

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON  
HEALTH, COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES  
AND ADDICTION, COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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May 18, 2018  
Start: 10:19 a.m.  
Recess: 2:40 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: DANIEL DROMM  
Chairperson

MARK LEVINE  
Chairperson

DIANA AYALA  
Chairperson

JAMES G. VAN BRAMER  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Adrienne E. Adams  
Andrew Cohen  
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Vanessa L. Gibson  
Barry S. Grodenchik  
Rory I. Lancman  
Steven Matteo  
Francisco P. Moya

Keith Powers  
Helen K. Rosenthal  
James G. Van Bramer  
Alicka Ampry-Samuel  
Inez D. Barron  
Mathieu Eugene  
Fernando Cabrera  
Robert F. Holden  
Joseph C. Borelli  
Karen Koslowitz

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

Dr. Mary Bassett, Commissioner  
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, DOHMH

Dr. Oxiris Barbot, First Deputy Commissioner  
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, DOHMH

Sandee Rozzo, Deputy Commissioner for Finance  
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, DOHMH

Corinne Schiff, Deputy Commissioner for Environmental  
Health, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene,  
DOHMH

Dr. Demetre Daskalakis, Deputy Commissioner for  
Disease Control, NYC Department of Health and Mental  
Hygiene, DOHMH

Tony Marx, President and CEO  
New York Public Library

Dennis Walcott, President and CEO  
Queens Public Library

Linda Johnson, President and CEO  
Brooklyn Public Library

Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner  
Department of Cultural Affairs



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3 ADDICTION, COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES  
4 AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 5

6 [sound check] [pause] [gavel]

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good-good  
8 morning, and welcome to the City Council's ninth day  
9 of hearing on the Mayor's Executive Budget for Fiscal  
10 2019. My name is Daniel Dromm and I Chair the  
11 Finance Committee. We are joined by the Committee on  
12 Health chaired by my colleague Council Member Mark  
13 Levine, and the Committee on Mental Health,  
14 Disabilities and addictions chaired by Council Member  
15 Diana Ayala. We've been joined by other Council  
16 Members, Council Member Bob Holden, Council Member  
17 Steve Matteo, Council Member Barry Grodenchik,  
18 Council Member Fernando Cabrera as well. Today we  
19 will hear from the Department of Health and Mental  
20 Hygiene the three library systems and the Department  
21 of Cultural Affairs. Before we begin, I'd like to  
22 thank the Finance Division staff for putting this  
23 hearing together including the Director Latonia  
24 McKinney, Deputy Directors Regina Poreda Ryan and  
25 Nathan Toth, the Committee Counsel Rebecca Chasan,  
Unit Head Crilhien Francisco, Finance Analyst Janette  
Merrill, and Alia Ali and Finance Division  
Administrative Support Unit, Nicole Anderson, Maria  
Pagan, Roberta Caturano who pull everything together.

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1 I'd also like to thank Evia Cardorso, my Finance  
2 person for working on the budget and being here with  
3 at the hearings all the time. Thank you for your  
4 efforts Evia. I'd like to remind everyone that the  
5 public will be invited to testify on the last day of  
6 budget hearings on May 24<sup>th</sup> beginning at  
7 approximately 4:00 p.m. in this room. For members of  
8 the public who wish to testify but cannot attend the  
9 hearing, you can email your testimony to the Finance  
10 Division at [financetestimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:financetestimony@council.nyc.gov), and the  
11 staff will make it part of the official record.  
12 Today's Executive Budget hearing kicks off with the  
13 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. DOHMH's  
14 Fiscal 2019 Executive Budget totals \$1.6 billion, 48%  
15 of which is paid for with city funds. Since the  
16 Preliminary Budget Plan, the agency has added \$75,000  
17 to hire a training coordinator for the Cure Violence  
18 Program and \$6.2 million to support Health New York  
19 City, the citywide plan to combat the opioid  
20 epidemic. Reducing the number of opioid deaths in  
21 the city is one of DOHMH's major initiatives as the  
22 number of overdose deaths in New York City has more  
23 than doubled since 2000. The city will spend \$60  
24 million annually across multiple agencies toward that  
25

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1 effort. Given the scope of the problem, the Council  
2 called on the administration to fund community based  
3 organizations to lead prevention and treatment  
4 efforts around the opioid abuse. However, the  
5 funding that the Administration included in the  
6 budget will largely support the work of city  
7 agencies. I look forward to learning today why the  
8 Administration chose to focus on agency programs  
9 rather than that of community based organizations  
10 that are already out in the field doing this work  
11 every day. While there is clearly the need for a  
12 focus on opioid abuse, I would like to learn more  
13 about the department's efforts to combat the use of  
14 other drugs like cocaine and crystal meth, which are  
15 also on the rise, and in light of my experience as a  
16 daycare director and public school teacher, I am  
17 incredibly interested in hearing about the  
18 department's role in lead exposure prevention and  
19 treatment. Following the recent events with respect  
20 to lead in NYCHA facilities, I asked NYCHA at its  
21 Executive Budget hearing about assessing the more  
22 than 200 daycare facilities in NYCHA buildings. They  
23 responded that they—that they are licensed by DOHMH,  
24 and I hope to hear that your agency has recently  
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1 taken a closer look at these daycare centers. Before  
2 we begin, I'd like to remind my colleagues that the  
3 first round of questions for the agency will be  
4 limited to three minutes per Council Member, and if  
5 Council Members have additional questions, we will  
6 have a second round of questions at two minutes per  
7 Council Member. I will now turn the mic over to my  
8 Co-Chairs Council Members Levine and Ayala for their  
9 statements, and they will—then we will hear testimony  
10 from Dr. Mary Bassett, Commissioner of the Department  
11 of Health and Mental Hygiene. Alright.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [coughs] Thank  
14 you Chair Dromm, and good morning everybody. As the  
15 Chair mentioned today we're going to be reviewing the  
16 Budget of the Department of Health and Mental  
17 Hygiene, which at \$1.6 million I was just remind is  
18 one of the largest in the city, and we're also going  
19 to be looking the Council's Preliminary Budget  
20 Response. First, I want to reiterate Chair Dromm's  
21 concerns about the lack of funding for community-  
22 based organizations to lead prevention and treatment  
23 efforts around opioid abuse. While I strong support  
24 services funded through the Administration's \$22  
25 million enhancement and Healing NYC including Relay

1 the Non-Fatal Overdose Response Program. I believe  
2 we need to fund CBOs to conduct localized care and  
3 navigation and coordination efforts in settings  
4 beyond emergency departments and among populations  
5 other than recent overdoses. The Budget Response  
6 from the Council also called on the Administration to  
7 fund programs and services related to animal welfare  
8 and health equity, two subjects the Health Committee  
9 recently addressed in oversight hearings.  
10 Specifically, the Council called on the  
11 administration to turn underutilized DOH and DOHMH  
12 buildings in Queens and Staten Island into Health  
13 Action Centers in order to increase access to social  
14 supports and clinical services including behavioral  
15 and mental healthcare. The response also asked the  
16 Administration to allocate funding to the animal care  
17 centers of New York in order to extend receiving  
18 hour, increase stray animal pickup and reduce the  
19 feral cat population. I look forward to hearing more  
20 about the department's funding strategies for these  
21 important subjects. Next, I would like to address  
22 two public health issues of particular concern in New  
23 York City: Tuberculosis and Hepatitis. I recently  
24 called on Mayor de Blasio to add \$6.7 million to the  
25

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1 Fiscal 19 Budget for Tuberculosis prevention in order  
2 to address the recent spike in TB that has  
3 disproportionately affected our city's immigrant  
4 neighborhoods including neighborhoods in Western  
5 Queens, the Chair's own district included and Sunset  
6 Park, Brooklyn. Shortsighted budget reductions in  
7 the late 1980s dismantled New York's public health  
8 response to TB contributing to a massive outbreak of  
9 drug-resistant strains of the disease. I would like  
10 to discuss the Administration's plan to fund a TB  
11 response in order to stave off a similar outbreak.  
12 We know that the public health burden of viral  
13 hepatitis in New York City also remains  
14 extraordinarily high with an estimated 100,000 New  
15 Yorkers infected with Hep-B and 146,500 adults  
16 affected with Hep-C. I'm particularly concerned  
17 about the cost barriers that low-income New York City  
18 residents may encounter when accessing Hepatitis  
19 testing, medical care and treatment. Hep-C is  
20 curable in almost all patients, but only 14% of New  
21 York City residents infected with the virus have been  
22 cured. It's imperative that our city's community-  
23 based health organizations have the capacity to  
24 prevent, identify, manage and treat Hepatitis B and  
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1 C. So, I look forward to working and discussing  
2 these issues in today's hearing as well as other  
3 topics central to protecting and promoting the health  
4 and wellbeing of New Yorkers, and back to you, Mr.  
5 Chair. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Chair-Chair Ayala.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [off mic] Okay, thank  
9 you. [on mic] Thank you Chairs Levine and Dromm and  
10 good morning. I am Council Member Diana Ayala, Chair  
11 of the City Council's Committee on Mental Health,  
12 Disabilities and Addiction. I would like to start by  
13 thanking the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
14 for the Council Commission Report on supervised  
15 injections as a strategy to reduce opioid overdose  
16 and public injection. The plan would establish over  
17 those prevention centers inside non-profits that  
18 already function. Just need to exchange sites. I  
19 look forward to discussing the community outreach  
20 process in the neighborhoods of the proposed sites as  
21 well as any major challenges or opposition that this-  
22 that they may impede the plan's progress. To turn to  
23 the Council's Fiscal 2019 Preliminary Budget  
24 Response, I would like to express my disappointment  
25 that our requests to prioritize and enhance services

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1 for New Yorkers with disabilities was not addressed  
2 in the Executive Budget. Approximately 950,000 New  
3 Yorkers live with a disability, and more than half of  
4 these individuals report multiple disabilities. In  
5 the response, the Council implored the Mayor's Office  
6 of People with Disabilities to work with the Office  
7 of Management and Budget, and the city agencies to  
8 prioritize services for disabled New Yorkers as they  
9 related to transportation, employment, housing,  
10 health, and education. However, the Administration  
11 did not include any additional funding in the Fiscal  
12 2019 Executive Budget. I believe the city does not  
13 adequately invest in services and programs for New  
14 Yorkers with physical and/or developmental  
15 disabilities and I look forward to discussing this  
16 unmet need with you today. The response also called  
17 on the Administration to allocate funding DOHMH to  
18 implement the National Diabetes Prevention Program in  
19 order to provide prevention activities and education  
20 services in neighborhoods with high rates of obesity  
21 and chronic disease. Diabetes disproportionately  
22 affects New York City's low-income and working class  
23 communities including my district of the South Bronx.  
24 Leading to an undue burden of mass illness,  
25

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1 amputation, blindness and kidney failure. I look  
2 forward to discussing the important health issues as  
3 well as the programming and services funded under the  
4 \$22 million Healing NYC Expansion including the  
5 Health and Engagement Assessment Team program and the  
6 End Overdose Training Institute. Thank you.  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and I'm  
9 going to ask counsel to swear in the panel.

10 LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm that your  
11 testimony will be truthful to the best of your  
12 knowledge, information and belief?

13 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I so affirm.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Commissioner,  
15 would you like to begin.

16 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Thank you and good  
17 morning to Chairpersons Dromm, Ayala and Levine and  
18 members of the Committee. I'm Dr. Mary Bassett,  
19 Commissioner of the New York City Department of  
20 Health and Mental Hygiene and I'm joined today by  
21 First Deputy Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot and  
22 Sandee Rozzo, our Deputy Commissioner for Finance.  
23 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on our  
24 Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2019. The  
25 department has once again had a tremendously

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productive year defending the health of New Yorkers.

We've been busy implementing the comprehensive

package of tobacco bills signed into law last summer,

expanding our internal racial justice reform efforts,

scaling up citywide efforts under Thrive NYC, and

rolling out elements of the Mayor's Neighborhood Rat

Reduction Initiative. We reopened the Chelsea Sexual

Health Clinic and worked with our sister agencies to

enroll 80,000 New Yorkers in health insurance to get

Covered NYC, and engaged New Yorkers to Help Me Quit,

an app that is designed to help people quit smoking.

The department launched Living Sure, the city's

campaign to promote Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis or PREP

to women, and recently announced that New York City's

air is the cleanest that it has been since monitoring

began in 2008. Earlier this month, New York City

reinforced its status as one of the most progressive

cities in the country with Mayor de Blasio's support

for a one-year research pilot for overdose prevention

centers or OPCs. The pilot would open up centers in

up to four existing student exchange programs that

can operate the OPC without city funding. We are

pleased with the leadership of the Mayor and the

Council in supporting this demonstrated life saving

1  
2 overdoes prevention method. We are standing on the  
3 right side of history with this decision. If the  
4 requirements to proceed with OPCs are met and we take  
5 action here in New York, others across the country  
6 will follow, and we look forward to further  
7 discussions with our sister agencies, elected  
8 officials, and community members about this critical  
9 program in the coming months. We are able to do all  
10 of this and more thanks to the continued support from  
11 the Administration and Council. We are grateful to  
12 mayor for the addition of over \$11 million a year in  
13 the Executive Budget. With this funding we will  
14 continue to tackle the city's opioid crisis. Since  
15 the launch of HealingNYC, the department has  
16 distributed over 70,000 Naloxone kits contributing to  
17 the city's goal to distribute 100,000 kits. We've  
18 engaged providers, pharmacists and implemented  
19 innovative care linkage approaches. We have  
20 conducted public media campaigns, Naloxone training  
21 and targeted neighborhood based education efforts to  
22 ensure that New Yorkers are aware of this epidemic  
23 and that this is all hands on deck effort. We're  
24 proud of the great progress made under HealingNYC,  
25 but we recognize the need for additional services for

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1 those most at risk for overdose. This new funding  
2 will allow us to expand our Relay Program from 10 to  
3 15 hospitals. This program uses peer wellness  
4 advocates in emergency departments of hospitals for  
5 counseling and linkage to care after non-fatal  
6 overdose. We will also establish an End Overdose  
7 Training Institute to serve as a technical assistance  
8 center to help increase overdose prevention capacity  
9 and Naloxone distribution, and we will implement a  
10 new Naloxone Leave Behind Program with the FDNY so  
11 that first responders can leave Naloxone kits with  
12 people at risk of future overdose. Additionally,  
13 we're expanding the capacity of our Heat and Co-  
14 Response units in order to provide behavioral health  
15 expertise to individuals with a mental health or  
16 misuse crisis. These newly funded efforts will  
17 enable the city to provide proactive health oriented  
18 interventions to people who need them most. Turning  
19 to other budget updates, we were pleased that the  
20 proposed cuts at both state and federal levels were  
21 not included in final spending legislation, but we  
22 are concerned that the consistent attacks on public  
23 health funding will lead to future reductions that  
24 will force the department to reduce vital services.  
25

