

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

Steven Banks  
Commissioner of DSS, HRA & DHS

Molly Murphy  
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

David A. Hansell  
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  
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Michelle Jackson  
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Stephanie Gendell  
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Susan Stetzer  
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Ariel Sharansky  
UJA Federation

Triada Stampas  
Food Bank NYC

Edline Jaquet  
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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

2 surrounding the SNAP program. I'm very concerned  
3 that further reductions in Emergency Food Assistance  
4 Program, otherwise known as EFAP, will put incredible  
5 strains on the City's emergency food assistance  
6 system and for hungry New Yorkers who rely on the  
7 system. We need additional baseline funding for EFAP  
8 to combat hunger instead of one-year additions we  
9 have been seeing over the last three fiscal years.  
10 During this hearing, I would like to hear how DSS  
11 plans to address the aforementioned issues and others  
12 that the City faces at this point, and besides the  
13 services and programs of these agencies, we will also  
14 discuss how their budgets can be made more  
15 transparent and clearly structured so that the City's  
16 fiscal monitors, including us here at the City  
17 Council are able to access more information more  
18 easily. Before I welcome the Commissioner, I'd like  
19 to thank the Committee Staff for their work on this  
20 hearing: Nameera Nushat [sp?], Finance Analyst who  
21 has put together a tremendous briefing paper for the  
22 committee members; Doheni Sampura [sp?], our Unit  
23 Head who has done a fantastic job; Amenta Killawan  
24 [sp?], Counsel for the Committee; Robbie Akaseem  
25 [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

2 by phone, rather than in a rigid four-hour window  
3 under the old system, or clients can choose to come  
4 into a center and wait for an in-person interview.

5 In October 2015, before the implementation of the on-  
6 demand call center, only 52 percent of the completed  
7 SNAP recertification interviews were conducted via  
8 telephone. We now have 76 percent of the interviews  
9 held by phone, a 46 percent increase. On-demand  
10 interviews for SNAP recertifications have been fully  
11 in place for more than a year and now on-demand  
12 interviews for new SNAP applicants are being phased  
13 in. Following our implementation of this service for  
14 Brooklyn clients last year, we have just announced an  
15 expansion that enables new Manhattan and Staten  
16 Island SNAP applicants to complete their eligibility  
17 interviews using on-demand services. The Bronx and  
18 Queens will be next; we anticipate having these  
19 services fully available to our clients in these  
20 boroughs by the end of the calendar year. We have  
21 also rolled out the HRA Mobile App, a self-service  
22 mobile app to give clients the ability to use their  
23 mobile device to better manage their cases by having  
24 immediate access to case details and the ability to  
25 submit required documents from their smartphones.

2 Since the application's launch in March 2017 clients  
3 have uploaded more than two million images. In  
4 addition, we've modernized our centers by providing  
5 on-site self-services. For clients who prefer to  
6 access our services inside one of our centers, we now  
7 have a suite of self-service tools, which include  
8 self-service check-in kiosks and PC Banks to utilize  
9 ACCESS HRA and self-service scanning of documents  
10 directly in our centers. In sum, by providing an  
11 enhanced client experience, these lower-touch service  
12 models free up our eligibility workers' time so they  
13 can focus on those clients who need more support and  
14 assistance. In partnership with the Speaker of this  
15 Council, prior to his assuming this new office, we've  
16 made two major reforms to expand services for clients  
17 with HIV/AIDS. First, in the State's Fiscal Year  
18 2014-15 budget, we successfully advocated for a 30  
19 percent rent cap to be applied for HASA clients and  
20 then implemented this critical policy change  
21 expeditiously based on OTDA eligibility instructions,  
22 with the City covering 50 percent of the rental  
23 assistance costs. Second, on August 29, 2016, we  
24 expanded the medical eligibility criteria for the  
25 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

