 struggle with the pervasive impacts of trauma, mental
3 health issues, and substance abuse. We provide
4 people with food, shelter, clothing, medical care,
5 mental health and substance abuse services, legal
6 services, high school equivalency classes, and other
7 educational programs, job training programs. So, I
8 just wanted to ask that the City Council consider all
9 those things, and we have a couple of asks
10 specifically, but first I want to highlight that we
11 are a member of the Coalition for Homeless Youth and
12 that they have some requests which are the following:
13 One, to create 100 DYCD RHY beds for youth ages 21 to
14 24 years old to go in line with the recent passage of
15 the age increase for RHY beds. Two, to increase 24-
16 hour drop-in services to the Bronx and Brooklyn.
17 Three, to add more housing specialists that serve
18 runaway and homeless youth specifically. Four, to
19 align current contract amounts with the real cost to
20 run a program. And specifically, CHNY, Covenant
21 House New York, has a couple of specific requests on
22 our end for funding several items that can bolster
23 our continued efforts to serve RHY to the best of our
24 ability. The first is metro cards. We don't get any
25 assistance right now from the City on metro cards,

2 and we give metro cards to approximately 2,000 youth
3 per year. So, because of this we're often running
4 low on metro cards. So that'd be a really big
5 helpful thing for us, if we could get 50,000 dollars,
6 is what we're requesting for assistance for metro
7 cards for our young people. Two, is increase
8 assistance for our legal services. We only have one
9 fulltime attorney right now. It'll be really awesome
10 to have a second one. So, we're requesting some
11 additional funding for that so we can have a second
12 attorney who can handle emergencies and walk-ins and
13 stuff like that. We're also requesting some
14 assistance for our workforce development and anti-
15 human trafficking transitional living programs, and
16 more of this is highlighted in the written testimony
17 which I have submitted. So, thank you so much.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Thank
19 you. And I obviously always appreciate everything
20 that Covenant House does, and there's so much more
21 that we need to do to shore up the RHY system and
22 make sure that no young person is sleeping on the
23 street or sleeping on a subway grate, and while we're
24 appreciative of everything that this Administration
25 has done in changing the entire perspective from

2 where we were five years ago where we were fighting
3 to keep the beds that we had, there's still so much
4 more work we need to do. So, these recommendations
5 are excellent, and I think these are all thing that
6 we need to continue to advocate for and continue to
7 press this Administration. As I think over in my
8 head, I got three and a half more years. I got four
9 more budgets to go, and so we need to make sure that
10 we're doing everything that we can at a time when the
11 economy is doing okay and we have-- we're not facing
12 major cuts every year. We'll have the opportunity to
13 shore up our systems and so let's keep doing it. So,
14 I wanted to make sure that we're working with the
15 entire provider community on RHY on that. I want to
16 thank this entire panel. Same goes for everybody.
17 We have this opportunity, progressive council,
18 progressive mayor, you know, and a lot of us are kind
19 of in our last term, so we need to do everything we
20 can to keep this-- keep the momentum going. So,
21 thank you so much. Thank you for your patience in
22 staying all afternoon and evening. I hope that you
23 guys can all go home and enjoy, you know, your
24 dinners and everything like that. Okay. Thanks all.
25 Thank you. Next panel: Catherine Shugru Dosantos

2 [sp?], Anti-Violence Project; Amy Torres, Chinese-
3 American Planning Council; Danette Rivera from JITA
4 Community Outreach; Janice Tausto [sp?] from Writer's
5 Alliance, Fair Fares; and Nancy Rankin, Community
6 Service Society of New York. Okay, thanks Greg.
7 Okay, we can call up a couple more folks for this
8 panel: Chris Widelo, AARP; Jackson Wolfe, Sylvia
9 Rivera Law Project; Stephanie Phillips, Sylvia Rivera
10 Law Project; Sasha Alexander, Sylvia Rivera Law
11 Project. Alright. Whoever wants to begin?