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2 We were relieved to see that the state budget to  
3 tuberculosis prevention and control funding was  
4 rejected in the final budget, and were proposed  
5 reductions to other critical public health services  
6 such as school based health centers, and poison  
7 control centers. At the federal level we were  
8 cautiously happy to see that the omnibus spending  
9 bill passed by congress did not include the severe  
10 cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services  
11 proposed in the President's budget. Perhaps this is  
12 an indication that congress recognizes that public  
13 health is a bipartisan critical area of work, and  
14 although we were spared significant budge cuts, our  
15 programs are otherwise jeopardized by federal policy  
16 shifts outside of the budget process that are not  
17 based on science including those that would allow  
18 LGBTQ discrimination in healthcare settings, endorse  
19 abstinence only sexual health education, and threaten  
20 the status of immigrants. It remains clear that the  
21 Trump Administration does not share the values of our  
22 city Administration, nor its legislators, and we will  
23 continue to fight back against proposals that would  
24 widen disparities and put New Yorkers at risk. I  
25 hope you never tire of hearing me say that we are

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1 fiercely committed to health equity, and that we are  
2 deploying the most evidence-based skill driven and  
3 expert led strategies to do so. We've made progress  
4 in the past year, but racial disparities and life  
5 expectancy and disease burden, and infant and  
6 maternal mortalities remain. This is unfair, unjust,  
7 and preventable. Addressing these inequities must  
8 remain a top priority throughout all of our work and  
9 our staff is taking this challenge head on. I want  
10 to thank the mayor for the resources dedicated to the  
11 department in the Executive Plan, and thank you to  
12 the Speaker, the Chairs Levine, Ayala and Dromm, and  
13 members of the committees for your partnership and  
14 shared commitment to protecting and promoting the  
15 health of all New Yorkers. Thank you once again for  
16 the opportunity to testify. I will gladly take any  
17 questions.  
18

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,  
20 Commissioner and we appreciate you coming in and  
21 giving testimony. Let me start with some questions  
22 on the lead issues—on lead issues. DOHMH considers a  
23 child's blood level to be high if a test at or above  
24 10 micrograms per deciliter. However, in 2012, the  
25 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention adjust its

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1 threshold to five micrograms per deciliter. If DOHMH  
2 were to follow CDC's guidelines, it would have added  
3 5,000 children to its list of those who tested high  
4 for lead in 2016 to 6,000 children total. Speaker  
5 Johnson recently sponsored legislation to lower the  
6 threshold for considering children's blood toxic.  
7 Why doesn't DOHMH adhere to CDC's threshold and have  
8 your own?  
9

10 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: So, the Health  
11 Cold uses the cut point of 10 micrograms per  
12 deciliter as a definition of lead poisoning. The  
13 Centers for Disease Control, as you note, has used 5  
14 micrograms per deciliter as a surveillance tool. What  
15 it tells us is that 95% of children are below that  
16 level. Our Health Code has 15 micrograms per  
17 deciliter as the trigger for environmental  
18 remediation as does Local Law 1, which went into  
19 effect in 2005. As the Council is aware, we are  
20 tremendously proud of our-of our track record in lead  
21 poisoning lead prevention and control. We've seen a  
22 nearly 90% reduction in the number of children with  
23 blood lead levels above 5, the surveillance criteria  
24 since Local Law 1 went into effect. I'd be happy to  
25 go over the numbers with you, but I do want the

1  
2 Council to be aware that we are succeeding in  
3 reducing the prevalence of children with blood lead  
4 levels that are 5 and higher, and we intervene on any  
5 blood lead level that is 5 or higher, but we use as a  
6 trigger for environmental intervention the level of  
7 10 for most children, which is lower than the Health  
8 Code or Local Law 1 indicate. For very young  
9 children, of course, these are the children that we  
10 are most concerned about, we intervene at lower  
11 levels.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, you feel  
13 confident that you're not missing any children or  
14 capturing any children with lower lead-of blood  
15 levels that they are not going to be poisoned by that  
16 lower lead level?

17 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: You might have to  
18 go over that again for me, but the-the-if-if you're  
19 getting at the idea that there is no level of-of lead  
20 in the blood that is considered safe, you are  
21 accurate in that statement.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right, because my  
23 understanding is that any level of blood is not safe.  
24 Is that correct?

25

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1  
2           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: That is correct,  
3 and as I indicated, we have really—I—I wish I could  
4 convey to the Council effectively how pioneering this  
5 department has been in tackling lead exposures and in  
6 lowering blood lead levels in children. As you know,  
7 the Health Department banned lead and paint in 1960,  
8 18 years before the federal government and as I've  
9 told you, the number of children with blood lead  
10 levels over five has steadily declined and has gone  
11 down by nearly 90%. I think the actual precise  
12 number is 88%. It's now under 5,000 children with  
13 blood lead levels over 5 and then both—both of those  
14 children are between 5 and under 10.

15           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, following  
16 concerns about NYCHA's process for assessing lead  
17 hazards, Council Member introduced several pieces of  
18 legislation that would strengthen protocols for  
19 inspecting lead hazards in residential buildings,  
20 daycare centers, soil and drinking water. Do you  
21 know of those efforts and do you support any of those  
22 efforts?

23           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I'm aware that the  
24 Council has got a whole portfolio of bills. I  
25 believe the last count is 22. We are busy reviewing

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1 these and we'll be happy to talk with you about them  
2 when we have completed our review.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, has DOH  
5 inspected the 200 plus daycare centers in NYCHA  
6 facilities for lead paint?

7 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: In order for a-a  
8 childcare center to receive a permit, the Center has  
9 to be lead-free. So, that's the initial requirement.  
10 When our inspectors go out, they look for-for peeling  
11 paint regardless of whether it's documented as having  
12 lead in it or not, and we remediate it, we-we are  
13 quite emphatic about the-about protecting our  
14 children.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, have you found  
16 any daycare centers that have peeling paint?

17 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I'm sure that  
18 there have been daycare centers that have peeling  
19 paint, but I'm just--

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] And  
21 then do you test that?

22 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: What I'm  
23 indicating to you is that in order to get licensed,  
24 the daycare center has to show that it is lead-free.

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How do they show  
3 that?

4 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Right, it's—it's  
5 not licensed. It's a permit. I always get these  
6 mixed up. They—they—they have to pass an inspection.  
7 This is before they start accepting any children.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, what does that  
9 inspection look like?

10 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, most  
11 inspections for lead paint begin with XRF, which is  
12 an X-ray technique for looking for—for lead in  
13 paint.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that—that X-ray  
15 can determine whether lead paint was originally used  
16 in the daycare center?

17 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I don't—you know,  
18 we banned lead paint in New York City in 1960. So—  
19 but we continued to look for it because many of—much  
20 of our housing stock is old and we have—we have a  
21 great deal of housing stock that had lead paint in it  
22 at one time. The XRF would simply determine whether  
23 or not there's lead in that paint. It also—it's not  
24 perfect. If you aim an XRF at something that also  
25 has other types of lead of in it, a metal surface

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1 like a radiator or a door frame, we can get false  
2 positives. I'd be happy to go over the specific  
3 results for our-our daycare centers. As you say,  
4 there are 200 out of 2,300 in-in-in NYCHA housing and  
5 once again, we ensure that they are lead-free at the  
6 time of permitting.  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, Commissioner,  
9 what-what--

10 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing]  
11 Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --what concerns me is  
13 that if we're finding lead paint in NYCHA apartments,  
14 why wouldn't it be contained in the daycare centers?

15 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: If-if it's a  
16 facility that is-has-was built-was open before 1997,  
17 then the inspection is for intact paint. I'm joined  
18 by our Deputy for Environmental Health who can give  
19 you some more details on this.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Council Member-

21 -

22 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing] I  
23 mean the-the--

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member I  
25 just--

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COMMISSIONER BASSETT: --there's a  
distinction between being lead-free and being lead  
safe. If the paint is intact, then it won't be  
shedding, and it won't have the opportunity to get  
into the environment.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, where--also where  
I'm coming from. I used to be a daycare center  
teacher and a director, and peeling lead paint in  
daycare centers or peeling paint let me say, was not  
uncommon. It was all over the daycare center. So,  
that's why I'm--I'm going here, but before--

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing]  
Well, our inspectors look for it, and if they find  
it, they--it is remediated regardless of--of lead  
content. We don't want peeling paint in daycare  
centers.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, it was always  
extremely difficult to get NYCHA to paint even in the  
daycare center, but anyway, I--I'm going to swear you  
in before you--before you say anything.

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [off mic] To let  
you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, your assistant.  
[laughs]

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1  
2           LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm that your  
3 testimony will be truthful to the best of your  
4 knowledge, information and belief?

5           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Yes.

6           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And could you just  
7 state your name for the record?

8           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Yes, Corinne  
9 Schiff, Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Health  
10 and oversee our Childcare program, and I'll just add  
11 to the Commissioner's comments. You asked whether  
12 that XRF test would show layers of paint and--and  
13 indeed it would, and so for any childcare center to  
14 get a permit from us openings after 1997, it does  
15 need to submit proof, and if they have chosen a  
16 location where there are--where there is lead paint on  
17 the walls, they--they have to just abate. They have  
18 to get rid of that paint, scrape down and--and  
19 repaint. So, those centers are lead-free. They  
20 nonetheless cannot have paint. That's a routine part  
21 of our inspection. For centers that have--that were  
22 open before 1997, they're required to do a self-  
23 inspection annually. As you know, paint is a  
24 problem, as the Commissioner noted when it is not  
25 intact. When it's peeling or chipped that's when

1 children can get access to it. So, that's a part of  
2 the self-inspection that we require and it's part of-  
3 -  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] And who  
6 conducts the self-inspection?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: The  
8 childcare provider is required to do it, but it's  
9 also a part of our inspection, and if we find paint  
10 either that's lead paint or paint where we don't know  
11 whether it's leaded, then there is a requirement that  
12 they within 24 hours remediate. In other words, they  
13 move--remove the children from that exposure and then  
14 we require them to fix in a more permanent way. That  
15 takes a little longer. So, the first step is within  
16 24 hours you have to remove that hazard from the  
17 children--for the children, remove that exposure, and  
18 then fix in the long term, and we continue to inspect  
19 to make sure that that remediation has occurred.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, how often have  
21 you found centers with chipping paint?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I--I don't  
23 have those--those numbers with me, but we can--we can  
24 follow up with--with those details.

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1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Yeah. Oh, I'd  
3 like to get those numbers, okay, and it remains a  
4 concern to me because having worked in-in a daycare  
5 center when I did, I-I constantly saw chipping paint.  
6 It's hard for me to believe that there isn't, but  
7 anyway, the law-the law requires-

8 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing] Oh,  
9 Council Member, there was something that we didn't  
10 mention that we should have mentioned is that as part  
11 of an investigation of any child who has an elevated  
12 blood lead level, we also look at their-at the--at  
13 the place where they get their childcare. So, we  
14 inspect that site. So, the principal way that the  
15 Health Department tackles elevated-the problem of  
16 lead poisoning is because we're receiving all of the  
17 blood lead test results at the department, and any  
18 time a child has a blood lead level of 5 or greater,  
19 we-we take action, and that if the--and if there is a  
20 child who needs remediation, environmental  
21 remediation at this time that would be at a level of  
22 10 or higher, we would look at their childcare  
23 center, at their home, any place where they spend  
24 quite a bit of time. So, there's another way to get

25

1 at the childcare center than our--our inspections of  
2 those centers.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and let me just  
5 talk a little bit then about the Healthy Homes  
6 Program that you run. Does the DOHMH identify lead-  
7 based paint hazards and monitor the abatement work to  
8 enforcement safety regulations through that program?

9 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Sorry, can you  
10 restate--restate--say that again? I didn't quite catch  
11 it.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, you have a  
13 program called the Healthy Homes Program.

14 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And--and--and what does  
16 that program do. Do you go--go and inspect apartments  
17 or what are you looking for through that program?

18 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, we look not  
19 only for lead abatement, but also for, you know, for  
20 other things associated with health at home, the--the--  
21 our Integrated Pest Management Program is part of  
22 that program as well.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But lead--lead--

24 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Lead is part of  
25 it.

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1  
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --is part of the  
3 program.

4 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: You're right. It  
5 was expanded beyond lead as we have been successful  
6 in bringing lead as a public health problem--program--  
7 problem in the city.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, does the U.S.  
9 Environmental Protection Agency allow landlords to  
10 paint over lead paint?

11 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: There--so to my  
12 knowledge and I--I may have to turn to my deputy on  
13 this, there's no requirement that people eliminate  
14 lead in a building. What we check for is the  
15 deteriorated paint surfaces. Abatement means that  
16 you scrape down and--and--and eliminate paint and  
17 become lead-free, but that--in our city that would be  
18 a huge effort. We have a city with a lot of old  
19 housing stock and, you know, including very fancy  
20 parts of the city. That is fine so long as that  
21 paint is intact.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What is your level of  
23 involvement with the remediation work that's being  
24 done in NYCHA in regard to the lead paint issue  
25 there?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: For us the trigger  
3 the child. So, we would be involved and we stay  
4 involved regardless of what NYCHA does, and when we  
5 have a child with an elevated blood level, we want to  
6 see the blood level come down.

7           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, do you go to  
8 NYCHA to inspect the work that they've done?

9           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: If a child has an  
10 elevated blood lead level and it's in NYCHA, we—we  
11 ensure that their environment has been abated, and  
12 we—as I indicated, we'll look at secondary locations  
13 for that child, their childcare center, at  
14 grandmother's house or anything place where they  
15 spend substantial time.

16           CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Currently the law  
17 does not protect those who reside—those who go like  
18 in grandma's house for instance. I have legislation  
19 that I want the Council to pass, which would change  
20 the definition of reside, because often times we do  
21 have situations where children go to their  
22 grandmother's house after school and spend  
23 significant amounts of time until their mother can  
24 pick them up, but according to the law they're not

1 eligible for any type of lawsuit or something should  
2 they get lead poisoned.