2 shelter capacity since 2010. Participating as a  
3 member of the Food Collaborative in the first  
4 evaluations of food distribution, capacity, and food  
5 equity to identify gaps and address ongoing Emergency  
6 Food Assistance Program, EFAP, needs in the FY19  
7 budget. Increasing baseline funding for legal  
8 assistance for immigrants from seven million dollars  
9 in FY13 to 29.7 million dollars in FY18, which  
10 enabled immigrant New Yorkers to receive legal aid in  
11 approximately 15,000 cases in FY17, as a result of  
12 the four-fold increase in the City's overall  
13 commitment to immigration legal assistance programs  
14 since FY13. Operating the IDNYC program, which as of  
15 December 2017, issued more than 1.2 million cards.  
16 One year ago, we announced our Turning the Tide plan  
17 to transform the City's approach to providing shelter  
18 that had been in place for nearly four decades. Our  
19 plan puts people and communities first. It does this  
20 by ending the use of decades-old stopgap measures,  
21 like cluster shelter sites and commercial hotel  
22 rooms, and instead opening a smaller number of new  
23 borough-based shelters to help families and  
24 individuals stay connected to the anchors of life  
25 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

2 state-certified shelters. This represents a more-  
3 than 42 percent reduction citywide in this 18-year  
4 old cluster shelter program. And we recently  
5 announced our plans to transition another 800 cluster  
6 units into permanent affordable housing using eminent  
7 domain if necessary, which covers more than a third  
8 of the remaining cluster units. As we announced when  
9 we released the plan last year, we have prioritized  
10 ending the cluster program, and we are on pace to end  
11 the use of cluster units as shelter by our 2021  
12 deadline. Consistent with our legal and moral  
13 obligation to provide shelter every night to families  
14 and individuals who are homeless, including during  
15 the extreme cold weather this winter, we have  
16 increased our use of commercial hotel locations to  
17 meet immediate nightly capacity needs, with these  
18 locations serving as a bridge while we bring new  
19 borough-based shelters online. The City's periodic  
20 use of commercial hotel locations is not new, in  
21 fact, it dates back off and on to the 1960s. While  
22 we are deeply committed to the goal of eliminating  
23 this use, the hard truth is that our transformation  
24 of the shelter system will take time. We anticipate  
25 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

2 sites for new shelters. It's better for our homeless  
3 neighbors and it's better for taxpayers, and we could  
4 save the City a total of 100 million dollars per year  
5 if we can utilize only shelters and end the practice  
6 of using hotels. At the beginning of the 90-day  
7 review in 2016, there were three urgent problems that  
8 we needed to address: the cumulative impact of years  
9 of underinvestment in shelter maintenance, security,  
10 and client services. Significant progress has been  
11 made to raise the bar for clients in each of these  
12 areas. First, we have conducted more than 34,000  
13 shelter inspections in 2016 and 2017, thanks to the  
14 work of the Shelter Repair Squad, an aggressive  
15 multi-agency task force launched in 2015 to  
16 systematically identify and address shelter  
17 conditions that had been previously left unaddressed  
18 for decades. The number of outstanding violations  
19 within traditional shelters has dropped 84 percent  
20 since January 2016, with many of the remaining  
21 repairs involving capital projects. Second, the NYPD  
22 now oversees and manages shelter security. We have  
23 partnered with the NYPD to implement an NYPD  
24 Management Team at DHS overseeing shelter security  
25 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 23<sup>rd</sup>

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--

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 arrears. 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 arrears,  
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 arrears 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