12 DANETTE RIVERA: I just want to share
13 this real quickly that this has been an exciting
14 blast from the past since I had experience first-hand
15 homelessness as a youth and adult, and I know very
16 well how it is to sleep in the trains, and not have a
17 place to sleep as a youth and an adult. So, I'm
18 like-- this is so crazy. But anyway. Hello, my name
19 is Danette Rivera and I am the Executive Director of
20 Jesus is the Answer Community Outreach Center located
21 in Jamaica Queens, and I want to thank you Chairman
22 Levin for this very important matter that you're
23 giving attention to today. My food pantry is fully
24 operational because of the support from federal,
25 state, and city anti-hunger programs. Just as it is

2 important for people who come to our food pantry to
3 also learn wages and access to public benefits, it is
4 essential that we are able to access resources so
5 that we can continue to be the last line of defense
6 against hunger when those other resources are not
7 enough. Our program relies on federal TEFAP, the
8 Emergency Food Assistance Program, state HPNAP,
9 Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program,
10 and City EFAP, Emergency Food Assistance Program,
11 emergency food resources because none of these
12 programs in solitude could possibly provide the
13 adequate amount of food necessary to help alleviate
14 the hunger epidemic that exists in our community.
15 The sad truth is that even at current funding levels,
16 all of these programs combined still do not fully
17 meet the needs that we see every week, which is why
18 I'm here today, to urge New York City to invest more
19 in filling the gap between the resources families
20 have for food and the food resources families need
21 EFAP helps fill this meal gap and instills dignity to
22 visiting emergency food program like ours because it
23 allows us to offer a variety of food on a consistent
24 basis. The Federal TFAP program helps us provide
25 specific foods such as milk, beans, cereal, pasta,

2 but each food type is not always available. New York
3 City's EFAP program on the other hand, ensures our
4 ability to provide food such as oil and jelly, pasta
5 sauce, and rice. These foods are considered staples
6 for most people in America, but without the support
7 of EFAP too many of our neighbors would otherwise
8 lack them at the dinner table. Not only is EFAP
9 essential for providing nutrition for physical health
10 and dignity for emotional health and adequate
11 nutrition also helps-- it also helps with cognitive
12 well-being. The food EFAP provides enables people
13 who visit our program to function better at work for
14 their children to focus better in school and be more
15 productive in society as a whole. My organization
16 will not be able to function without adequately
17 funding EFAP, which is a life-changing nutrition
18 assistance program. We reject the cuts proposed by
19 the Mayor. We need to increase EFAP food funding to
20 22 million in the Fiscal Year 2019 City Budget,
21 because it is a "no-brainer." Let's keep New Yorkers
22 hunger-free with dignity, choice, and opportunity and
23 supply food in our great city and supply people in
24 our great city with the power to America great.
25 Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'll just "amen."

3 STEPHANIE PHILLIPS: Good evening, Chair
4 Levin and members and staff of the Committee on
5 General Welfare. My name is Stephanie Phillips. I am
6 a transgender woman struggling to find housing and
7 employment in New York City. I am a member and a
8 leader at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project in Manhattan
9 where I organize around the rights of Trans people. I
10 have lived in New York City for two years and been
11 homeless during this entire period. As a low-income
12 person it's been hard to pay my bills. It's had an
13 impact on my mental health, and I am here in support
14 of these trans-specific programs that would help me
15 and the community. The shelter system is dangerous
16 for transgender people due to violence and
17 discrimination, and that's why we need to be
18 prioritized for housing. Our community needs
19 stronger employment supports that will benefit
20 everyone. I have applied for many jobs and have been
21 turned away and never even gotten a phone call. The
22 Back to Work program that I went through was horrible
23 due to discrimination over the bathroom they tried to
24 deny me from, the women's restroom. I greatly
25 appreciate you taking the time to listen to me and

2 other members and leaders in our community. Thank you
3 very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Stephanie.