3  
4 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, we'd have to  
5 look at—I haven't looked at, and we are, as I noted  
6 earlier, reviewing the whole package of legislation,  
7 but I just reiterate that if a child has an elevated  
8 blood lead level, our investigators will consider  
9 places where they spend time beyond their primary  
10 residence.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I have another  
12 issue on the No. 7 Train. Do you also, yeah, do you  
13 look at structures like that or agencies? Because  
14 what's happening in the No. 7 Train is that you have  
15 huge chunks of lead based paint literally this big  
16 falling into the street. Vendors are there, you  
17 know, food is being prepared there. That leads paint  
18 stuff is going all over the place. Is that something  
19 that you would look at as well?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We do—do an  
21 inspection along the elevated train lines for the No.  
22 7. We—we did two kinds of inspections. We sent our  
23 mobile food vending inspectors out for the very  
24 reasons that you just described, and it's a  
25 requirement for a mobile food vendor to protect food

1 from contamination, and so we did find that the—the  
2 vendors who were vending near the elevated subway  
3 lines, did have their food covered, and so we didn't  
4 see a—a risk to food. We also sent lead inspectors  
5 out to do visual inspections and to look in the  
6 parks, and we really did not see a high risk. We've  
7 been in—in discussion with our colleagues at MTA, but  
8 we—we were satisfied that this is not presenting a  
9 risk to the community.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Even with that lead  
12 blowing all around the area, and people being able to  
13 breathe that lead in, those chips in, and this—one of  
14 my employees who is sitting over—right over here by  
15 just inches, you still don't think it's a hazard?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: From our  
17 inspections, we—we were satisfied that there was not  
18 really a risk there.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, I'd—I'd have to  
20 really disagree with that because that place is a  
21 total disgrace. I think that there's a schedule now  
22 to paint it, but I don't see how that has not  
23 contributed. I think Western Queens, if I'm not  
24 mistaken, has the highest level of lead exposure in—  
25 in all of Queens. Is that correct? In the Western

1  
2 Queens area who have the highest amount of lead  
3 exposure?

4 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I'd have to—we—I'd  
5 have to check on that. We—we usually think of the  
6 sort of lead belts in the city as the Williamsburg  
7 section of Brooklyn.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

9 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: So, we can check  
10 on that for you and get back to you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, another—  
12 another issue that particularly affects Queens in  
13 general is that it—it continues to have the highest  
14 burden of tuberculosis, and with 247 cases and a rate  
15 of 10.6 per 100,000 households. However, the Corona  
16 Chest Center in Jackson Heights, which offers  
17 evaluation and treatment services Monday through  
18 Saturday only offers extended hours until 8:00 p.m.  
19 As you know, it's a heavy immigrant community. Often  
20 time business is conducted after 5:00 p.m. Are there  
21 any plans to open that Chest Center later than those  
22 hours?

23 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: So, I'm not sure.  
24 I think that the Corona Center has evening hours.  
25 Huh?

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Two days a week.

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Two days a week

so-and-and we have weekend hours available as well.

As you point out, TB in our city is now largely an  
issue for people who were born outside of the United  
States, and who likely acquired their infection  
remotely when they were a resident in another  
country. So, in a sense it reflects the TB control  
programs in the countries from which they emigrated.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sure that Chair

Levine is going to have some more questions on the TB  
stuff, but let me move onto Cocaine and Crystal Meth  
abuse. Are we still doing enough in those areas? I  
know there's been a heavy focus on opioids, but what  
are we doing with Cocaine and Crystal Meth.

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: That's-that's a

really good question, and-and one thing that I'd like  
to make sure that the committee is aware of because I  
know that you have a lot of interactions with your  
constituents is that Fentanyl, the synthetic opioid  
that has made our street drugs so much more dangerous  
has entered the drug supply broadly so that 30% of  
Cocaine related drug overdose deaths now how Fentanyl  
involved. So many people who use Cocaine may not be

1 seeking an opioid, are in no way prepared for an  
2 opioid overdose. So, it's very important to let  
3 people know that our street drugs have never been  
4 more dangerous because of the presence of Fentanyl.  
5 So that has been a principal message that we've been  
6 getting out for-around Cocaine that it now can  
7 frequently contain Fentanyl and just makes the  
8 overdose risk much higher as it does in other drugs.  
9 Crystal Meth is a-is an issue in a-in a smaller  
10 targeted community, and we've been using social  
11 media, and more narrow media campaigns to address  
12 that issue. We-we have Dr. Daskalakis here if you'd  
13 like to hear more details about that, or I can  
14 arrange for him to let you know what we're doing at  
15 another time.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I do like the doctor.  
18 So, let me-let me just have him up for a minute.

19 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: You like the  
20 doctor. Everybody likes Dr. Daskalakis, yes.

21 [laughter] Yes, indeed.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But I don't want him  
23 to run against me because he's a great speaker. I'll  
24 tell you that. [laughter] [off mic] State your name  
25 for the record and some body has to swear you in.

1  
2           LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm that your  
3 testimony will be truthful to the best of your  
4 knowledge, information and belief?

5           DR. DASKALAKIS: I do and I'm Demetre  
6 Daskalakis, the Deputy Commissioner for Disease  
7 Control at the New York City Department of Health.  
8 So we actually in New York City have what is the most  
9 innovative municipally supported crystal  
10 methamphetamine program in the country. . Based  
11 [coughs] on work that happened before funding came to  
12 the agency in the frame of ending the epidemic of HIV  
13 we did a needs assessment in the city and identified  
14 that there was a gap in crystal meth services. So  
15 with the addition of the agency's funding we were  
16 able to launch a program by pushing money out to two  
17 community based organizations, the Gay Men's Health  
18 Crisis and Housing Works. So, they cam together to  
19 create a program that's called Recharge. It's about  
20 a year old, and went from zero clients to 135 clients  
21 in that time. The majority are young men who have  
22 sex with men of color. About 40% of them have had  
23 unstable housing. It is officially the largest  
24 feeder into the Housing Works Pre-exposure  
25 Prophylaxis Program. So, in fact, it's a model for

1  
2 integrative services both mental health, substance us  
3 services as well as medical provision of care to  
4 people living with HIV and those at risk, a model  
5 that a lot of other jurisdictions are now looking  
6 toward a-toward-toward us given the fact that it's  
7 not really done anywhere else except for New York.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you,  
9 doctor. I need to move along here, but always  
10 appreciate hearing from you and I'm glad that you're  
11 working on that.

12 DR. DASKALAKIS: Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: And I should point  
14 out that this was an issue that was raised to the  
15 department by advocates, and one that we took action  
16 on. We are very proud of our-of our relationship  
17 with the advocacy community, and because it enables  
18 us to be more agile in our health response.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, let me just go  
20 through one more area, and then I'll turn it over to  
21 the other chairs as well. You recently announced  
22 that New York City would implement its new menu board  
23 rules following a decision by Food and Drug  
24 Administration requiring America's chain restaurants,  
25 movie theaters and grocery stores with more than 20

1 locations excuse me [coughs] to provide calorie  
2 information on menu boards. What specific  
3 nutritional information will the new rules require  
4 New York City to post?  
5

6 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: As you know, New  
7 York City has pioneered the—the posting of calorie  
8 information on menus and menu boards. We became the  
9 first jurisdiction, but jurisdiction—I think  
10 Sausalito, California or something might have been  
11 doing something, but we became the first jurisdiction  
12 in 2006. What this new federal result that was  
13 passed as part of the Affordable Care Act in 2010.  
14 So, it's—it's taken a while for the federal  
15 government to take action on it, and we're very happy  
16 they have. What it will do is extend it to multiple  
17 types of chains not just food service establishments.  
18 So chain supermarkets that serve prepared foods,  
19 convenience stores that may serve foods and they all  
20 have to give not only calorie information but also  
21 the information that the sort of target amount number  
22 of calories a person should have in a day is about  
23 2,000. One of the concerns about simply positing  
24 calorie information was that the people had no idea  
25 whether having a 1,200 calorie breakfast was a good

1 idea or not. The answer is it's not a good idea.

2  
3 It's more than half the calories you should eat in a  
4 day. Additionally, there--there is a requirement that  
5 they keep on site full nutritional information, the  
6 type of information that you would get on a facts  
7 panel in a supermarket available on request. So, we  
8 have indicated that we will be--we will enforce the  
9 federal rule. We were ready to do it a year ago, but  
10 agreed that we would after being sued that we would  
11 wait for the--for the federal rule and--and I'm happy  
12 that they did go forward with it.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you and  
14 just--I'd like to just talk a little bit about  
15 something else that related to the menu boards and  
16 you'll see what I'm--where I'm going in a minute. I'd  
17 like to talk about a digestive disorder known as  
18 sprue or celiac disease. This autoimmune reaction to  
19 eating gluten, which can damage the small intestine  
20 affects an estimated 1% of the population worldwide  
21 and remains personally significant to me. DOHMH's  
22 website, however, does not contain any information  
23 about Celiac Disease. Does DOHMH offer any programs  
24 for people with Celiac Disease?

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1  
2 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: No, not that I'm  
3 aware of.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Would the new menu  
5 boards include anything on Celiac Disease

6 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I-I-I think you're  
7 asking whether the nutrition facts information  
8 contains information on gluten, and I-I-it doesn't.  
9 I think people who have decided to have gluten-free  
10 diets are [coughs] are often aware of the types of  
11 food that can and cannot eat.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Not  
13 necessarily.

14 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: But it may be  
15 difficult to-to tell, and people often take the  
16 position of being better safe than sorry in their  
17 selections. Additionally, many, you many places  
18 provide this information on request, and we provide--

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Well,  
20 if you've ever been to a restaurant with a person who  
21 suffers from Celiac Disease, they get poisoned all  
22 the time because they had-it's had exposure to the  
23 grill. It-it-it's a little drop of wheat gets into a,  
24 you know, a meal or whatever it may be, and then they  
25 have violent reactions to it, and-and it's something

1 that I—I've spoken to some doctors from Mount Sinai  
2 Hospital about it as well, and it's really something  
3 I think that the department should really begin  
4 looking at. It's—it's—it's—I—I couldn't believe that  
5 it's not on the website, to be honest with you.

7 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: The—the main  
8 interest that we've had as an agency in labeling food  
9 is to let people—is to have an impact on the obesity  
10 epidemic, which as you know is—is still headed in the  
11 wrong direction so calorie counts was the key that we  
12 worked to find on menu boards. I'm pleased that the  
13 federal government has expanded that to require that  
14 the information be made available on a wider range of  
15 nutrients but I—I—you know, I hear what you're saying  
16 and we will certainly take it under advisement.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you when you put—  
18 when you do the food and prepare a course, right for  
19 those who are--

20 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: We do.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --chefs?

22 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Yeah, the—I—I—I've  
23 had this conversation with staff. Our food prep—  
24 preparation is only into safety, food safety, and so

1 far, food safety most refers to hygiene and—and  
2  
3 hygienic practices.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But do you teach  
5 allergies?

6 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Not—I—I don't  
7 know. So, I see the—I'm—I'm sure that we do, but let  
8 me get the expert up here to confirm.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Yes, our  
10 Food Protection Class, which is every service  
11 establishment has to have a supervisor on site at all  
12 times when they are operating, and that person has to  
13 be trained in food protection, and that course is  
14 offered by us as at our Health Academy, and it  
15 includes training on allergies. The Ad Code also  
16 includes a requirement that every restaurant have an  
17 allergy poster on site in the area for workers to  
18 make workers aware of the common food allergies and  
19 about cross-contamination for allergens.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is there any standard  
21 by which the Department of Health measures gluten  
22 content or labeling of something to be gluten-free?  
23 Sometimes you'll go to a restaurant and on the menu  
24 it says gluten-free, but there may still be gluten in  
25 it?

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1  
2 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, I would--  
3 [pause] this matter of labeling, we don't actually  
4 determine the content of food. That's--that's not  
5 regulated by us.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But you do manage  
7 diseases?

8 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: We do.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right. So, do you--

10 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing] I  
11 mean we--

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --recognize that  
13 Celiac grew?

14 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing] We  
15 don't provide--[laughs]

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But Commissioner,  
17 hold up. Okay, it's a very serious issue, okay, and  
18 I don't think it's anything to laugh at, and I'm  
19 asking you a serious question. Do you recognize it  
20 as a disease?

21 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I--

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] You  
23 don't seem to know much about it.

24

25

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1  
2 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I'm-no, I-I-I'm  
3 familiar with it, but I'm not an expert in it. I'm  
4 not a gastroenterologist.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that's the  
6 problem. That is exactly the problem, and that's why  
7 I'm saying to you and to the Health Department that  
8 we need to recognize this as a disease, and that's  
9 the point that I'm trying to get it. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Understood.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you so much,  
12 Mr. Chair. This morning many of us received the-the  
13 deeply disturbing news that the Trump Administration  
14 is planning to change the rules around Title IX that  
15 would bar funding or organizations that provide  
16 women's reproductive services or even advise on such  
17 services. This could mean devastating financial  
18 consequences for non-profit providers like Planned  
19 Parenthood. That might not impact wealthy women who  
20 probably will find other ways to get such important  
21 services, but for low-income women, people without  
22 health insurance, communities of color, this could  
23 mean a real denial of not just reproductive health  
24 services, but broader medical services for women.  
25 Our allies in Congress are going to fight this tooth

1 and nail, but in the meantime is the city preparing  
2  
3 to a plan to step in and help shore up these  
4 services, which are so vital in New York City?

5 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, we've also  
6 read the headlines. We don't know yet what the  
7 actual actions of the federal government will be. We  
8 know that there have been threats of such actions.  
9 As I completely agree with your characterization of  
10 Planned Parenthood, it is a vital service for women,  
11 and an important partner to us in city government in  
12 providing services to many, many women. The--the--they  
13 estimate that one out of every five women in this  
14 country in her lifetime will use Planned Parenthood  
15 services. So, you know, these services should be  
16 protected. We in New York City view them as vital  
17 and we are still waiting to see whether the federal  
18 government will meet its threats. I would remind you  
19 that will--will actually find a way to--to carry out  
20 its threats. The Affordable Care Act we were told  
21 was going to be dead on day one. The threats against  
22 Planned Parenthood began before--before the current  
23 president took office, and here we are 400 days out.  
24 I'm hopeful that we will be able to ensure that these  
25 actions don't take place.

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1  
2           CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I-I remain ever  
3 hopeful as well, but a matter with consequences this  
4 serious we also have to prepare for the worst, and I  
5 do think that the city needs to find a way to shore  
6 up these services perhaps by closing the funding gap  
7 left a providers like Planned Parenthood, also  
8 perhaps by ramping up our own provision of  
9 contraceptive services, et cetera in our-in our  
10 wonderful sexual health centers and other Department  
11 of Health venues, and-and I know you agree with that.  
12 I just implore the city not to wait until this crisis  
13 is upon up. I do want to ask about Naloxone  
14 availability in pharmacies and the New York Times, as  
15 you well know, reported that only about [coughs] a  
16 third of the [coughs] 720 pharmacies which were  
17 listed as providing Naloxone were, in fact, providing  
18 it without a prescription. What is the status of  
19 that supply today, and has the city updated its  
20 website, its app, its 311 services so that the  
21 information is accurate about where it actually is  
22 available at pharmacies?

23           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: The answer to that  
24 question is yes.

25

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1  
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, so ho many-  
3 what-what is the number today out of the 720 where  
4 it's available without a prescription?