2 frustration and we did some digging down to try to  
3 give you a better answer, I anticipated this question  
4 was going to come, that instead of leaving you to add  
5 11 percent plus 30 percent, and what's the remainder,  
6 the 59 percent, we wanted to step back and say what  
7 are the reasons why people are becoming eligible,  
8 families are becoming eligible. And so that's this  
9 larger group, but within that you get the eviction  
10 number. Now, when I gave you the 20 percent are  
11 found eligible because of overcrowding and some type  
12 of discord or conflict, that's why we've expanded the  
13 services that are funded through Homebase to be able  
14 to do some family mediation. Homebase was originally  
15 conceived of as an eviction prevention, keep people  
16 in their homes service, and gradually the providers  
17 have been expanding their services, and our funding  
18 now this year reflects that expansion finally,  
19 because we want to really focus on that particular  
20 group of people. Is there some intervention that we  
21 could have to keep them with family or friends in  
22 some way or other? In terms of single adults, I  
23 mean, the class definition of the single adult  
24 shelter population is "homeless by reason of  
25 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 through 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 eminent domain. If we do have  
9 to use eminent 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 thee 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 don 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--

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

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--

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 58<sup>th</sup> 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 50<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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?

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 homeless, 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 is 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?

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.

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

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

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you for the  
14 question, and you and Chair Levin I thought conducted  
15 a very important hearing not so long ago focused on  
16 exactly this issue in which Commissioner Torres-  
17 Springer and I both testified about it, and I think  
18 your focus on making sure that there's enough of a  
19 set-aside for people to be able to have an  
20 opportunity, move out a shelter back into their  
21 communities if they want to and if they're ready to.  
22 That's something that we are very focused on, and I  
23 think the partnership with you will help us get  
24 there. We're-- HPD's Housing New York Plan is  
25 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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

2 32 percent from Fiscal Year 2014 to 17, and we've  
3 also successfully lowered the census of our Close to  
4 Home residential program by 20 percent from Fiscal  
5 Year 14 to Fiscal Year 2017. Beyond that, we've  
6 developed and are instituting a number of  
7 enhancements to the Close to Home program that focus  
8 on improving youth monitoring and accountability,  
9 enhancing oversight of staff and providers, and  
10 increasing inter-agency partnerships. Now, as you  
11 know, only weeks after I started at ACS last March,  
12 the State enacted the long-awaited Raise the Age  
13 legislation, and since then, ACS has been working  
14 nonstop with the Mayor's Office and our sister City  
15 agencies on planning to implement the initial  
16 requirements of the Raise the Age beginning on  
17 October 1st, 2018. We've also made structural  
18 changes at ACS over the last year to help strengthen  
19 agency operations that support all of our  
20 programmatic work. Early in my tenure, I created a  
21 new Office of Accountability to centralize and  
22 strengthen all of our internal and external  
23 accountability functions. Our Chief Accountability  
24 Office reports directly to me and works closely with  
25 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

2 are irrelevant in child welfare investigation.

3 Supervisory managerial training are also being

4 enhanced, and to ensure continuity from the training

5 academy, ACS began in Fall 2017 to deploy Staff

6 Development Coordinators and coaches in DCP borough

7 offices to bridge the transition from training to the

8 field, and we thank the Council for supporting these

9 enhancements in the enacted 2017-18 budget. To

10 strengthen CPS's ability to conduct and document

11 investigations, last year we provided all child

12 protective staff with internet-activated smartphones

13 with relevant apps and tools. And we're going in the

14 next step right now, several hundred frontline staff

15 are part of a pilot project to use tablets in the

16 field, and all of our frontline CPS will have tablets

17 within the next several months. This will strengthen

18 their ability to conduct and document investigations

19 by enabling CPS to download case information when and

20 where needed, and upload case notes in the field, in

21 court, or elsewhere. And finally, with regard to

22 child protective work, we're expanding the role of

23 our Division of Child Protection in providing support

24 services to families. In December we collaborated

25 with Food Bank for New York City to launch our first-

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

9 Moving on to preventive services. We made major  
10 Investments with the Council support in preventive  
11 services in FY18. That's helping us to implement the  
12 best possible service models to support families and  
13 to make sure that our providers are adequately  
14 compensated for the work that they do. Last March,  
15 when I started as Commissioner, ACS had a backlog of  
16 almost 500 families waiting months for preventive  
17 services that had already been recommended for them  
18 following a child protective investigation. After an  
19 aggressive implementation of business process  
20 improvements, we eliminated that backlog by September  
21 and we restored our ability to provide timely  
22 matching of families with preventive services. And  
23 since then, we've continued to improve the quality  
24 and consistency of services with additional  
25 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,