5 SASHA ALEXANDER: Good evening, Chair and
6 members of the Committee on General Welfare. My name
7 is Sasha Alexander, and I'm the Membership Director
8 at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, SRLP, in Manhattan
9 where I work to support the leadership and political
10 voice of low-income trans and gender nonconforming
11 folks. For over 15 years, SRLP has provided free
12 quality and affirming legal support that thousands of
13 TGNC New Yorkers facing harassment and
14 discrimination. Our organization has worked with
15 city agencies to strengthen policies and protections
16 for low income TGNC New Yorkers, such as our work
17 with the Department of Homeless Services in 2006
18 regarding shelter and related services for
19 transgender and intersex clients. For the last three
20 years I have been part of a trans-led coalition that
21 worked with members of the New York City Council to
22 create forums to address the needs of TGNC community-
23 - Andy spoke to this earlier. I stand here today
24 representing hundreds of my trans brothers, sisters,
25 and siblings who attended those forums and are still

2 waiting to have our concerns addressed. I am hopeful
3 that one outcome from our work is a deeper
4 relationship and understanding with New York City
5 Council about what TGNC New Yorkers are currently
6 facing in addition to funding for necessary programs
7 and supports that our community has identified. I'm
8 sure I don't need to tell you all this or anybody in
9 the room, but every day New Yorkers are navigating
10 escalating costs of living and the struggle to make
11 economic ends meet. For transgender nonconforming
12 folks the conditions which we navigate employment and
13 housing are wrought with discrimination and
14 harassment from being mis-gendered, being mis-named,
15 denied access or services, or even threatened with
16 violence. Sometimes more obvious and intentional and
17 other times more embedded. The trauma of
18 experiencing bias while trying to gain access to
19 shelter or employment in New York City for trans
20 people must end. I cannot stress how impactful
21 stronger supports such as designated rental
22 assistance and the expansion of employment programs
23 can positively impact our communities. Many of our
24 member are formerly or currently living in the New
25 York City shelter system and accessing services

2 through HRA. As a service provider who is also
3 transgender, I have seen firsthand how important it
4 is for all New Yorkers to have access to safe housing
5 and employment supports. I greatly appreciate you all
6 taking the time to listen to me tonight and the other
7 members of our community, and thank you for my time.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Sasha.

9 SASHA ALEXANDER: Thank you.

10 : We have one other member from our
11 organization, is it alright if-- we also had his name
12 called, but--

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yeah.

14 JACKSON WOLFE: Good evening, Chair
15 Levin, members and staff of the Committee on General
16 Welfare. My name is Jackson Wolfe. I'm a 29-year-old
17 trans man that was raised in New York City. I am a
18 member at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project in Manhattan.
19 We organize for the rights of trans people. I
20 struggled with being homeless for many years because
21 I was pushed out and didn't have family support.
22 Excuse me. I currently reside in a DHS shelter, but
23 in all of the ones I've been in I've experienced
24 safety, privacy, and discrimination issues,
25 especially involving the bedrooms and bathrooms. If

2 I was able to access the rental voucher I would be
3 able to get myself out of the shelter system, but
4 instead I have experienced harassment and violence.
5 I don't get support from my case managers or shelter
6 directors, and even had to leave the shelter for my
7 own safety and mental health. Employment in general
8 has been a continuous issue for me, especially as I
9 transition. One issue is that I don't have my name
10 changed as of yet, therefore, my physical appearance
11 versus my identification does not match. As a
12 result, it has raised anxiety and frustration when
13 seeking employment or any kind of services. If there
14 was a program that specifically provided the services
15 that I needed, it would make a huge impact, not only
16 on me, but others like me and more to come. We just
17 want what everyone else does: housing, employment,
18 and to live a normal and stress free life as much as
19 possible. I greatly appreciate you taking the time
20 listening to me and other members and leaders in our
21 community. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Jackson.

23 NANCY RANKIN: Excuse me, I have a cough.

24 Good evening Chairman Levin. Thank you for the
25 opportunity to testify today. My name is Nancy

2 Rankin. I'm Vice President for Policy Research and
3 Advocacy for the Community Service Society of New
4 York, a nonprofit organization that's worked for
5 almost 175 years to advance upward mobility for low-
6 income New Yorkers. I want to start by thanking you
7 and the majority of the Council Members for their
8 letter to the Speaker that was released yesterday
9 advocating for including funds for fair fares in the
10 Council's response to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget.
11 While Mayor de Blasio has embraced half-fare
12 discounts for low-income New Yorkers, he has proposed
13 paying for it through an increase in the
14 millionaires' tax. But why make Fair Fares one of
15 the few important things New York City has the legal
16 authority to actually do on its own, without having
17 to go and beg Albany, right, for their approval,
18 contingent on getting the state to pass a tax
19 increase that virtually everyone but the mayor
20 acknowledges has little chance of being enacted? Most
21 city, major city initiatives from ThriveNYC to
22 affordable housing to adding police officers are paid
23 for out of growing city revenues or by finding
24 savings elsewhere in the budget. We don't require a
25 dedicated new funding stream to pay for them. Surely