5 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: It's around about  
6 700 is the current list. We have visited all of the  
7 independent pharmacies, talked to the pharmacy chains  
8 that, as you are aware and there were concerns about  
9 the pharmacy chains, CVS doing the Rite Aid, which  
10 two of them are now actually Walgreens. But the-they  
11 also have taken action to ensure that they have it on  
12 site. We also have changed the language on our  
13 website to indicate that these pharmacies have agreed  
14 to make Naloxone available. I would point out to you  
15 that the agreement to have Naloxone available doesn't  
16 mean that they have it in stock, but when we have  
17 checked with everyone on the list, we find that over  
18 80% of them had Naloxone in-in stock. Part of the  
19 difference between the way we checked, and the way  
20 the New York Times reporter checked is that we asked  
21 to speak to the pharmacist, and we now include that  
22 information on our website advising people to speak  
23 to the pharmacist. So, I don't know who the reporter  
24 was speaking to. We want everybody who walks into a  
25 pharmacy to have the ability to purchase Naloxone.

1  
2 We also let people know that the state subsidizes the  
3 co-pay, but we—we think that we're doing a good job,  
4 but there are a lot of other places to get Naloxone  
5 as well. As I indicated, we've handed out 70,000  
6 kits.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Absolutely, and—and  
8 we're—we're fully supportive of that effort to  
9 disseminate the kits. I'm not surprised the  
10 pharmacists are well informed, but the average New  
11 Yorker is going to walk and the first employee they  
12 see they're going to ask, they're going to believe  
13 whatever they're told. Very few of them are going to  
14 look for a second opinion from the pharmacist.

15 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Is that what you  
16 do when you're looking for a prescription drug, you  
17 speak to the cashier?

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Well, who—whoever is  
19 the first person you go to if they say sorry, it's  
20 not available, you know, they're—they're going to  
21 assume--

22 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing]  
23 Well, I hope that that pharmacist—we've been—we  
24 visited them and the independent pharmacies have done  
25 in-person visits to each of them, and we are seeking

1  
2 to expend the number of independents that are  
3 stocking it and making sure that they train everybody  
4 in-in the store.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: But just to  
6 clarify, so the number today is--there's 700 where  
7 this--

8 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: 700. I-I can get  
9 you the exact number.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So, almost so 98%  
11 or 97% of the original list now are in compliance?

12 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I-I wouldn't use  
13 the word compliance, Council Member because we don't  
14 regulate them. They're volunteering to make Naloxone  
15 available. We're please that they're making the  
16 Naloxone available, and they have through the chains  
17 agreed that they are making it available and training  
18 all of their staff as well was our outreach to the  
19 independent pharmacies. So, I-I don't want to--you  
20 know, I-I really feel that we should be pleased that  
21 these small business people have been stepping up to  
22 the needs of their neighborhood and support them in--  
23 in-in being able to make it available to people  
24 without a prescription, which is what happens when  
25 they have the standing order.

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1  
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: [interposing]  
3 Absolute, but so-so, but just to come here (sic) so  
4 about 97% are following these guidelines as now as  
5 far as your information?

6 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: That's-I'm-the-  
7 the-our list is now 100%. Everyone that we list on  
8 our website--

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: [interposing] Got  
10 it. Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: --is 100%.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: You know, the 720  
14 number has been updated.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, I-I do want to  
16 move onto TB--

17 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing]  
18 Oaky.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: --a disease which  
20 you acknowledged and the Chair certainly emphasized  
21 really reflect-affects the most vulnerable New  
22 Yorkers. These are overwhelmingly immigrants, many  
23 undocumented, any are scared to seek services in the-  
24 in the-because of the horrors of the Trump Era and  
25 how immigrants are treated. And yes, you pointed out

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1 that most cases are contracted abroad but, of course,  
2 they're in New York City now and we have to diagnose  
3 them in New York City. We have to treat them in New  
4 York City, and several years ago we had a network a  
5 chest centers open to do that, and many of them have  
6 now been closed. In the Chair's district there's been  
7 a reduction of hours but some of them have been  
8 outright closed. So, there—there was a chest center  
9 I believe in Bed-Stuy that's been closed, in  
10 Brownsville. I think one on Staten Island, and other  
11 locations. We now are funding this at less than 50%  
12 of what we funded it 10 years ago. The TB is  
13 rebounding up 10% last year as your department  
14 reported. Someone could do the math on this, but I  
15 bet every dollar we spend now in ramping up service  
16 would yield a lot more than a dollar down the road,  
17 and to say nothing of the human suffering that could  
18 be prevented. So, if—if your budget was restored to  
19 double what it is today, what would that mean in  
20 terms of service provision? What could you do to  
21 help stem—stem the rise of this epidemic?

22  
23 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [off mic] I

24 would—[on mic] Sorry, Council Member. The state had—  
25 had reduced our budget in our current fiscal year.

1  
2 They cut our budget for tuberculosis control by about  
3 \$400,000 and were threatening to further reduce the  
4 TB budget. In the current fiscal year, fortunately,  
5 that threat was not realized in the final budget, the  
6 TB prevention and control cut that's now taken.

7 However, the FY18 cut remains in place. We as a city  
8 are committed to maintaining an excellent

9 Tuberculosis Control Program, and we have proceeded

10 with implementing—boosted outreach. As you know, the

11 way that we manage TB is to find the person who is

12 infected, track down their contacts, see if any of

13 those people has TB—have TB, follow them until

14 they're treated to cure, and also seek to identify

15 people who have asymptomatic evidence of infection

16 and prophylaxes. Those are the two key strategies.

17 We boosted outreach and additional funds to maintain

18 clinic hours including evening hours, and weekend

19 hours, which were threatened by the state cut. I'm

20 confident that we have the necessary resources to go

21 forward in the Executive Plan.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Even with the number  
23 of centers that are not totally closed?

24 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: The, you know,

25 there was a time when hat 3,700 cases of Tuberculosis

1 diagnosed in the city. The number of cases has come  
2 down. It came down every year until this past year  
3 in which we saw this 10% reduction. I'm confident  
4 that the ability to maintain accessible hours for  
5 this hard-working immigrant population that often has  
6 TB, and can't—needs evening hours, and weekend hours,  
7 and the increase in outreach workers that we are well  
8 positioned to continue to drive down TB rates. The  
9 budget cut that was threatened was not acceptable.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So, look, I don't  
12 exonerate the state in having reduced funds  
13 substantially in recent years. You know, our job is  
14 just to push that the city fill the gap when  
15 necessary, but I think I'm hearing you say that  
16 you've been able to move some funds around internally  
17 in the department to help shore up some of the gaps,  
18 which—which is certainly better than nothing, but I  
19 don't have to tell you the difference between taking  
20 money from a pot because you have some attrition in  
21 some part of your agency versus actually allocating  
22 money in the budget that's going to be there long-  
23 term year after year. That's obviously what we're  
24 pushing. You—you would probably agree with that, but  
25 I—I do want to move on to the safe congestion

1 facilities and I do want to acknowledge really the  
2 bold leadership of the Mayor in supporting this pilot  
3 program, which will save lives. There are three  
4 people on average dying everyday in the city because  
5 of overdose. This addiction--opioid addiction does  
6 not have to be a death sentence, and as--as you know,  
7 and as you've stated publicly, this is a proven  
8 strategy to reduce fatalities. There was one curious  
9 item in the Mayor's Report that I wanted to ask you  
10 about, which he said that no city funding would be  
11 put into these projects, and it's interesting he  
12 didn't say no Administration funding. So, I'm  
13 wondering whether the--the intention was to--to  
14 preclude even the possibility that the City Council  
15 could use some of this money to support these pilots.

17 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, as you,  
18 we've been guided by advocates in identifying four  
19 potential sites for this one-year research pilot, and  
20 the advocate are confident that they can move forward  
21 with the sites. I'm not aware of the negotiations  
22 they may have had with the Council.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right, but in terms  
24 of the funding, is--is did the--did the Mayor intend  
25 to declare that the City Council--when he said no city

1 money would be included did the Mayor intend to say  
2 the City Council money could not be invested in this  
3 pilot?  
4

5 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I-I-I think he was  
6 talking about our Executive Budget as proposed by the  
7 Mayor.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And are you--

9 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing] I'm  
10 not aware of the negotiations that might have taken  
11 place, but I do know that not only New York, but  
12 other cities, the city of Philadelphia, I believe the  
13 city of San Francisco are--are--similarly have  
14 indicated that they expect principally private  
15 funding. I'll defer to OMB on--on what the definition  
16 of city is in terms of budget speak.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, I want to ask  
18 you about the implementation of the new smoking ban  
19 in public housing in New York City. This will have  
20 health benefits good public health policy, but we  
21 need to make sure we do it right, and I don't think  
22 it's enough only to inform residents of these new  
23 rules, and perhaps do some marketing around why  
24 smoking is bad with sign dumping (sic) developments.  
25 We really need to invest in smoking cessation

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1 programs specifically targeting people who live in  
2 public housing who are now going to have to  
3 transition into this dramatic changing rules. We  
4 just raised taxes on-on tobacco in the last session.  
5 So, we have some money available. Is some of that  
6 money going to be invested into smoking cessation  
7 programs for public housing residents?  
8

9 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: As you know, the-  
10 it's the federal government's mandate on NYCHA that  
11 they implement smoke-free housing by July 30<sup>th</sup> of  
12 this year. The Health Department has worked  
13 collaboratively with NYCHA on providing them with  
14 technical assistance for this. The state runs the  
15 principal cessation service for all residents of the  
16 state and the city, which is a quit line. The number  
17 I should say so that you have it, and everybody here  
18 has it is 1-866-NY-QUITS. Anybody who smokes and  
19 wants to get assistance in stopping smoking can use  
20 this number.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright, if-could-  
22 could there not be on-the-ground services provided in  
23 NYCHA developments that would help-that would be  
24 targeted to smokers to help them quit other than just  
25 calling the phone number?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, the-the  
3 phone number is not just a phone number. They make  
4 medication, Nicotine replacement available to smokers  
5 who after interview seem appropriate for NRT.

6           CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And is funding  
7 available for NYCHA residents who want to pay for  
8 cessation medications or patches or other--?

9           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: But these are made  
10 available at no charge through the State Quit Line.

11           CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Alright. I'm a  
12 strong supporter of our Health Action Centers, and-  
13 and give you due credit for having brought them back  
14 to life in recent years. We're only in three  
15 neighborhoods right now. It's a very big city.  
16 There are large low-income communities, communities  
17 of color without a Health Action Center: Jamaica,  
18 the Rockaways, North Shore of Staten Island to name  
19 three that-that come to mind. I was very frustrated  
20 by the response of the OMB Director in the recent  
21 hearing. I think it was the Chair who asked about  
22 this. It might have been another one of our  
23 colleagues, and the response was: Well, there's no  
24 evidence that these work. Now, you know, that's not  
25 really the way things happen in public health

1 interventions. You don't—in very, very, very few  
2 cases do you get a statistically significant provable  
3 impact on a neighborhood intervention in public  
4 health, but we—we don't need that to know that a  
5 program which helps residents eat and prepare healthy  
6 food is going to yield benefits in obesity and all  
7 the attendant diseases. Science already proves that  
8 that works. We already know that when you train new  
9 mothers on how to put their baby to sleep that you  
10 have a reduction in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome,  
11 SIDS, this is one of the programs that you're  
12 providing there. We already know that when you  
13 provide mental health counseling, it reduces rates of  
14 suicide. So, all these things are—are established.  
15 So, why—why do we need to wait until we get data on—  
16 on impact in East—in East Harlem before we can roll  
17 out these services in Jamaica and Rockaways and the  
18 North Shore of Staten Island?

19  
20 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: That whispering  
21 was just me asking what, you know, what was said, but  
22 I—I won't get into that. I—I—I think that you  
23 understand the rationale for having on-the-ground  
24 Health Department staff covering an array of—of—of  
25 activities that we pride ourselves as an agency in

1 implementing evidence-based programs. We have  
2 implemented this model one that really replicates the  
3 notions of Mayor La Guardia of having district health  
4 offices because these neighborhoods are ones that  
5 have a higher disease burden across a whole array of  
6 conditions as compared to other parts of the city.  
7 The three neighborhoods in which we are based  
8 presently East and Central Harlem, Central North  
9 Brooklyn, Big Swath at the South Bronx remain the  
10 neighborhoods with the highest disease burden, but I  
11 agree with you that there are other neighborhoods  
12 which have—have higher disease burdens than others,  
13 but these are the ones in which we continue to focus  
14 our efforts.  
15

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: One of those  
17 neighborhoods that I mentioned was Jamaica, and I  
18 realize we have been joined, by the way, by the local  
19 Council Member Adrienne Adams, who I know cares a lot  
20 about this issue. Because Mayor La Guardia in his  
21 wisdom built these district health offices, the  
22 buildings are there for the most part, and because  
23 we're leveraging CBOs who are in these buildings  
24 doing a lot of the direct service provision, the  
25 actual cost to the city for each one of these center

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1 I believe you informed us in another hearing was only  
2 a million dollars per center. We're used to talking  
3 about programs which have \$10 million, \$100 million  
4 price tags. So, I-I do want to move on, but I'm just  
5 going to observe that—that the return on investment  
6 here is pretty impressive considering the  
7 infrastructures are already in place. We had a  
8 hearing last month on animal care centers oversight  
9 on—on that entity, and one—one of the things emerged—  
10 that merged—emerged out of the hearing is that we can  
11 invest in successful components of that operation,  
12 and reduce or increase the live release rate, and I  
13 do want to acknowledge how much ACC has increased the  
14 live release rate already. Up to now 92 of 93%, one  
15 of the highest in the country. I don't minimize  
16 that, but I know you share and ACC shares the desire  
17 to make this even better, and to and to continue to  
18 push those numbers higher and we have programs, which  
19 do that that are in place and limited extent  
20 currently at ACC like mobile adoption vans, like  
21 offering food pantries to low-income pet owners, and  
22 there's other programs, which can help low-income pet  
23 owners keep their pets in their homes. Adding  
24 capacity in a—in the centers so that we can isolate  
25

1 animals who might be contagious adding to veterinary  
2 services. We identified these and many other great  
3 programs that we are confident would increase the  
4 live release rate further. There was no additional  
5 money in the budget for ACC. Can you explain why not  
6 and whether we can get funding to continue to improve  
7 the work of ACC?  
8

9 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I'm very glad  
10 Council Member, Chair that you recognize how well  
11 AC&C and is doing. Their live release rate is 93%  
12 now is among the highest in the country, and we're a  
13 very big city, and many of our dogs that are  
14 surrendered to the animal care center are pit bulls,  
15 which are often difficult to adopt. So, they've done  
16 a terrific job working with others. I expect that  
17 they will continue to do this work. You know that we  
18 are working on capital investments. I thought your  
19 question might be about that. We're committed to  
20 having five full service shelters one in each of our  
21 boroughs, and we are at work on getting the adoption  
22 center repurposed from what had been a garage in East  
23 Harlem. All of these will also be added capacity  
24 to AC&C. I-I-I, you know, I am very proud of their  
25

1 work and I-I feel that they can continue doing this  
2 work with their current budget.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay, the Centers  
5 for Disease Control has put out a report that Vector-  
6 borne diseases, which is jargon for things you get  
7 from ticks and fleas, et cetera are on the rise, lime  
8 disease probably being the most prevalent in our  
9 region. Can you comment on the increase in these  
10 diseases in New York City, and the extent to which  
11 you are going to allocate more staff and other  
12 resources to monitor or prevent and treat these  
13 diseases in the face of-of what is arise in-in-in  
14 these conditions, which we believe has led-driven by  
15 global warming by the way.