2 we're streamlining administrative process and  
3 providing targeted technical assistance to our foster  
4 care agencies to help reduce time to reunification  
5 and accelerate adoption and kinship guardianship. In  
6 Fiscal Year 2018, beginning this year and scaling up  
7 over the next two years, ACS and the Dave Thomas  
8 Foundation have established an \$11 million  
9 partnership to expand an initiative called Wendy's  
10 Wonderful Kids, which is focused on adoption  
11 recruitment using a particular model to increase the  
12 number of older children and children with special  
13 needs who exit foster care to a forever family  
14 through adoption or through KinGAP. The majority of  
15 children who enter foster care in New York City  
16 return home to their families. In fact, in Fiscal  
17 Year 2017 more than 2,000 children were reunified,  
18 and 899 were adopted, and 378 children exited foster  
19 care to Kinship Guardianship. So, while there is  
20 more work to be done, we are making solid progress  
21 toward our goal of connecting children and youth in  
22 foster care to permanent, safe, and loving homes.  
23 And finally, with regard to foster care, we've  
24 expanded our Fostering College Success Initiative  
25 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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

2 as I've said to you and I will say to each and every  
3 one of you who are in the room, whether you're a  
4 union man or union sister, or you're an educator, or  
5 you're in a group home, or you're-- wherever you are  
6 in the foster care system helping out with children,  
7 our conversations are going to be about how do we be  
8 the responsible adults in the room to help our young  
9 people in crisis. I don't want us to be adversaries.  
10 I want us to be teammates that's making sure that we  
11 have a system that works so we can improve the lives  
12 of the future of New York. So, with that all being  
13 said, going into the Close to Home conversation, the  
14 state has maximized an appropriation of 41.4 million  
15 dollars to the City for its juvenile justice program,  
16 Close to Home. The estimate for Fiscal 2019 is only  
17 30.5 million; however, due to the access in the Close  
18 to Home we know there's going to be more slots to our  
19 youth. Despite, we authorizing Close to Home for an  
20 additional five years, implicitly validating the  
21 success of this program, the state budget proposes  
22 cutting off funding for New York City for Close to  
23 Home. I'm baffled. In addition to, there is further  
24 evidence of the Close to Home effective from Columbia  
25 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

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

6 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well again, let me  
7 start out and then Deputy Commissioner Franco can  
8 elaborate. So, the number that you cited, Council  
9 Member, actually includes who are in secure and non-  
10 secure detention. SO, in our two secure detention  
11 facilities the population fluctuates somewhat, but  
12 it's been mostly in the 50 to 60 range recently, and  
13 then we have another 30 or so kids who are in non-  
14 secure detention, and they are in residential  
15 facilities not--outside of our two detention centers  
16 that you mentioned, Horizon and Crossroads. So that  
17 number has been down because of the number of arrests  
18 in the City has been down. But we know that once  
19 Raise the Age implementation begins in October of  
20 this year we will have more young people coming into  
21 our system, and the City's plan is that both  
22 beginning October 1, 2018 newly arrested 16-year-  
23 olds, if a judge orders that they require pre-trial  
24 detention or pre-adjudication attention. And then  
25 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 1<sup>st</sup>. 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 ACSs 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--

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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--