2 in a proposed budget of \$88.67 billion we can find
3 \$200 million to reduce economic inequality by making
4 public transit more affordable. And we think these
5 costs would be partly offset by significant savings.
6 The City's Human Resource Administration currently
7 spends \$48 million on sort of piecemeal distributing
8 free metro cards on ad-hock basis, but that does
9 little to meet the broader transportation needs of
10 the poor. Brooklyn Defender Services estimates that
11 we spend \$51 million on fare evasion prosecutions for
12 primarily poor people with arrests and fines they
13 can't pay. Why not make it easier for them to afford
14 public transit. Fair fares would be a better use of
15 our resources. And most importantly, the reason that
16 we're here today at your committee and not transit is
17 because fair fares is not a subsidy for the MTA; it
18 is a subsidy for low-income New Yorkers, and I think
19 we've heard that in many of the comments people have
20 made throughout the day and evening, that how
21 important metro cards are. In his State of the City
22 message last month, Mayor de Blasio proclaimed his
23 goal of making New York City the fairest big city in
24 America. We agree, but lofty rhetoric alone will not
25 lift up low-income New Yorkers. We urge the Council

2 to include funding to make fair fares-- half fares on
3 public transit a reality for low-income New Yorkers
4 in its budget response and a priority in the final
5 negotiations. Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. It struck
7 me that if he wants to make it the fairest city in
8 America, fair fare. Make it fair with fair fare.
9 It's very-- it's very easy to remember.

10 NANCY RANKIN: Well, sorry, and you know,
11 given that we already as a city subsidize half fares
12 for seniors, for the disabled, and for students, we
13 have transit check kinds of benefits that subsidize
14 it for higher income. It does seem that it's not
15 fair that the only group we're not subsidizing are
16 the poor.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And one other thing
18 to point out, and you know, I've been involved in the
19 Rikers, closing Rikers discussion, because it's--
20 there's-- in my district there's a potential
21 replacement facility that can be expanded, and I
22 didn't know this until recently that the number one
23 people-- the number one reason why people are in
24 Rikers is fare evasion, number one, and that's, you

2 know, to make it-- that's so wrong on so many levels.
3 So, anyway.

4 NANCY RANKIN: Why not use the money to
5 help them actually afford the fares?

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, in the first
7 place, right. I mean, as one of my colleagues
8 pointed out also, when you go through the tolls at
9 the-- if you were to not pay your toll at the
10 Verrazano [sp?] Bridge, you're not-- you don't get
11 arrested for that. Thanks.

12 NANCY RANKIN: Thank you.

13 JANICE TOSTO: Good evening Chairman
14 Levin. My name is Jancie Tosto [sp?]. I am a Bronx
15 resident and a member of the Writers Alliance. I
16 currently serve as a program coordinator for an
17 organization serving homeless and formerly homeless
18 individuals and families, and I'm here today to also
19 call on Mayor de Blasio to fund half price metro
20 cards for low-income New Yorkers or fair fares in
21 this year's budget. Six years ago I found myself
22 unexpectedly unemployed. I lived on my unemployment
23 benefits and it was a nightmare. I did not have any
24 assistance for my metro card. To get to job
25 interviews, medical appointments and other trips, I

2 had to walk long distances on a regular basis.

3 During those lean times I certainly could have

4 benefitted from a temporary fare reduction until I

5 became employed. In my current position I am

6 fortunate enough to be able to afford a monthly metro

7 card, but not everyone can. So, when I encounter

8 people who need to use the transportation system and

9 cannot pay, I voluntarily swipe them in. I even

10 carry a couple of metro cards with two rides on them

11 just in case, and I've had to use those as well.