16 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Right.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: It sadly means it's  
18 not going away, and so let's-let's start to prepare-  
19 to prepare for long-term battle against Vector-borne  
20 diseases.

21 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: You are-you are  
22 correct. This is likely related to-t climate change  
23 and I-I think in our current political climate we  
24 should take very opportunity to point out that  
25 climate change is real. The-the Vector-borne

1 diseases that we concern ourselves with at the  
2 department also include those that are related to  
3 mosquito-borne diseases. It's any disease in which  
4 the—the pathogen is carried by a vector rather than  
5 person to person, and we have robust programs  
6 tackling Vector-borne diseases. We have national  
7 experts in our agency who focus on this. We have  
8 seen a rise in tick-borne diseases in—in New York  
9 City as well as across the country. I'll get you--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: [interposing] Can  
12 you quantify that?

13 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I have to get you  
14 the numbers, but I want to point out one thing, their  
15 money—I mean for the last two—two years that I have  
16 the numbers available 2015 and 2016 they were running  
17 about flat at about 950 cases reported to us each  
18 year. I want to point out that the majority of  
19 individuals who get a tick-borne disease, the most  
20 common of which is lime disease, acquire it outside  
21 of the city limits, but we are seeing cases and our  
22 surveillance suggests because we survey not just the—  
23 the people with the diseases but the ticks to see  
24 whether they have the virus, the viruses. We ae

1 seeing more of them in--particularly in the Bronx  
2 and Staten Island.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So, what are we  
5 doing about that? Are we allocating more resources?

6 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, we have a  
7 program that--that's aimed at deer control. As you  
8 know, the--the--the tick that carries the bacteria that  
9 cause lime disease is often found on deer, and we  
10 have a program in Staten Island to sterilize the male  
11 deer--Staten Island is an island--so that control of  
12 that deer population is possible, and it's been done  
13 through male sterilization. It's a little more  
14 complex in the Bronx, which is on the Mainland so the  
15 deer, you know, can just walk there.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you. Finally,  
17 I want to ask about Hepatitis D and C, which afflicts  
18 people who are really on the margins of our society.  
19 It's often people who have HIV, intravenous drug  
20 users and various immigrant groups. It is a lot more  
21 prevalent than the average New Yorker understands for  
22 that reason because it's not in the press. We have  
23 a--a strange patchwork of programs to combat, Hep-C an  
24 it results in very uneven funding of the testing, and  
25 I think there's some settings where the testing is

1 free, and there's some that works on a sliding scale,  
2 and there's some where the patient just has to pay  
3 the full cost. And so in my district we have a  
4 wonderful non-profit African Services Committee. You  
5 might know them, where they'll have people who come  
6 in for an HIV test, and as you all know there's a  
7 very high correlation between HIV and—and Hepatitis  
8 because you have compromised the immune system. And  
9 the HIV test is free, and so the patient will receive  
10 the test, and then they're told the Hepatitis test is  
11 \$30, and we're generally talking about very low-  
12 income New Yorkers for whom that could be at a  
13 minimum difficult to pay for if not insurmountable,  
14 and so African Services Committee reports that only  
15 10% of the patients are getting the Hep test, which  
16 to me just seems crazy for such a cheap test. I mean  
17 there are medical tests, which cost hundreds of  
18 dollars. This one I think is—they're charging \$30.  
19 So, could the city not be funding the Hep test in all  
20 settings, and can you explain the inconsistencies?

22 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, I—I know  
23 that in our clinics where we—we offer testing in a—in  
24 a—as part of the assessment of somebody with HIV  
25 infection. So, we do offer Hepatitis C testing, and

1  
2 in our setting we—we don't allow cost to be a barrier  
3 for care. I wanted to note that we also provide  
4 contraception in that clinic—contraception in  
5 clinics. As you know, they barely are. (sic) You  
6 know, the—I'm—I'm—I'm not sure that I can speak to  
7 our whole healthcare delivery system, which, as you  
8 now, is fragmented and complex. For people who lack  
9 health insurance the public hospital system is—is  
10 always open to them as are our clinics.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. I'm—I'm  
12 going to close. I just going to pass it off to—to my  
13 colleague, but the—the communities, which are  
14 vulnerable to Hepatitis are often living on the  
15 margins, and we need to serve them where we can meet  
16 them, and they're often far more comfortable coming  
17 into a community-based organization, which has—  
18 literally speaks their language just for serving  
19 immigrants, or in other words as—in other words as  
20 cultural competency, and I think if we have to send  
21 them to an H&H facility many of them are not going to  
22 make it there. And so, I'd like to work with you to  
23 close the gaps in—in this service provision so that  
24 we're making sure we meet people where they are for

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1 this important test. Thank you Commissioner. Thank  
2 you, Mr. Chair.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Chair  
5 Ayala.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

7 Commissioner, regarding the Supervised Injection  
8 facilities DOHMH's plan would establish over those  
9 prevention centers inside non-profits that already  
10 function as needed to exchange sites. Proposed sites  
11 include Housing Works, 37<sup>th</sup> Street Health Clinic in  
12 Chelsea, Vocal New York and Gowanus, Brooklyn,  
13 Washington Heights, Corner Project and Washington  
14 Heights, Manhattan and Saint Ann's the corner of harm  
15 reduction and Longwood the Bronx. Since the release  
16 of the report this month have-have you encountered  
17 any major challenges or opposition to the plan that  
18 may impede its progress?

19 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I don't believe  
20 we've heard back from the commissioner. I don't  
21 believe we've heard back from the State Health  
22 Commissioner on the request for him to support a  
23 resolution so that we can institute a one-year pilot  
24 research study.

25

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1                   CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is there a timeline?

2  
3                   No?

4                   COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, the sooner  
5                   the better.

6                   CHAIRPERSON AYALA: No, I agree, but I  
7                   wonder if, you know, if anyone--

8                   COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing]  
9                   Well, I can't give him--well the letter was written by  
10                  the Deputy--Deputy Mayor Palacio, but I--I don't  
11                  believe we can give a deadline. We look forward to  
12                  hearing from him. I understand from him that he's  
13                  working on it.

14                  CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Now, assuming that,  
15                  you know, he's--he's okay, and that we're able to  
16                  implement, what would be the community outreach  
17                  process? What would that look like in neighborhoods  
18                  that have been selected?

19                  COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, as outlined  
20                  by the Mayor when he indicated that he would like to  
21                  see this go forward, the--there are a couple of steps,  
22                  one is the State Health Commissioner. The other is  
23                  the local district attorney, the representative of  
24                  the City Council for that area, and then a 6 to 12-  
25                  month period will take place when an advisory council

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1  
2 comprised of various city agencies including Health,  
3 the Police Department as well as community-based  
4 organizations, you know, an array of community  
5 representatives. The elected officials will all  
6 begin a community engagement process to figure out  
7 how this place will work.

8           CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Alright, thank you.  
9 Regarding the Crisis Response Services. So, as part  
10 of the Healing NYC the Fiscal 2019 Executive Budget  
11 allocates \$5.7 million and 29 positions in Fiscal  
12 2020 to expand the capacity of the Health and  
13 Engagement Assessment Team. The additional funding  
14 and staff will support coordination first of the 24/7  
15 Triage Staff operated by DOHMH and the New York City  
16 Police Department. How did the Administration  
17 determine this funding need, and how would this  
18 expansion improve the city's response to opioid  
19 overdoses?

20           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I think you're  
21 talking about HEAT, the Health Engagement--

22           CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] Yes.

23           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: --Assessment  
24 Teams. Well, the idea here is to continue our move  
25 towards a public health response to mental crises and

1 these will deploy mental health professionals and  
2 peer, people living with mental illness as a first  
3 line of response to people who are assessed by the  
4 Triage unit to be appropriate for that type of  
5 response rather than any police department response.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Diabetes prevention.

8 So according to DOHMH Epidata brief from April 2014,  
9 Black, Hispanic and Asian New Yorkers are at least  
10 twice as likely to have diabetes as New Yorkers as  
11 White New York City. Diabetes also disproportionately  
12 affects high poverty New York City communities  
13 including East Harlem and the South Bronx. What  
14 specific diabetes related community outreach does  
15 DOHMH conduct or facilitate in these high need  
16 neighborhoods?

17 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: You are right to  
18 point out that diabetes is a serious health problem.  
19 It is among our top ten leading cause off death, and  
20 has been rising up through the ranks. So, we have a  
21 whole array of-of efforts that are aimed at tackling  
22 the diabetes problem starting with prevention, which  
23 is aimed mainly at tackling the problem of overweight  
24 and obesity focusing on healthy foods even promoting  
25 breast feeding to-to-for newborns is part of an

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1 obesity prevention agenda specifically focused on  
2 diabetes. We are supporting the National Diabetes  
3 Prevention Program.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I mean I-I-I can  
6 speak specifically from my-in my district. I don't-I  
7 just-I-I know that it's prevalent. I don't really  
8 feel like we're hearing enough about it or seeing it  
9 enough. So, I-I really just don't--

10 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I appreciate that  
11 feedback.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Can you tell us how-  
13 how does the-so, how does the agency cater its  
14 diabetes outreach like to engage these low-income  
15 communities? I know Borough President Diaz has  
16 launched like this #Now 62 Campaign, which has been  
17 pretty exciting for Bronxites. We've seen residents  
18 just take control over their developments and start,  
19 you know, exercise classes and healthy eating  
20 programming because of that campaign. I'm not sure  
21 if you're familiar with it, but yeah, yeah.

22 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Absolutely. Our  
23 Bronx office is a-is an active participant in #Now  
24 62. So, we do a number of community-based  
25 activities, many of them coming out of our

1  
2 Neighborhood Health Action Centers, and focused on  
3 neighborhoods which have—know have high rates of  
4 diabetes and high rates of poorly controlled  
5 diabetes. For example, in East Harlem, we have been  
6 running now for a couple of years Community Health  
7 Worker project aimed at—at public housing where we  
8 aim to reach people who have diabetes, high blood  
9 pressure, asthma and work with them to both—to better  
10 manage their self-manage their conditions, and also  
11 to better cooperate with medical care. The outreach  
12 workers do coaching on disease management, and we  
13 also support community activities like advocating for  
14 farmers markets within the developments, walking  
15 clubs, things of that sort. So, I, you know, I'd  
16 love to tell you more about these—about these. I—I  
17 think that this is something that people have to  
18 integrate into their daily lives. It's not a simple  
19 issue, but certainly we can do much better.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Regarding the Crisis  
21 Prevention and Response Task Force, last month Mayor  
22 de Blasio and First Lady McCray and members of the  
23 City Council launched the New York City Crisis  
24 Prevention and Response Task Force, a 180-day effort  
25 to develop a comprehensive citywide strategy to

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1 prevent mental health crisis and improve the city's  
2 response to emotionally distressed New Yorkers. What  
3 role does--what role will the DOHMH play in the task  
4 force, and how will the task force's efforts to  
5 improve New York City's Mental Health system defer  
6 from the programs and services funded through  
7 ThriveNYC?

9 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: As you're aware,  
10 this is a task force that is given 18-180 days, a  
11 six-month time frame in which to come up with advice.  
12 It's seeking to build on activities that we've  
13 already initiated that will help us to have a broader  
14 range of responses to mental health, and crises in  
15 our neighborhoods. And I hope we'll build on efforts  
16 like Co-Response, HEAT and so on. The Health  
17 Department will be working on it with other agencies  
18 including the Police Department. It will be chaired  
19 by the First Deputy Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for  
20 Health and Human Services.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you know if there  
22 is--if there will be any representation from The  
23 Department of Education because we have been getting  
24 a lot of inquiries from educators regarding the  
25 emergency response by police officers in our local

1 schools when children are suffering from some sort of  
2 emotional distress?

3  
4 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I don't know but  
5 I—I would expect—I would expect that the Department  
6 of Education is involved. The answer is yes, the  
7 Department of Ed of Education is involved. So that  
8 it's something that cuts across many of our agencies  
9 as a city.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Great, and I will ask  
11 my last question because I—we're running out of time,  
12 and I want to afford my colleagues an opportunity to  
13 ask questions, but regarding disabilities, I ask this  
14 all the time. I just feel that as a city we're not  
15 doing enough, you know, to—to really deal with this,  
16 but there, you know, funding for mental health and  
17 substance abuse services in DOHMH's Operating Budget  
18 has grown substantially in recent years. Funding in  
19 the Fiscal Year 2019 Executive Budget for mental  
20 health services increased by more than \$132 million  
21 when compared to the Fiscal 2016 Budget, and funding  
22 for substance abuse services increased by  
23 approximately \$34 million. Funding for developmental  
24 disabilities, however, has remained flat at \$12  
25 million.

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COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Why hasn't the  
Administration made meaningful investments in  
programs and services for people with developmental  
disabilities?

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, I'm hopeful  
that we are doing a good job with our—with the  
funding that we have, and I would—I would agree with  
you that many of the things that we do that help  
people with disabilities help all of us. It's  
something not under the purview of our agency, but  
done by the Department of Transportation. The curb  
cutouts I think all of us appreciate when we pull a  
cart over the curb. So, it's not just for the  
disabled, but we, you know, we'll take under  
advisement your remarks and—and, you know, take a  
look at our programming strategy. I don't know  
whether you have any specific recommendations, but  
we'd be happy to discuss this with you.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I'm—I'm happy to  
share them with you, and I mean just to the  
Administration I will keep hammering you over the  
head over this every single hearing because I think  
that it's really important, and I—it was staggering

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1 to me when I was looking at the numbers. We've  
2 remained flat for the last, you know, few—several  
3 fiscal years, and it just—it makes no sense to me  
4 when have, you know, just about under a million, you  
5 know, individuals that living with disabilities in  
6 this, you know, in the city, and so I appreciate any  
7 effort to move that—that conversation along.  
8

9 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, we now have  
12 questions from Council Members Holden followed by  
13 Adams and the Powers.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thanks

15 Commissioner for your testimony. I have a few  
16 questions. I want to follow up on Chair Dromm's  
17 issues with lead. Now, I've had an incident and I—I  
18 guess you're aware of it in my district where a sewer  
19 project was underway and—and the contractor took soil  
20 from the found and tried to bring it to a soil dump,  
21 and they rejected it because of the high lead levels,  
22 and subsequently the study was done on the—soil and  
23 it was discovered that there were lead levels between  
24 3 and 600, and possibly 2,400 parts per million,  
25 which is hazardous. The soil was actually dumped

1 uncovered across from a local public school with  
2 about a thousand—over a thousand children. For five  
3 months it was left there uncovered, and we uncovered  
4 it—you know, we actually discovered this and with the  
5 subsequent lead levels in the ground of 2,400 and the  
6 sewer project was stopped. Yet, I've asked your  
7 office and I've asked the Mayor's Office to issue an  
8 advisory to the people who live in the area of the  
9 sewer project against planting. People plant  
10 vegetables, certain leafy vegetables and grow and  
11 that's a consideration, that's a concern that we need  
12 and advisory put out. Also, there was no lead  
13 testing offered to the children or the parents of the  
14 children in the school, which I thought should have  
15 been an afterthought. It's certainly something that  
16 we—we—we certainly should do or offer because lead,  
17 you know, ingesting lead with children—certainly with  
18 children ingesting lead chips, paint chips is one way  
19 to get lead poisoning and breathing dust is another  
20 way, lead dust—lead-laced dust. So, I—I can't  
21 understand since no lead levels are good for anyone  
22 certainly children that we wouldn't take the  
23 precaution to test the children in—in the school at  
24 least. But I also want to just--another part of the  
25

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question is how do we know the numbers? I mean I  
guess you get it from the Department of Education  
because children are tested per year, each year?