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,

2 they'll stay in their current job classification as  
3 current simple servant title, you know, current  
4 compensation and so on. But on the ACS end, in order  
5 for us to be able to recruit the numbers of staff  
6 that Deputy Commissioner Franco described, it is  
7 clear to us that in our current simple service title  
8 which will be called "Juvenile Counselor," we will  
9 not be able to recruit the number of people that we  
10 need, and that is based on historical experience. We  
11 don't think that frankly the compensation is going to  
12 be adequate to recruit that many people, and so we  
13 are in the process of working with our colleagues  
14 across City government in DCAS and OMB and the Office  
15 of Labor Relations to create a new title, a new civil  
16 service title, with an adjusted compensation schedule  
17 that we think will enable us to do the aggressive  
18 hiring that Deputy Commissioner Franco described,  
19 which is, you know, 175 staff by September and then  
20 50 more repeatedly in order that by 2020 we'll have  
21 enough staff to fully handle the responsibilities of  
22 Horizon and Crossroads without Department of  
23 Corrections supervision. So, we're in the final  
24 stages of developing what that new title will be,  
25 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

2 has to be adopted by April 1<sup>st</sup>. We have been  
3 aggressively educating members of the state  
4 legislature about the adverse impact this would have.  
5 Deputy Commissioner Franco and I were in Albany last  
6 week. We were in Albany the week before that. So,  
7 we're doing everything we can to make sure that the  
8 cut doesn't happen, and I know it's an important part  
9 of the City's legislative agenda in Albany. So, my  
10 hope is it won't.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: These are  
12 uncertain times. Let's say that it is cut.

13 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: If it does happen-  
14 -

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: [interposing] What  
16 is your contingency plan?

17 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: If it does happen,  
18 then my guess is we'll be back to you with a  
19 conversation as part of the Executive Budget in a  
20 month or so about what the City's going to be able to  
21 do about that. I mean, there's no question. We  
22 cannot implement the requirements of Raise the Age.  
23 We cannot take responsibility for more kids coming  
24 into the system without state funding, without that  
25 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' sour  
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 Strat 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

2 are fully enrolled. We've also been working very  
3 closely with the Department of Education and their  
4 outreach team through their Pre-K and 3K efforts to  
5 also bring Pre-K and 3K children into the EarlyLearn  
6 program, and that has been a very successful  
7 partnership. Around quality, we continue to do the  
8 work that we rolled out several years ago right after  
9 I got here, about three years ago after the health  
10 and safety audit, and I'm happy to say we have  
11 successfully, through the Office of Head Start, we've  
12 had three audits since. Every single audit has had  
13 zero findings and zero concerns, and that's, you  
14 know, that's a big feat for the City of New York.  
15 We're really proud of that, and that just speaks to  
16 the work we've been doing around quality-- to create  
17 a quality system in EarlyLearn.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is there any  
19 logistical consideration or concern around Department  
20 of Education being the applicant for Head Start  
21 rather than ACS as part of the social services  
22 district when EarlyLearn is transitioning over next  
23 year?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: So, we're  
25 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.

24

25

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.

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

2 done exit interviews. We've collected a fair amount  
3 of information about why child protective specialists  
4 leave, and we're using that input, as well as the  
5 Town Hall meetings that I've done since I've been  
6 Commissioner, to hear about what the concerns and the  
7 frustrations of child protective workers are, and  
8 we've used all of that information to develop a  
9 multi-faceted plan to address, improve retention, and  
10 decrease attrition. So, we're looking at improving  
11 our training. We are looking at how we can improve  
12 the transition from training from the academy where  
13 they spend the first couple of months of their  
14 experience through on-the-job training into full  
15 caseload carrying, and so we are, for example,  
16 putting coaches and staff development coordinators  
17 into the borough offices so they can help smooth that  
18 transition from training into the field. We're  
19 improving our training manuals. We're going to make  
20 them more accessible. We're shortly going to make  
21 them web-based and searchable. So it'll be easier  
22 for child protective specialists to access guidance  
23 when they need it and policies when they need them.  
24 we have looked at some of the administrative issues  
25 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--

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,

2 there's' Tier II capacity that comes on every day.  
3 It's not a lot, but maybe we should make sure that if  
4 you are identify by ACS as high-risk, that you just  
5 make sure that those-- you have first dibs on a Tier  
6 II setting, and that you not-- the situation not  
7 exacerbated by ever having to go to a hotel, because  
8 honestly, like, we'll see how this all goes, but I  
9 don't have a lot of confidence in the structure of  
10 being in a hotel setting as being conducive to  
11 healthy outcomes for children that are within a high-  
12 risk situation.