12 It's a humbling and humiliating experience to ask

13 someone to swipe you in, because most people just

14 blow you off. That's why I'm fighting for fair

15 fares. No one should have to beg to get to where

16 they need to go. I thank you Chairman Levin for your

17 continued support of fair fares, and I ask for the

18 City Council to fight for it during budget

19 negotiations. Mayor de Blasio should fund discount

20 fair fares because no New Yorker should endure the

21 struggle I did six years ago. I believe in transit

22 access for all, including the clients I serve who

23 need opportunities and access to education, training,

24 and other employment resources after experiencing

25 homelessness. They want economically sustainable

2 careers for themselves and their families so they
3 don't have to choose between medicine, housing, food,
4 or a metro card. New York City can spend a little to
5 help hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers get ahead.
6 I appreciate your support for fair fares. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Janice.

8 So, I want to thank this panel. These are all
9 excellent, excellent priorities that we need to--
10 from emergency food to transgender services to fair
11 fares. These are all the things that we should be--
12 transgender nonconforming and fair fares-- these are
13 all the things we should be focusing on in the City
14 Council. So, I will certainly be talking about this
15 in the coming months as part of our budget. I'm going
16 to be talking about this with our Speaker, Corey
17 Johnson, who I know has been supportive of all these
18 issues for years, and so let's continue to make this
19 all a priority and hold everybody accountable. So,
20 let's do it. Thank you all. Thanks. Okay, last
21 panel: Jillani England [sp?]; Olivia Dana [sp?],
22 Staten Island Youth Justice Center; Brandy Mathis
23 [sp?], Carnegie Hall; and Towak Komatsu [sp?]. This
24 might officially be our longest hearing every. I'm
25 not quite sure. I have to go check the record, but

2 we're approaching hour nine, I believe. I think.

3 Hour ten? No, hour nine. Whoever wants to begin?

4 GILLANI ENGLAND: Hi, good morning, good
5 afternoon, good evening. I'm Gillani England. I am
6 the Co-founder and Co-Executive Director of Good
7 Call. Good Call is a completely free hotline in case
8 of arrest staffed by Bronx Defenders and Legal Aid
9 Society operating right now in the Bronx. We have
10 been active in the Bronx for two years. Since we
11 have been active, we have connected over 500 people
12 to legal support, have a hold time of under a minute,
13 and have a user satisfaction rate of over 90 percent.
14 All of this was done with under 200,000 dollars. I
15 believe City Council members make like 148? Yeah.
16 So, what we're doing here, we really want to bring
17 citywide. We have been able to connect folks to
18 legal support and mitigate problems that folks would
19 have had under different circumstances. I have Malik
20 here who has actually utilized our hotline, and he
21 can tell you about his experience.

22 MALIK REEVES: Good evening Council. My
23 name is Malik Reeves. I am from Bronx, New York. One
24 day, late night come home from work. I had my uniform
25 on, on my way home. I was with a friend. I swiped my

2 card going through. It says, "See agent." Now, late
3 at this time there's no assistant at the booth, so
4 instead of asking for a swipe and getting blown off
5 like the other lady said, like you know, you tend to
6 every day, I go through the gate and I'm going home.
7 Two undercover detectives approach me, ask me for my
8 ID. I tried to explain why. They was not hearing
9 it. I complied. Gave them my ID. I got arrested
10 and went to 14th Street Union Square Precinct. From
11 there on I have no phone, no contact information, but
12 I did have the information of Good Call. So, I
13 called the system, and I got an attorney right away.
14 I didn't wait. She picked up the phone right away.
15 From then on the perspective of the detectives
16 changed. I was treated differently than my prior
17 situations going through the system and it was a
18 faster pace. And from then on I was even
19 accommodated with breakfast on my way to the
20 courthouse. So, that was kind of different for me.
21 So, with my experience, I want everybody to have the
22 same experience and utilize this system and make it
23 citywide. Thank you.