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: So, let me begin  
with your last questions--

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Alright.

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: --and I'm try and--  
and work through them, and--

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I know I'm on the  
clock. So, I've got 30 seconds.

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Oh, is that right.  
Well, the way that it's recommended that children be  
tested at age 2 and age 2-age 1 and age 2. In fact  
it's the law that children be tested at age 1 and age  
2. We rely on physicians who see children  
particularly in their first year of life often, and  
are in the position to recommend testing to children.  
So, the Health Department doesn't actually do any  
lead testing. We rely on our Healthcare system and  
children's visits to the pediatricians to get the  
lead tests done and they are referred to us. We  
receive from the labs all of the lead test results.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, because--  
because I look at--

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1  
2           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing] So,  
3 it's not--by the time the kid gets to school I want  
4 you to know that's not the age at which we want kids  
5 to be tested for the first time. A lot of lead  
6 exposure has to do with ingestion and the hands-in-  
7 mouth activities that little children have. So,  
8 that's how we find out by receiving the blood lead  
9 results.

10           COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay.

11           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: You had a question  
12 about--about planting in our soil.

13           COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right.

14           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Most of the lead  
15 in our soil from New York City is from the days of  
16 leaded gasoline, and we in general recommend that  
17 people not plant in the soil because end-use planters  
18 use, you know, get a box and fill it with good soil  
19 that you--that you buy, and plant. So, I--I don't--I--I--  
20 I don't know whether you feel that your constituency  
21 is not aware that this is the recommendation.

22           COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: No, they aren't  
23 aware of it.

24           COMMISSIONER BASSETT: So, that--that's a--  
25 a good thing for you I mean actually.

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1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] I  
3 don't how many people here are aware of that.

4 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Really?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Certainly in a—in  
6 an area that's—was a dump, actually a city dump at  
7 one time.

8 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, not that—I  
9 mean unfortunately, you know, the presence of lead  
10 in—in—in gas, you remember that notion that lead  
11 stopped the engine from knocking or something like  
12 that, resulted in widespread lead contamination of  
13 soil. So, we don't recommend that people plant in  
14 this soil. The main exposure for lead is lead paint,  
15 and that remains the focus of our agency. We—we  
16 don't see lead and soil as a particularly prominent  
17 exposure. We are focused on the principal exposure,  
18 which is from lead paint chips and lead dust, which  
19 are right--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] Yes.  
21 I—I know my time is up, but I just have one just  
22 quick follow-up, and then I'll reserve for later.  
23 The area I'm talking—I'm not talking about all over  
24 the city. I'm talking about the levels of lead  
25 that's proven for 2,400 parts per million--

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COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --which is hazardous, which in an area, and it's not a large area, that the Department of Health issued an advisory to people or just a mailing or some kind of notice in their door that they probably shouldn't plant especially in this soil and build boxes above it, and that's all I ask, and that's not a big thing I think.

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing]

Well, I'm happy to discuss it with you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, next Council Member Adams.

COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Good morning and thank you, Chairs for holding this hearing this morning. My questions are going to revolve around Cure Violence. I represent District 28 in Queens, South Jamaica and two days ago we experienced the first killing in four years. I'm sure you're aware. So, we pretty much took to the streets yesterday in support of our community. The community is very shaken up by this. We have unrest of--by the residents as well as surrounding residents in the community. We're very grateful to organizations like

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1 Life Camp and King of Kings Foundation for the great  
2 work that they do. So, what I would like to know is  
3 the Fiscal 2019 Executive Plan allocates \$20—I'm  
4 sorry, \$75,000 annually to the Department of Health  
5 and Mental Hygiene to hire a training coordinator for  
6 the Cure Violence program that's evidence-based  
7 initiative supported by the Mayor's Office to prevent  
8 gun violence. How specifically would you coordinate  
9 with organizations like Life Camp and King of Kings  
10 in an effort to support the Cure Violence Initiative?  
11

12 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Thank you for that  
13 question. As you're probably aware, New York City  
14 has among the largest Cure Violence Programs in the  
15 nation. I believe we have 17 different locations,  
16 and Life Camp has been a key part of—of the Cure  
17 Violence work. It's coordinated now through the  
18 Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, which adds  
19 wraparound services in addition to the Cure Violence  
20 program, which is a public health oriented program  
21 towards ending Cure Violence. The person who would  
22 be hired at the Health Department would play a  
23 coordinating and technical assistance role in  
24 supporting the organizations that implement Cure  
25 violence. We have been playing this role with Cure

1 Violence since it first came to the city, and—and I,  
2 you know, I'm—we're big supporters of this program.

3 I am aware of the shooting and the individual who  
4 lost his life, and—and, you know, I—I think that the  
5 work that Erica Garner—Oh, I got her name wrong.

6 Erica Ford. Sorry. That's another victim is Erica  
7 Garner. Erica Ford has done in—in LIFE CAMP has been  
8 pretty remarkable.

9  
10 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I agree. It's  
11 exemplary work. What is the Department of Health and  
12 Mental Hygiene's role in the Cure Violence  
13 Initiative? How does the agency work—specifically  
14 work with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice to  
15 implement and evaluate the program?

16 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Well, we have—the  
17 part of the program that we're responsible for is  
18 the—the—the public health aspect of it that contracts  
19 with the community-based organizations that are held  
20 by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, thank you  
22 very much, and—and I hope that we are in agreement  
23 that violence is indeed a mental health issue.

24 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: And a public  
25 health issue.

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1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: And a public  
3 health issue.

4 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: We are in  
5 agreement.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you very  
7 much for your testimony.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Council Member  
9 Powers.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you. Thank  
11 you for being here and testifying. I had received a  
12 concern around the time that the DOH, yeah, I think  
13 part of the process for receiving, if you're a person  
14 with disabilities concerns about the timing related  
15 to getting the parking permit for people with  
16 disabilities and DOT has informed me that there's  
17 some delays. It appears that the Department of  
18 Health related some of the disabilities getting their  
19 medical records approved. So, I-I'm not sure if  
20 you're familiar with this or somebody?

21 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I'm familiar with  
22 the issue, but I-I would need to get back to you on  
23 the specific concern that you have, because actually  
24 it was doing better.

25

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COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: [interposing]

Well, I'll send you the specific concern. My  
question is how many physicians or medical aspects  
(sic) to review the records and—and potentially  
that's a—a reason that there's a delay? How many—how  
many people are reviewing it?

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I'll have to get  
back to you with that information.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: There's somebody  
here who might have an answer?

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: There might be as  
there is somebody who is standing behind me.  
[laughter] But we—we can get those details for you.  
We—we certainly have—in the past we've contracted  
that service and we've—we've maintained contracts  
with people who do the reviews on our behalf.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Are you  
contracts—is that what you're doing?

COMMISSIONER BASSETT: We don't actually  
employ—we haven't employed full-time physicians to do  
these reviews, but I—I'll have to find the details  
for the—for you and happy to get back to you about  
it. We certainly don't want people to have to wait a  
long time to get back to them.

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1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I will. I will  
3 send the specific--so I would just note, though, that  
4 I didn't think that was a radical question to ask how  
5 many folks were reviewing it. So, certainly at--at a  
6 hearing I would appreciate it if some of that  
7 information was available, but we'll follow up with  
8 the--with the appropriate person at the agency to find  
9 out the answer.

10 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Thank you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Yep, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council member Holden  
13 has some follow-ups.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Commissioner on  
15 the--I want to do it quickly, a quick question. No  
16 funding got the animal shelter in Queens the full-  
17 service animal shelter. You said you're committed  
18 to--your agency is committed to the--the shelter?

19 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Not just our  
20 agency, our Administration--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] I  
22 know the Administration

23 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: -- is absolutely  
24 committed to it.

25

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1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Alright, the  
3 Administration is committed, but there's no money in  
4 the Capital Budget. [background comments]

5 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Those funds will  
6 be--will be available. We have \$5 million for the  
7 design components of it, and as the process proceeds,  
8 the funds are committed. The Administration has made  
9 it very clear that it is committed to having a full  
10 service animal shelter in every--in every borough.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Show me the  
12 money. That's what we--that's what we need--really  
13 need, because Queens seems to be--

14 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing]  
15 Well, last the--we had \$98 million put in our budget--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right.

17 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: --in capital  
18 funds.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing]  
20 Yeah, I understand.

21 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: I--I think that  
22 that should give us the--the--the funds will be there.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. On the  
24 question of outreach because my--my--my police precinct

25

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1 captain just told me--[bell] Oh, can I go?--about  
2  
3 the--

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Go ahead, Bob.

5 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Can I go?

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, Council Member.

7 I'm sorry. [pause] [background comments]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, the-the  
9 mic--the commander of my police precinct, the local  
10 precinct says that we--we--we lead the city or  
11 consistently in opioid overdoses 1 and 2. Can you  
12 tell us the outreach that you're doing to--to actually  
13 notify people, you know, people who are victims  
14 obviously or of addiction of parents in the outreach  
15 that your agency is doing?

16 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Sure. I mean  
17 we're--we're doing a lot because as you note, our city  
18 has the highest number of overdose deaths that we've  
19 ever had on--on record at present. We have a larger  
20 citywide campaign going now. It's the third round in  
21 a citywide campaign. We focused on promoting the  
22 people have Naloxone. We'd be happy to come to your  
23 office and offer Naloxone, you know work with you to  
24 set up Naloxone training programs. We also want  
25 people to understand that treatment is available to

1 them. Additionally, when we see a surge in overdose  
2 deaths in any particular community we have as part of  
3 our newly funded initiative under Healing NYC a sort  
4 of outreach team that goes out into the neighborhood  
5 and makes sure that healthcare providers in the  
6 neighborhood are aware of the increase in overdose  
7 deaths, and that people are aware of the role of  
8 Naloxone in reversing overdose deaths.  
9

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But I—I came from  
11 the advertising world, and I know how you could  
12 target certain populations and certain age groups.  
13 What's the age group that's most like to—to overdose?

14 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Interestingly,  
15 many times people think this will be somebody who's  
16 20 years old, but the—the peak in overdose deaths is  
17 people between 40 and mid-50s.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I heard that--

19 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: [interposing] Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --which is  
21 surprising. So, I just want to know--

22 COMMISSIONER BASSETT: Right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --how do you  
24 reach these people? I mean do you text them? Do  
25 you—do we—do we do massive outreach that way?



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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We'll take a five-  
minute break. [pause for break] Okay, thank you.  
We will now resume the City Council's hearing on the  
Mayor's Executive Budget for Fiscal 19. The Finance  
Committee is joined by the Committee on Cultural  
Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup  
Relations chair by Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer.  
We've also been joined by Council Members Francisco  
Moya, Council Member Adrienne Adams, and I believe  
others will be coming shortly. We just heard from  
the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and now  
we'll hear from Tony Marx, President and CEO the New  
York Public Library; Dennis Walcott, President and  
CEO of the Queens Public Library, and Linda Johnson,  
President and CEO of the Brooklyn Public Library.  
Libraries are no longer just a place for books and  
silent retreat. Libraries across the country are  
responding to the changing demand and are being  
challenge to reform their roles and purposes. The  
focus was one circulation, and while circulation is  
till crucial to the systems, libraries now provide  
free services and programs for children and teens,  
immigrants and seniors, New Yorkers who lack access  
to a broadband at home, people who need literacy

1 services, New Yorkers who are actively looking for  
2 jobs and small business owners. Therefore, I am  
3 disappointed that the Administration did not include  
4 the additional \$16 million in expense funding and \$60  
5 million in capital funding for the libraries that the  
6 Council recommended in the Preliminary Budget. This  
7 fiscal year, one area in particular that we are  
8 bringing a renewed focus to is the city's Capital  
9 Program. For the first time the Council has  
10 established a subcommittee to focus exclusively on  
11 the Capital Budget and process led by Chair Vanessa  
12 Gibson. The subcommittee will play an integral part  
13 in the next few months in our oversight of the  
14 proposed budget as we strive to reform the capital  
15 process. It concerns me that the library systems has  
16 such as low capital commitment rate. In Fiscal 2017,  
17 the Library Systems committed \$18.5 million or 4.3%  
18 of the Annual Capital Plan of \$433.6 million. The  
19 progress and issues surrounding capital projects  
20 needs to be an ongoing discussion between the  
21 Council, DDC and the library systems that we can find  
22 solutions to the problems. Before we hear from the  
23 libraries, I'll open the mic to my Co-Chair Council  
24 Member Van Bramer for his statement.  
25

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: thank you

[coughs] very much, Chair Dromm and to all of the  
library workers and supporters who are here. I  
welcome you into the Chambers now that we have  
rallied on the steps, and I want to channel Lauren  
Comiteau who just delivered a rousing address  
outside, and just say dispensing with all the talking  
points, we know what libraries mean, we know what you  
need. What you're asking for is not that much. With  
respect to a \$90 billion budget, we have the means to  
do this. We just need the political will to make it  
happen, and the people of the City of New York  
benefit so much by a relatively small investment, and  
we just have to do it, and we have to do it now. And  
I don't know if Lauren is still here with us? She  
had to go? Of course, back to work, but I hope  
you'll let her know that I shouted her out, and we're  
channeling here, and I hope the three presidents and  
CEOs also channel Lauren Comiteau in their testimony  
because we know that's the challenge, Dennis, right  
there. [laughs] She was plain spoken. She spoke  
truth to power, and we have to do this. The people  
of the City of New York are desperately in need of  
these services. On the expense side we know what we

1  
2 need in order to make sure that libraries can stay  
3 open, library workers can continue to be paid what  
4 they're worth, and to make sure that our library  
5 buildings are in a state of good repair. We need a  
6 library system that's as good and worthy as the  
7 people you serve and the people who work inside the  
8 libraries. So, obviously this council has always led  
9 the way. We have always led the way in pushing hard  
10 for our public libraries. I know we'll continue to  
11 do that. That's why our Budget Response called for  
12 the \$16 million. Again, a relatively drop in the  
13 bucket of a \$90 billion budget. It is doable. The  
14 \$60 million in capital continuing to invest it can  
15 happen, it should happen, it must happen. So, I want  
16 to thank our colleagues for their Queens Panel right  
17 now, but we love all five boroughs equally, as I said  
18 outside, and we're going to deliver for all of our  
19 libraries. So, with that, anxious to hear the  
20 testimony. Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much,  
22 Chair Van Bramer, and I'm going to ask Council to  
23 swear the panel. Oh, we don't want to swear this  
24 panel in that's right. I like to swear you in, but  
25 we'll let you go.