13 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: Well, I, you know,  
14 I certainly appreciate your point. That would  
15 obviously be a DHS policy decision, not an ACS policy  
16 decision, but I'm happy--

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] But--

18 COMMISSIONER HANSELL: to raise it with  
19 our DHS colleagues.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: could be informed.  
21 Lastly, and I just-- I was excited to hear in your  
22 testimony about the pilot program around domestic  
23 violence-involved families and providing them with  
24 therapy, and I'm trying to find what page that's on.  
25 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.

24

25

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]

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.

2 They won't be registered by July 1, unless they put  
3 in the old amounts now. I know that's a little  
4 confusing, but what that really means is that despite  
5 the Council's efforts, the money is still not where  
6 it needs to be, providing enhanced services to  
7 homeless New Yorkers. Even if that were not the case  
8 and they were able to administratively figure out how  
9 to do model budgets, model is sort of a misnomer  
10 because it doesn't include money for salary parody,  
11 as you pointed out before, for enhanced services to  
12 homeless folks living in the shelters. It does not  
13 include money for fringe rate. It does not include  
14 sufficient funding for indirect costs and other  
15 things, and so we'd like to see all of those  
16 investments made in the sector if we really hope to  
17 get to where we need to be. Critical services that  
18 are left out of model budget include medical  
19 services. We're having a crisis with opioid  
20 overdoses. The City is moving away from co-locating  
21 medical services in shelters. We think that's a  
22 mistake. Medical services should be prioritized in  
23 shelter budgets and making sure that there's on-site  
24 care so that prescriptions for things like  
25 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

2 this time to highlight three areas that haven't been  
3 discussed yet. So, the last panel, salary parody  
4 between ACS and DOE teachers was mentioned. Also,  
5 investment in human services contract was mentioned.  
6 However, salary parody across DFTA contracts was not  
7 brought up. So, with attention being given to senior  
8 center staffing through the model budget process, UJA  
9 requests that the Council advocates implementing  
10 increases in salaries for all DFTA-funded contracts.  
11 Underfunded contracts mean that providers are left to  
12 wrestle with the inequity of paying different  
13 salaries to staff doing the same jobs which leads to  
14 a lot of staff leaving, which also results in lower  
15 service access and quality for New York seniors.  
16 With the aging population growing, the City should  
17 recognize the need to attract skilled individuals to  
18 the geriatric field. Next, I would like to mention  
19 the Ella Louisel [sp?] Holocaust Survivor Initiative.  
20 New York City is home to about 45,000 Holocaust  
21 survivors, almost half of which are living at or  
22 below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, and  
23 as these survivors age there needs become a lot more  
24 complex due to what they suffered from during the  
25 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

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?

2 Why don't we even talk about them? Who has asked for  
3 them? I know I have, and I've never seen or heard  
4 that they've existed. Foster care is the new Jane  
5 Crow. Like slavery, foster care separates families  
6 of color and creates massive amounts of stress, fear,  
7 insecurities, depression, and trauma, all of the  
8 components that will ensure failure. So how exactly  
9 is ACS spending their budget if almost half of the  
10 children in their care were never given an  
11 opportunity to remain safely at home? And the  
12 outcome for those children is worse than if they  
13 remained at home. Is ACS going to destroy more lives  
14 with the money and widen the gap of  
15 disproportionality? A portion of the money should be  
16 earmarked to enlist the health and assistance of  
17 experts like myself to change the outcome for  
18 children and their families by ensuring children and  
19 families are not torn apart in the first place, to  
20 make sure families have a safe place to turn for  
21 support, a place that is not contracted and  
22 controlled by ACS. ACS has a slogan, "See something,  
23 say something." I see they are not doing what they  
24 say, protecting children. I see children suffering  
25 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.