24 GILLANI ENGLIN: So, we are asking City
25 Council for 500,000 dollars so that we can move Good

2 Call from being in the Bronx to support all five
3 boroughs in New York City. We started a petition a
4 couple of days ago. We have about 1,000 names here,
5 and 20 community organizations that support our work.
6 What we need is City Council to act on this. We talk
7 about this big fair city. We talk about bail reform
8 and all these things. We have to examine the entry
9 ways of how folks are ending up in pre-trial
10 detention. Many times folks are making statements to
11 police without legal representation leading to folks
12 copping pleas for things they didn't do and this is
13 actually changing their lives where folks are losing
14 their jobs, having their children taken away, all
15 because of this lack of information and this lack of
16 representation. So, I ask you as we sit here, please
17 support Good Call and our efforts to expand to all
18 five boroughs in New York City. We know that New
19 York City wants to be a big fair city. We've had
20 tragedies in the past such as Kalif Browder [sp?].
21 We don't want that to happen again, and I would be
22 livid if I have to sit in this seat and talk to you
23 guys again about this if we've had something happen
24 and it could have been prevented. So, I ask that--
25 we have our proposal and we're going to give our

2 petition to Speaker Johnson, but we ask you guys
3 seriously to look into Good Call and helping us
4 expand to all five boroughs in New York City. Thank
5 you.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Excellent. First
7 time hearing the organization. It sounds amazing, so
8 I'll make sure that-- get the word around.

9 GILLANI ENGLIN: Definitely willing to
10 meet offline so we can talk.

11 OLIVIA DANA: Good evening. My name is
12 Olivia Dana. I am the Project Director of the Staten
13 Island Justice Center which is a project of the
14 Center for Court Innovation. Thank you for the
15 opportunity to speak tonight. I am here to urge the
16 City Council to support the Center for Court
17 Innovation as it seeks to strengthen and expand
18 alternatives to incarceration, youth diversion, and
19 access to justice programs through one million
20 dollars in support from the City Council in Fiscal
21 Year 2019. This includes a 500,000 dollar
22 continuation of funding for ongoing operations. It
23 also includes a 500,000 dollar enhancement which will
24 serve the goal of preparing the Center's youth
25 diversion programs for Raise the Age, which is

starting on October 1st, 2018. Today's written submission includes a summary and supporting materials that reflect this request. Support from the Council is crucial to the continuation of our alternative to incarceration programs throughout the five boroughs. Our programs which include the Red Hook Community Justice Center, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives, Midtown Community Court, Bronx Community Solutions, Queens Youth Justice Center, and the Staten Island Justice Center have been documented by independent evaluators to improve safety, reduce incarceration, and enhance public trust in government. We work with tens of thousands of New Yorkers each year at these project sites, and the vast majority of the people we serve are LGBTQ youth, immigrants, low-income folks, or people of color. Through our ongoing partnership with the City Council, we've worked to reduce incarceration and have made New York City neighborhoods safer for all. The Center is also committed to improving outcomes for young people impacted by the justice system. With expanded support from the Council, the Center's Youth Diversion programs will be a vehicle for the successful implementation of Raise the Age. The

Center's diversion programs in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island currently serves thousands of young people each year through counseling, academic support, and workforce development. As an example of the success of this work, in 2017 the Staten Island Justice Center worked with 210 young people facing charges in criminal court and diverted them from the justice system. Our compliance rate for these participants was 84 percent. Support from the Council will enable center programs to serve and estimated 30 percent more youth by providing meaningful off-ramps to detention where possible. Without expansion funding we may struggle to accommodate the expected influx of alternative to detention cases due to Raise the Age. Additionally, 16 to 17-year-olds have a unique set of needs that will require different programming than our current youth population. This requires additional staffing, training, and program materials. The City Council's support has been invaluable to the success of the Center for Court Innovation. The Center looks forward to continuing to work with the Council to reduce incarceration and to enhance youth justice.

2 We respectfully urge you to continue to support our
3 work, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much,
5 and thanks for the work that CCI does throughout our
6 city and incredibly vital and essential component to
7 everything that we're trying to do throughout the
8 city, and I think collectively, so thank you.