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LINDA JOHNSON: We're libraries. We tell  
the truth.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [laughs] Right,  
exactly. Alright, would you like to start?

LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you Chairman Van  
Bramer, Chair Dromm. Thank you also for giving a  
shout out to Lauren Comiteau from the Great Library  
in Mill Basin. She used language that we all I think  
we could use this morning, but we'll try and tone it  
down a bit now that we're inside. We are grateful to  
you, to your committee to Speaker Johnson to Majority  
Cumbo and our Brooklyn Delegation and the entire City  
Council for supporting New York City's libraries.  
We're proud of the advances set in motion three years  
ago when you made it possible for us to provide  
universal six-day service. We depend on your  
dedication to our libraries among the city's most  
democratic institutions. So we can help over 37  
million New Yorkers we see each year. To continue to  
serve the public at the level they have come to  
expect and deserve, we need the city's increased  
support. Unfortunately, the Executive Budget did not  
include an increase for libraries. The Fiscal 2019  
Tri-Library Budget Request is modest yet urgent. We

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1 are seeking an additional \$16 million in operating  
2 funds to be split among the three library systems,  
3 paired with an increase of \$60 million in capital  
4 dollars. Without additional expense funds this year,  
5 we will face difficult choices ahead. For Brooklyn  
6 Public Library, the \$4.5 million in operating funds  
7 we are requesting will allow us to continue providing  
8 six-day service a week, maintain our physical spaces  
9 and expand our collections. The cost of library  
10 services over the last three years has increased but  
11 our Operating Budget has not. People rely heavily on  
12 their local libraries and nowhere is that more  
13 evident than in our program attendance. Last Fiscal  
14 Year Brooklyn Public Library held over 63,000 program  
15 sessions across all age groups with nearly a million  
16 attendees. We are the borough—we are the borough's  
17 largest provider of free WiFi hosting 555,000  
18 connections and over 1.3 million computer sessions.  
19 It is standing room only for children and the  
20 caregivers at our weekly story time programs offered  
21 in every branch in multiple language and as often as  
22 possible. Our services aim to engage families, jobs  
23 seekers older adults, veterans, homeless immigrants,  
24 teens, entrepreneurs, truly everyone is welcome here.  
25

1  
2 Brooklyn Public Library has encouraged innovation, by  
3 providing mentorship and resources to library staff  
4 with creative new ideas through the BPL Incubator.  
5 However, staff costs have risen dramatically and our  
6 popular and innovative programming could be at stake  
7 if another year goes by without additional operating  
8 dollars. Just last weekend, central library was  
9 teaming with excitement for the inaugural runway show  
10 of Brooklyn Fashion Academy, a pilot program of the  
11 BPL Incubator. The first of its kind, this 12-week  
12 fashion and business series was spearheaded by out  
13 business and career center. Fourteen aspiring  
14 designers aged 20 through 70 to 70, showed their  
15 lines on the runway at Central Library. At Brooklyn  
16 Public Library the size of our collection is also  
17 well below what it—what it should be for a system  
18 serving over 2.6 million people. In years where we  
19 face budget cuts, we chose to keep our staff in  
20 place, and the expense—at the expense of the  
21 collection budget. However, holding the Collection  
22 Budget constant for this long has taken a toll. Our  
23 branches need additional materials with an emphasis  
24 on world languages and our ebook circulation in  
25 soaring, up 19% over this time last year. The

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1 increase we are seeking in expense dollars would  
2 allow us to purchase an additional 1,200 new books  
3 per branch that our patrons need and deserve.  
4 Additionally, our ability to serve the public is  
5 compromised by our aging buildings most of which are  
6 plagued by maintenance issue and equipment failures.  
7 We spend approximately \$1 million precious operating  
8 dollars every year maintaining old boilers, replacing  
9 dilapidated furniture and funding temporary heating  
10 and cooling fixes as we wait for capital projects to  
11 replace broke systems. We are funding urgent  
12 projects that are neither—that are either not  
13 capitally eligible or impractical, costly and time  
14 consuming to address through the city's design and  
15 construction process. In order to avoid another  
16 summer of closing branches in the public—in the—in  
17 the public—to the public, branches, which are relied  
18 upon as cooling centers, we spent valuable operating  
19 dollars to maintain library service. For example,  
20 Flatbush Library is set to reopen on May 30<sup>th</sup> after a  
21 one-month closure to retrofit the HVAC and to  
22 retrofit the HVAC system, and Spring Creek Library  
23 will close on May 25<sup>th</sup> and reopen a month later. In  
24 both branches, the staff and patrons have suffered  
25

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1 through heat and reduced hours over the last few  
2  
3 summers as they wait for the systems to be replaced.  
4 The HVAC units at Bedford, Brownsville and Pacific  
5 Libraries, are too old to fix. Instead, staff and  
6 patrons must should over the busy, the noisy portable  
7 chillers we have installed until capital projects to  
8 replace these systems are underway. Just as we are  
9 faced with multiple emergency cooling issues every  
10 summer, we expect to spend significant expense  
11 dollars this coming winter to maintain or replace old  
12 boilers throughout our system. Mapleton and Borough  
13 Park Libraries both have boilers that are beyond  
14 their useful life, and we anticipate they may fail  
15 this coming winter. In order to keep our libraries  
16 open, these fixes will compete for treasured expense  
17 dollars, and ultimately take funds away from other  
18 worthy library operations. New code requirements are  
19 also adding costs to our operating budget. New York  
20 City elevator regulations have been updated and now  
21 require door lock monitoring systems, a control that  
22 will prevent an elevator cab from moving if the door  
23 is open. Accordingly, every one of our 35 branch  
24 elevators will be upgraded at the—during the upcoming  
25 year, and will cost several hundred thousand expense

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1 dollars. Brooklyn Public Library has 1.1 million  
2 square feet of physical space to maintain. At our  
3 current level of capital funding, it is impossible  
4 for us to address any but the most urgent problems.  
5 We spend much of our time and resources responding to  
6 emergencies, which can exhaust an entire year's  
7 capital allocation rather than holistically  
8 approaching building renovations. As I stated at the  
9 outset, the three library systems are requesting a  
10 total of \$60 million in capital funding this year,  
11 \$20 million for each system. In Brooklyn, innovative  
12 library construction projects in Sunset Park, Green  
13 Point, Brower Park, and Brooklyn Heights have  
14 eliminated millions in unfunded capital need. Revenue  
15 from the redevelopment of Brooklyn Heights Library is  
16 allowing us to improve several branches that are  
17 badly in need of repair. So, we are beginning to  
18 make progress by reduction Brooklyn Public Library's  
19 unfunded needs from \$300 million to approximately  
20 \$240 million, but there is a limit to what we can do  
21 on our own. Chronic underfunding makes it impossible  
22 for us to manage capital plans efficiently. Urgent  
23 projects are often delayed over very change in scope.  
24 Because libraries do not have recurring discretionary  
25

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1 funding in the 10-year Plan, we cannot draw from  
2 future fiscal years to cover current year shortfalls  
3 leading to delays and further cost escalations.  
4 While each library system needs \$20 million this  
5 budget year to fix failing infrastructure, backfill  
6 shortfalls and replace equipment, it is equally  
7 important for libraries to be included in next years  
8 10-Year Capital Plan. Without a reliable recurring  
9 source of funding, we are not able to perform  
10 necessary preventive maintenance. We cannot ensure  
11 projects that encounter a shortfall will continue to  
12 move forward and we cannot manage our physical plant,  
13 city-owned buildings in the most comprehensive and  
14 efficient way possible. As you have already proven,  
15 libraries are an excellent investment. Our doors are  
16 open wide to everyone and our branches provide  
17 resources that support personal advancement and  
18 strengthen the fabric of our communities. As you  
19 consider requests from many worthy organizations and  
20 agencies, remember the millions of New Yorkers who  
21 visit our branches each year, people who deserve  
22 programs that lift them up and collections that  
23 inspire, spaces that are welcoming and buildings that  
24  
25

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are safe. New Yorkers deserve to love their  
libraries. Thank you. [applause]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: President Walcott.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, Sir, and  
Linda, well said, and our beliefs definitely. Thank  
you, Linda. I would like to add that New Yorkers  
deserve libraries that reflect their city's  
commitment to providing them with the resources they  
need to be successful in their lives. Good  
afternoon. My name is Dennis Walcott, and I'm  
President and CEO of the Queens Public Library  
System. It is a pleasure to be there. Thank you  
Chair Dromm, Chair Van Bramer, Speaker Johnson, our  
Queens Delegation and the members of both committees  
for the opportunity to testify today about our budget  
for next year. So, now I'm going to be bad, and I'm  
not going to be lowering, but I am going to deviate  
from script because (1) Linda really said it all, and  
just basically duplicate what Linda said for Queens.  
And last night I was at an outstanding dinner that  
the New York Public Library hosted, and someone  
walked across the room from the New York Public  
Library, and said, There's someone at a table who  
would like to meet you, and I said I'd be glad to go

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1 over to meet this couple, and it was a couple from  
2 Jackson Heights no less, and they said, We love our  
3 library. We have a 10-month-old child. We take that  
4 child to the library almost every day. We look  
5 forward to the services and the books for our baby,  
6 and we as adults take advantage of the libraries.  
7 Multiply this couple with people throughout the five  
8 boroughs of New York City. That's what we're about.  
9 As I indicated outside, this morning I was at our  
10 office this morning first thing. Staff were there at  
11 7:30, 8:00 getting the library ready for people  
12 coming in at 9:00. I was there at 9:00 to greet our  
13 customers coming in, and people walk in the door  
14 looking for our services. We are truly the last open  
15 democratic institution where we don't ask you who you  
16 are or what's your from—where you're from, what  
17 you're about. Come in and use our libraries. That's  
18 what we're about. That's why we're here. That's why  
19 the people up there are here and the people in the  
20 audience because we provide a valuable public service  
21 to the public at large. This past Wednesday, we had  
22 two events going on at the Queens Public Library. We  
23 had a lot of events going on, but the two that stand  
24 out we had an older American program at one of our  
25

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1 libraries, and the prior Wednesday at this particular  
2 library we had roughly 450 some odd people. The  
3 Wednesday before we had roughly 460 people. This  
4 past Wednesday we have 1,400 people who came through  
5 our door for the services. That's what we're about.  
6 That evening we had an author talk. It was raining,  
7 and I said oh, we're only going to have half the  
8 people that registered for the author talk. Every  
9 seat was full, and then afterwards the long line that  
10 was snaking around our lobby for the author to sign  
11 the book was just outstanding. The next day we had a  
12 hip-hop program that evening at the library on a  
13 Thursday night, and again, the library was full of  
14 people there for our service. We are eclectic, we  
15 all-purpose, we are all-serving, we are there to  
16 serve the public and what we're asking for is a small  
17 amount of money because as managers, as CEOs, we're  
18 going to have to make difficult choices. I mean the  
19 reality is we have a responsibility, a fiduciary  
20 responsibility to not just our board, but to the  
21 public at large and how we manage our budget. That's  
22 why we're here. That's why we're employed. If we  
23 don't do our job properly then the library and most  
24 importantly our staff and customers will suffer, but  
25

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1 to allow us to do—do our job properly the \$16 million  
2 and the \$60 million that we're asking for basically  
3 gets us up to the bar minimum because when you were  
4 kind enough and led us and allowed us to get money  
5 several years ago and then baseline that funding, it  
6 allowed us to maintain services, but as Linda  
7 indicated, and you'll probably hear from Tony as  
8 well, our expenses are going up. Our capital needs  
9 are going up. Using expense dollars for capital  
10 purposes is unconscionable. It takes away valuable  
11 dollars from our core purpose with the capital needs  
12 that we have. We're very lucky in Queens, and I'm  
13 not saying that because we have a Queens Delegation  
14 sitting here, but our Queens Delegation have been  
15 true advocates not just with the amounts, but also  
16 with the money in making sure that we're constantly  
17 investing in our libraries both from an expense side  
18 as well as from a capital side, but we need more, and  
19 we're not being greedy. We're not being greedy.  
20 This is basic, this is core to the mission of the  
21 public that we're there to provide services for them.  
22 Our public relies on us whether it's computer  
23 services, whether it's program services, whether it's  
24 collections. You name it, we're there whether it's  
25

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1 immigration services, whether it's legal services,  
2 whether it's video visitation. You name it. We're  
3 there for the public at large. As the Chair know,  
4 Chair Dromm, we're about to do something creative in  
5 Jackson Heights our own Pride Day Parade, in that we  
6 will be opening the Jackson Heights Library on a  
7 Sunday providing a valuable service to the public,  
8 creative and having fun in doing it and supporting  
9 the public at large. As you know, in Queens we've  
10 tried two new things where we've had our 31-hour  
11 marathon where we've opened up our libraries for 31  
12 straight hours in Corona as well as Peninsula Library  
13 providing a variety of public services for the public  
14 at large, and we've seen a tremendous increase in the  
15 number of customers that come through our door.  
16 Those are things that we love to do, but we have to  
17 be very careful and very conscious. The core basic  
18 service that we provide to the public will not be  
19 hurt in the long run, and for us to make sure that  
20 we're not in the position to hurt those core  
21 services, all we're asking for is \$16 million and \$60  
22 million. Bottom line, bottom line, and that will  
23 allow us to continue the valuable services to the  
24 public that we are here to serve. So, on behalf of  
25

1 the Queens Public Library System, but more  
2  
3 importantly the great staff who are here, and those  
4 who are working the library and our customers who  
5 come through our door, thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. President  
7 Marx.