2 Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.  
3 My name is Alexis Sanders. I am 17 years old. I  
4 live in the Bronx, attend Juda Veskey [sp?] High  
5 School, and I am a recent graduate of the Exalt Youth  
6 program. Before I found Exalt, I would define myself  
7 as an outcast, fighting and lashing out. I could  
8 admit I needed help, and I got arrested. When I  
9 first got to Exalt, I still had the same bad  
10 attitude. I didn't really think Exalt could do  
11 anything for me. I was out of school. I didn't  
12 really care about anything after my mother passed  
13 away, but Exalt stood by my side. I traveled to Exalt  
14 office in Brooklyn from the Bronx every Monday  
15 through Thursday for 16 weeks. They helped me find  
16 alternative schools, got me an internship, and even  
17 got my case closed for me. They showed up when I  
18 didn't. Getting out of the criminal justice system  
19 was all I wanted, and Exalt helped me do it. I know  
20 this organization is really what helped me, because  
21 before they welcomed me in, I wasn't enrolled in  
22 school, I was failing all my classes, and didn't  
23 really plan a future for myself. As I sit here  
24 today, I'm proud to say, I attend school every day,  
25 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

2 Levin. You continue to inspire us by your memory of  
3 everything we say and your convictions. So, thank  
4 you. I'm just going to summarize what we have to  
5 say. There's colleagues of mine who will speak about  
6 this as well. We have five issues. The Day Care  
7 Council is almost 70 years old going back to World  
8 War II and we have labor relations and mediation  
9 policy. We have a new Early Childhood career ladder  
10 and employment initiative and a professional training  
11 institute. Right now our biggest issues have to do  
12 with continuing to support the UPK expansion, but not  
13 lose all our kids. We've had providers who have had  
14 to reseal four-year-old classrooms four times last  
15 fall, because the DOE's recruiting kids directly from  
16 those nonprofit settings. So, I know they're making  
17 efforts, but it's still a problem for us. It's  
18 impacting utilization. Major issue I'm sure you're  
19 familiar with is the issue of salary parody. It's  
20 destabilizing the entire system that we've spent so  
21 many years building up. Right now, a similarly  
22 qualified, certified Master's Degree teacher, when  
23 they start out the gap is 13,784. By five years they  
24 could be making 15,413 dollars more working with the  
25 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 11<sup>th</sup>. 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  
4 126<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup>,

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

2 1.4 billion. The City is paying approximately 100  
3 dollars per day for my stay in the shelter, which  
4 comes to approximately 36,500 dollars a year, or  
5 approximately 3,000 dollars a month. My LINC IV  
6 voucher has an apartment allowance of \$1,268 and this  
7 amount has not increased since 2015, although the  
8 asking rent in New York City is up 33 percent,  
9 according to the latest housing vacancy survey. The  
10 media spin on homeless is that a majority of the  
11 homeless are mentally-ill or drug-addicted, and that  
12 this is the reason for the inability to move the  
13 homeless into permanent housing. This has not been  
14 my observation. In 2015, a social services  
15 supervisor told a room full of shelter residents that  
16 they had no rights because they did not pay rent and  
17 did not pay taxes. Did you recognize the clerk at  
18 the store who helped you, the bank teller who cashed  
19 your check, the waitress, the nurses' aid, security  
20 guards your building, the cleaning crew at your  
21 office, the teacher of autistic children, the former  
22 librarian, or the former manager of a shelter as  
23 being homeless? Perhaps not. These are some of the  
24 men and women that I have met while in a shelter.  
25 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