9 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Hi, Mr. Levin. I'm
10 Towaki Komatsu. I've testified at your hearings
11 previously. To begin my testimony, let me share with
12 you and the remaining people in this room a
13 conversation I had with Steven Banks on December 14th
14 at the public Town Hall meeting that the Mayor had in
15 Brooklyn. I also asked your staff to-- for an
16 opportunity to test out this laptop before the start
17 of today's hearing, but I didn't get that, so I don't
18 know if this is going to work properly, but anyway,
19 I'll try. Okay, it's not working. How do you unmute
20 it? I'm clicking, but it's not-- nothing's coming.
21 Let's see. You want to figure it-- [off mic] Okay,
22 it's ready. Sorry about that. Let me just play off
23 my laptop. I'll take the USB [inaudible] out. This
24 is what happens when you don't get to pretest the
25 equipment that's made available. But bottom line is,

2 when Mr. Banks was here earlier today he was
3 testifying to the effect that about security issues
4 in the shelters. The conversation I had with him on
5 December 14th was essentially him telling me face-to-
6 face that HRA is not responsible for crime. so, if I
7 got 15 punches to my left temple on-- what do you
8 call it-- July 2nd, 2016 in this temporary shelter
9 I'm in, and that was after an attempted assault upon
10 me on May 12th of 2016 that was reported to HRA. The
11 question is, if you're chairman of this committee and
12 you're supposed to have oversight of HRA, if this was
13 shared with HRA and it's providers, how come I got
14 those 15 punches to my left temple about less than
15 two months after. This guy who is like 6'3", now
16 working for the Department of Education before many
17 of your kids is essentially a time bomb waiting to go
18 off again against a kid who might not survive 15
19 punches to their left temple like I did, and a
20 concussion to boot. So, also you and I have had a
21 conversation before, like, right outside this room--
22 sorry, but do you mind if I continue?

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

24 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Thanks. I testified at
25 an earlier committee hearing today about HRA

2 terminating its business with Entity Data. That same
3 company that's still subjecting me to wage theft
4 dating back five years. So, tomorrow, it's my intent
5 to walk into Supreme Court to have a judge issue a
6 binding order to compel all city agencies to stop
7 that business. I've asked about that. I've requested
8 that previously. I've been denied. So, instead of
9 asking permission any further from the Mayor's
10 Administration or City Council Members, I'm actually
11 going to have a judge issue an order to that effect.
12 Sorry, I just have to find that portion of the audio.
13 I don't mean to waste your time.

14 [audio demonstration]

15 STEVEN BANKS RECORDING: We are not
16 responsible for crime. If you would like to speak to
17 a police inspector right now, I'm happy to have you
18 talk to him.

19 TOWAKI KOMATSU RECORDING: That's not the
20 issue. The issue I told HRA March 16th--

21 STEVEN BANKS RECORDING: [interposing]
22 Okay.

23 TOWAKI KOMATSU RECORDING: but there was a
24 bait and switch.
25

2 STEVEN BANKS RECORDING: You need to move
3 on. There's a limit--

4 TOWAKI KOMATSU RECORDING: [interposing]
5 We'll see each other in court. That's it.

6 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Let me rewind that a bit
7 to put this in the proper context.

8 TOWAKI KOMATSU RECORDING: Handicap
9 because of a stroke, I would not be wasting my time
10 with you if I didn't absolutely need to, but I
11 learned yesterday someone was assaulted in my
12 building. He was a witness to my assault. He left
13 the building. He's now in like Albany, and so people
14 are getting assaulted in that building.

15 STEVEN BANKS RECORDING: Mr. Komatsu,
16 call the police. The police are here--

17 TOWAKI KOMATSU: [interposing] Do you mean
18 Deputy Inspector [inaudible] defending a federal
19 civil rights lawsuit?

20 STEVEN BANKS RECORDING: The police
21 Department is responsible for dealing with crime. We
22 are not responsible for a crime. If you would like
23 to speak to a police inspector right now, I'm happy
24 to have you talk to him.