2 because we don't have the teachers to staff them, not  
3 because there aren't kids to meet the services. The  
4 City Council has proven itself an ally of the human  
5 services sector, and we urge you to take leadership  
6 on-- a leadership role on this issue, to hold a  
7 hearing into this unjustifiable and inequitable  
8 system and demand that the Mayor provide the  
9 necessary funding to eliminate these salary  
10 disparities. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

12 SHELLEY ANDERSON: Good evening. My name  
13 is Shelley Anderson and I'm a group UPK teacher at  
14 Sheltering Arms, Mother Hale's Learning Center in  
15 Harlem. I earned my Master's Degree through a  
16 scholars program that the City had in Early Childhood  
17 Education at Hunter while working fulltime in a Pre-K  
18 center, and I was able to obtain my New York State  
19 Initial Teacher License as a result. Part of my  
20 repayment for my scholarship is a requirement to  
21 teach in a CBEC, Community-based Early Childhood  
22 Center, for three years. This has brought me to  
23 Sheltering Arms and I've been teaching there now.  
24 Teaching Pre-K is really special work. Young  
25 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 parity, 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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

2 starting on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. Today's written  
3 submission includes a summary and supporting  
4 materials that reflect this request. Support from  
5 the Council is crucial to the continuation of our  
6 alternative to incarceration programs throughout the  
7 five boroughs. Our programs which include the Red  
8 Hook Community Justice Center, Brooklyn Justice  
9 Initiatives, Midtown Community Court, Bronx Community  
10 Solutions, Queens Youth Justice Center, and the  
11 Staten Island Justice Center have been documented by  
12 independent evaluators to improve safety, reduce  
13 incarceration, and enhance public trust in  
14 government. We work with tens of thousands of New  
15 Yorkers each year at these project sites, and the  
16 vast majority of the people we serve are LGBTQ youth,  
17 immigrants, low-income folks, or people of color.  
18 Through our ongoing partnership with the City  
19 Council, we've worked to reduce incarceration and  
20 have made New York City neighborhoods safer for all.  
21 The Center is also committed to improving outcomes  
22 for young people impacted by the justice system.  
23 With expanded support from the Council, the Center's  
24 Youth Diversion programs will be a vehicle for the  
25 successful implementation of Raise the Age. The

2 Center's diversion programs in Manhattan, Brooklyn,  
3 Queens, and Staten Island currently serves thousands  
4 of young people each year through counseling,  
5 academic support, and workforce development. As an  
6 example of the success of this work, in 2017 the  
7 Staten Island Justice Center worked with 210 young  
8 people facing charges in criminal court and diverted  
9 them from the justice system. Our compliance rate  
10 for these participants was 84 percent. Support from  
11 the Council will enable center programs to serve and  
12 estimated 30 percent more youth by providing  
13 meaningful off-ramps to detention where possible.  
14 Without expansion funding we may struggle to  
15 accommodate the expected influx of alternative to  
16 detention cases due to Raise the Age. Additionally,  
17 16 to 17-year-olds have a unique set of needs that  
18 will require different programming than our current  
19 youth population. This requires additional staffing,  
20 training, and program materials. The City Council's  
21 support has been invaluable to the success of the  
22 Center for Court Innovation. The Center looks  
23 forward to continuing to work with the Council to  
24 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 14<sup>th</sup>  
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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 in this temporary shelter  
9 I'm in, and that was after an attempted assault upon  
10 me on May 12<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup>--

21 STEVEN BANKS RECORDING: [interposing]  
22 Okay.

23 TOWAKI KOMATSU RECORDING: but there was a  
24 bait and switch.

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 27<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup>. 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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

2 7:42 p.m., after nine hours and 12 minutes, this  
3 hearing is adjourned.

4 [gavel]

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1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE WITH COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE 436

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1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE WITH COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE 437

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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