2 TOWAKI KOMATSU RECORDING: That's not the
3 issue. The issue is I told--

4 [end of recording]

5 TOWAKI KOMATSU: So, the point is who is
6 in charge of providing oversight of HRA when
7 [inaudible] this defendant in this other federal
8 civil rights lawsuit in Brooklyn, same guy that was
9 shoving people like Ydanis Rodriguez around, Jumaane
10 Williams around in January during that protest, this
11 federal lawsuit was filed against the guy who since
12 got off that strategic response squad. So, point is,
13 before I met Mr. Redman on April 27th in Long Island
14 City last year, this other guy who was riding his
15 bike to go to a protest back in 2012 ran into him.
16 He was put in jail for 19 hours. He was never
17 charged, and now in June Redman has to stand trial
18 for violating Fourth Amendment Rights. So, back in
19 April of last year when I tried going to that first
20 public Town Hall meeting I wasn't doing it for myself
21 I was trying to get legal help for this 66-year-old
22 lady who I've never met. I actually beat her
23 slumlord in court without legal counsel. So, I have
24 a sworn affidavit from that slumlord confirming they
25 knew about a defective elevator for over a year and a

2 half and didn't do a darn thing about it. So, the
3 point is if I still need that legal counsel the first
4 time I testify here was on February 3rd of 2016 when
5 you guys voted yourself that massive pay raise. At
6 the time I told you guys that you didn't deserve it
7 because you had-- you guys hadn't essentially done
8 squat, unfortunately, if I had took 15 punches to my
9 left temple, if I reported that attempted assault on
10 May 12th and no one took corrective action, I have
11 better things to do. I mean, if I'm blacklisted from
12 employment opportunities with city agencies, if I'm
13 blacklisted by the same company that still subjects
14 me to wage theft, at what point is someone going to
15 step up to the plate and go to bat for a veteran who
16 is sitting in front of you right now?

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You know, I appreciate
18 the testimony. This is-- obviously we've spoken
19 before, and we can always continue to--

20 TOWAKI KOMATSU: [interposing] Oh, one
21 other thing. I forgot to tell you, the building I'm
22 living in the Bronx, it's still not registered with
23 HPD. It hasn't' been registered with HPD since
24 September 1st. The landlord pulled a bait and switch
25 on-- with regards to everybody who lives in that

2 building, meaning if you're shopping for a two-door
3 car and the dealer gives you a four-door car, that's
4 entirely different. That same landlord is going to
5 have a fundraiser at the Grand Hyatt on I think May
6 10th while the CEO is making 235,000 dollars a year.
7 So the question is, if HRA gave Urban Pathways tax
8 payer cash to do what it's supposed to do and it
9 hasn't, it's coming out of your wallet. It's coming
10 out of all these people's wallets. So, shouldn't you
11 guys take an interest about how your cash is being
12 spent?

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The oversight of
14 providers is an important component to the entire
15 system. Specifics, we can, you know, continue to
16 talk outside of the hearing.

17 TOWAKI KOMATSU: I gave it to you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
19 for the testimony. I want to thank this entire panel,
20 and I think that there's-- we continue to need to
21 keep our eye on the ball and prioritize these
22 programs that evolve put forward. I will say that
23 the public testimony that we've heard today has given
24 me a lot of inspiration in seeing the new and
25 innovative programs, the programs that are, you know,

2 weren't around when I first started. Good Call
3 wasn't around when I first started, and I find it
4 really exciting to be a part of what's happening in
5 this city today, and really inspired by all the good
6 work that you all are doing on the ground, not always
7 too great a claim, but essential work in our city,
8 and so I want to thank you all. I want to thank
9 everybody that's stayed the entire hearing. I want
10 to thank everybody, members of the Administration who
11 are here, and thank you for staying for the entire
12 public testimony. But again, the work that you've
13 all done is phenomenal. I can't thank you enough. We
14 have our work cut out for us over the next few months
15 with regard to this City's budget and how it serves
16 the people in New York who need it most. So, I want
17 to thank amazing members of this committee staff who
18 have put in so many hours in preparing for this
19 hearing. I want to thank you all. You've done
20 amazing work, and I want to thank our Sergeants at
21 Arms who have done a phenomenal job with this hearing
22 and for all of the Council budget hearings. I want
23 to thank all of you so much for everything that
24 you've done here at this hearing. So, with that, at
25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE WITH COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE 435

2 7:42 p.m., after nine hours and 12 minutes, this
3 hearing is adjourned.

4 [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 April 30, 2018