8 TONY MARX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and  
9 both chairmen and the City Council. Gosh, I—I don't  
10 know, I'm—I'm not sure I've got much left to say.  
11 The—Dennis and Linda have been eloquent as always in  
12 making it clear how much our communities depend on  
13 us, how much they trust us. I realize there may be a  
14 low bar, but all polling data shows that libraries  
15 are the most trusted institutions in America, and  
16 there's a reason for that for all the reasons that  
17 you've heard from my colleagues. At this moment in  
18 history when people are losing hope, are losing  
19 assurance that they will—that their families will  
20 prosper that their communities will prosper, that  
21 they'll be able to afford educations and not end up  
22 in life long debt, that they will be able to tell  
23 fact from fiction. They look to the libraries now  
24 more than ever, and we have to maintain and build and  
25 what we offer to meet that challenge. You've already

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1 heard the summary. Simply the most important point  
2 is as demand rises, staff costs rise as well. We got  
3 a great increase in expense, thank you, funding in  
4 FY16, but we hired a 100 new staff including 60 much  
5 needed children and young adult librarians. As a  
6 result, I might say we've gone from I think 100,000  
7 ore so folks in our Early Literacy programs when I  
8 got here to—about three-quarters of a million at this  
9 point, and all those kids and caregivers grabbing  
10 books off the shelf as they go so that the  
11 circulation of our children's collection is going  
12 through the roof. We've created the Education  
13 Programs that you all asked us to do because we can  
14 meet the real needs in every community whether it's  
15 Pre-K, after school, English language, citizenship,  
16 computer skills, coding. We've—we've seen—we now  
17 have those education programs get 1.5 million visits  
18 a year just at the New York Public Library alone,  
19 working in close partnership with the Department of  
20 Education. I was with the new Chancellor twice in  
21 the last four days talking about how we can help the  
22 City Council and the Mayor meet the goal of second  
23 graders all being able to read at least at grade  
24 level. WE get those kids before they get to school.  
25

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1 That is noted as well, but we also partner with the  
2 schools. We have to do more if this city is going to  
3 continue to prosper, but it's getting harder and  
4 harder. Look, the simple fact is we are absolute  
5 advocates of the actions of this City Council and  
6 this Administration in providing more progressive  
7 family leave benefits, in increasing minimum wage,  
8 healthcare options totally supportive absolutely. But  
9 we haven't gotten an increase in funding in those  
10 last three years while those costs have gone up, and  
11 as you can imagine, something has to give. We've for  
12 a \$16 million tri-li expense increase. Again, I'm  
13 not going to pull my punches. We could have asked  
14 for three times amount and though we'd get into a  
15 game of negotiation. We respect you too much for  
16 that. We've worked too closely with you for too long  
17 for that. We know that you know, that we are  
18 honestly saying this is what we need if you want us  
19 to keep our doors open, our hours where they are,  
20 whether you want these services to continue because  
21 more New Yorkers depend on the library to meet more  
22 of what they need to make this city work for them,  
23 and for their children than any other institution in  
24 this town for a relative pittance of the city's  
25

1 budget. I mean the bang for the buck here is really  
2 quite astonishing. We do not, you do not want us to  
3 make difficult choices about hours or days or  
4 programs or buying fewer books. Let's not end up in  
5 those bad old days, and mean books seriously.  
6 Circulation is up in our libraries. That is perhaps  
7 unique nationally. We see huge increases in demand.  
8 In the-in the Bronx for instance, in fact in all of  
9 our-in all of our branches, the test prep books, you  
10 know, that help kids as do our education programs,  
11 get ready for the test so that they can get into the  
12 schools that they want to. They have to be up to  
13 date. The cost keeps going up, and they fly off the  
14 shelf, right. Again, it's just one of the ways in  
15 which are an integral part of how that kid he used  
16 what they're learning in school, and added to that  
17 the test prep to grab the opportunities that we want  
18 them, that we need them as a city, and as a society  
19 to achieve. And then there is the non-eligible  
20 capital expense, our and the New York Public Library  
21 in Manhattan for instance, the average age of  
22 libraries is 84. I used to think that was really  
23 old. I'm not as convinced as I was once. [background  
24 comments, pause] We are so grateful to be finally  
25

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1 after only 100 years in the City's Ten-Year Capital  
2 Plan, but we have repairs to cracked paint, flooring,  
3 carpet, broken doors, HVAC repairs, et cetera that we  
4 need to address. At the 115<sup>th</sup> Street Library that we  
5 recently proudly name for Harry Belafonte, and really  
6 quite a moving ceremony. The floors are coming  
7 apart. If we don't fix them now, we will have to  
8 replace them at much great cost. At Soundview the  
9 HVAC system has failed. At Hamilton Fish we have a  
10 DDC delay and HVAC replacement, which means we're  
11 going to have to spend our money to keep the place  
12 cool during the summer so that the work can continue,  
13 and that's to say nothing—I'm leaving aside as Danny  
14 has already mentioned our more general issues with,  
15 you know, how the DDC Library relationship is going.  
16 Our average DDC project is now on average 75% over  
17 estimate taking twice as long, in many instances  
18 costing twice as much. That's the citizens of New  
19 York not getting what they need from their elected  
20 officials from all of us in terms of how we do  
21 business. Critical maintenance, Jimmy has already  
22 mentioned \$60 million, \$20 million each program.  
23 That's for larger projects, mechanical systems,  
24 energy conversation upgrades, façade, preservation  
25

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1 work, ADA compliance, branches of the sort that—that  
2 you have seen images of here. Again, let me just say  
3 we didn't come in here asking for the star and the  
4 moon. We came in here as honest partners who have  
5 worked so closely with you to say if you want us not  
6 to fall back, and not to have New Yorkers fall back,  
7 if you want us to continue the momentum, which I have  
8 to with—with these library presidents has been really  
9 a renaissance, a remarkable renaissance in these  
10 institutions throughout the city. Help us continue  
11 to do that, but don't take my word for it. Listen to  
12 our fellow New Yorkers.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very  
15 much. We've--

16 TONY MARX: Oops. How long is the video  
17 that we have?

18 LINDA JOHNSON: [off mic] It's less than  
19 nine minutes. (sic)

20 TONY MARX: Can we do—can we--?

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Go right ahead. Sure.

22 TONY MARX: Is that alright then?

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

24 TONY MARX: Thank you. Please. Sorry. I  
25 should have made that clear.

VIDEO PLAYING:

CHILD'S VOICE: I'm getting smarter in  
the library because I read more books. I do a lot of  
math and ELA, and it's helping me a lot because I'm  
I'm preparing for the State test, and whenever I need  
help with my homework, they're there to help me.

AMANDA: The library here and Toddler  
Time and the whole Children's section is important to  
me and my family because it's—it's really giving us  
an anchor in the neighborhood. It is helping my  
daughter grow leaps and bounds for her love of books,  
for her love of stories. We really count on it every-  
pretty much everyday to be here. So, it's great. We  
love it.

AMANDA: Literacy Leader is basically a  
program that helps kids learn and improve their  
reading and writing skills, and my job is to help  
them do that, and encourage them to actually enjoy  
reading. I have two students Hector and Alvin and  
they're both in second grade. Since working with  
them I have noticed that their reading level has been  
improving, and yesterday Hector he passed me and he  
was like, "Look, Amanda, look. I finished all the  
books in this level." I'm like that's great.

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1  
2 FEMALE SPEAKER #1: Okay, I'm dinosaur  
3 and it makes me feel good when I [laughter] am  
4 computer literate from the library. I took it right  
5 away into my work situation, and was able to, you  
6 know, do things with Excel that every office needs  
7 and even more. I could show other people.

8 FEMALE SPEAKER #2: We do a technology  
9 goal classes with like Microsoft Word and inform  
10 people about the new technologies that are coming.  
11 So, I feel like I'm helping the community and I'm  
12 helping myself as well. I'm learning. I was looking  
13 for something that would also build up my confidence  
14 and because of this confidence I could—I was able to  
15 win the presidential election for my National Honor  
16 Society.

17 MALE SPEAKER #1: One day I was in the  
18 Queens Library and using the computer, and I noticed  
19 a flyer that states that they are open for free  
20 security training. So, I'm like I've got to got. I  
21 got to do this. I got to inquire about this jobs  
22 skills training. I was able to develop certain  
23 skills that I need to have to get a job. [MUSIC]

24 FEMALE SPEAKER #3: I can do—I can go to  
25 the doctor. They provide meds too. Sometimes with

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1 man ahead of it, I'm won't—I am not scared because  
2 now I speak a little bit in English. Yeah. They  
3 helps me a lot.

4 FEMALE SPEAKER #4: That's Mike Prudent  
5 (sic) Get up here. [laughter]

6 FEMALE SPEAKER #5: It's helped me a lot.  
7 In the New York City Council it's not so easy, but  
8 most of all we feel thankful for all the support and  
9 help and contribution, a major contribution for all  
10 the Queens Library.

11 FEMALE SPEAKER #6: Using the library and  
12 I the library in my life closely. It helped me—I  
13 think I was able to merge into the American system or  
14 society. It helped me to be—to be comfortable to  
15 live in America. I can say that. So, I really  
16 grateful for that New York City life. For me it's a  
17 part of my life. [MUSIC]

18 MALE SPEAKER #2: Well, at first I joined  
19 a program to—just to teach them because I wanted to  
20 get more involved with my community, and I wanted to  
21 start because I had a lot of problems in my—in my  
22 life. When I came out to my parents, it wasn't that  
23 easy, and to deal with them, and it wasn't—it wasn't—  
24 it was a real tough time, and this program has  
25

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brought me back and helped me cope with it in a  
different way.

FEMALE SPEAKER #7: It's help with this—  
it allows me to be able to see my son. So, it was a  
great help. It was a blessing, and if it was a  
blessing to me, I know it would definitely be-be a  
blessing for many other families the class has added.  
I definitely look forward to him being able to come  
and utilize any of the programs that they—that he has  
like reference to resonate building and helping him  
to find out about internships, jobs and things like  
that, it would definitely be well appreciated and as  
him e being a young black man coming back into  
society from being incarcerated, I definitely want  
him to not be a part of the recitative population.  
So, we say thank you very much, and please continue  
to support. [MUSIC/END OF VIDEO]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. That was  
great. Oh, boy. I don't even know where to begin.  
I'm sorry I missed the dinner. Let me say that. It  
was last night right. Yeah.

TONY MARX: It was. It was actually  
delicious.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good.

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1  
2 TONY MARX: I hope—I hope Dennis got a  
3 funder out of it.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Usually I've been  
5 going for the last four or so years, but I couldn't  
6 make it last night. Let me just talk a little bit  
7 about the \$16 million that you are requesting in  
8 operating expenses in the \$60 million in terms of  
9 capital. I know that you outlined a lot of the  
10 programs that you're doing and that you have these  
11 real needs. What can be achieved if you get the full  
12 \$16 million? What do you actually intend to use it  
13 for? Have you decided where that money will go or is  
14 that not yet been actually decided? General support?  
15 Are there additional programs? What would it be used  
16 for?

17 TONY MARX: I can start. At the Public  
18 Library, the vast majority would go to staff costs so  
19 wages and the increased benefits again that we all  
20 total believe in. That's about \$4.6 million of the  
21 seven. Materials, additional materials so adding to  
22 our collections because I can't have empty shelves  
23 when kids say I got no books at home and now there  
24 are no books at the library so a million there, and  
25 then about \$1.4 million of the 7 for non-eligible

1 capital costs, and again, this was like just trying  
2 to keep us from going under water so that we can  
3 continue the momentum that we've been building  
4 together as a partnership over these last years.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-hm.

6 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, Brooklyn Public  
7 Library's breakdown is remarkably similar. I'd say  
8 the same thing. You know, we made a commitment to  
9 being open at least six days a week in some cases  
10 seven, and we haven't had an increase in three years  
11 now, and to maintain that level of service, you know,  
12 we're stretched very thin, and we need to be—we need  
13 to be taking care of staff better than we are today,  
14 and the other issue was, of course, collections,  
15 which I spoke about but this issue of spending  
16 operating money in order to take care of emergency  
17 repairs is—is really killing us.

18 DENNIS WALCOTT: The same for us and also  
19 for funding of our allies (sic) as well and meeting  
20 the meeting the minimum wage requirement, and making  
21 sure we have we have the additional dollars for  
22 that, and then as Tony and Linda indicated, I mean  
23 basically core services as well as collections.  
24

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1                                   CHAIRPERSON DROMM:  It was interesting go  
2  
3 hear President Marx speak about the need for  
4 materials as well because I know that was an issue in  
5 Queens probably in Brooklyn also where I remember a  
6 few years ago there was a drive just to get  
7 additional new books into the library system.  I  
8 think you were asking me to for contributions of  
9 books themselves or for funding for books and, you  
10 know, libraries—and I don't think they should really  
11 have to be doing that.  That should be something that  
12 the city is ensuring happens because that's basically  
13 why people go to the libraries.

14                                   DENNIS WALCOTT:  We went through a  
15 strategic planning process and did a very  
16 comprehensive survey of our public, and collections  
17 was number one.  I mean people want material, and  
18 they want new material, and as you know, Tuesday is  
19 New Book Day and the demand when people come into see  
20 what new books are on the shelves and making sure we  
21 have that available is always something that we try  
22 to respond to.

23                                   TONY MARX:  And—and that's in addition to  
24 the electronic books that as you've already heard  
25 there's simply E-App and you can download.  There are

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1 thousands of books already. We hope to add millions  
2 more for free. So, if you can't come in, there's  
3 books we send to people who have various sight or  
4 hearing impairments. I gave you one other poignant  
5 example. We—two years, you know for 40 years we've  
6 been pushing carts of books around on Rikers Island  
7 and the other detention centers in New York. It's  
8 totally insufficient in my opinion. I was incredibly  
9 proud two or three—I think it was three years ago  
10 now, that we opened our first physical branch library  
11 in the Rhodes East Facility on Rikers. Just two  
12 weeks ago we opened our second one at the Manhattan  
13 Detention Center, and the reason why I say this is  
14 not only because of what the people who are  
15 incarcerated there say about this like only time they  
16 feel like society hasn't basically said we are  
17 throwing you away that they are—we are doing it with  
18 the most powerful thing they can imagine which is  
19 books. So that that they can learn, gain skills,  
20 imagine the other lives, think about their families  
21 and building a new life. And one of the things that  
22 just blew me away in both of these facilities we have  
23 guards who work there who being shopping bags of  
24 books for themselves to add to the collections so  
25

1 that we can keep lending more books. I mean this is  
2 a--this is what, you know, in difficult circumstance,  
3 which God knows Rikers and the detention center are,  
4 this is New Yorkers coming together about what we  
5 believe in and in each other.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Plus I think you  
8 provide the vital resources of the book connections,  
9 which is distributed when somebody comes into Rikers  
10 Island so that they have resources that they can  
11 access once they get out.

12 TONY MARX: Well, and thanks to you all,  
13 we have the site visitations. We do the mommy and  
14 daddy read with me. We, you know, when someone who  
15 is incarcerated says I'm scared to read to my kid. I  
16 know how important it is, but because I can't read  
17 well enough, we set up programs to help them learn  
18 how to read so that they can teach their kids to  
19 read. We can't have inherited illiteracy and  
20 inherited inequality in New York and in America. We  
21 just can't.

22 LINDA JOHNSON: I'd just like to add one  
23 thing, which is that we all believe deeply that every  
24 great city needs a great library, and I think we all  
25 believe New York City is the greatest city in our

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1 country, but we are woefully behind when you look at  
2 per capita spending on material on books and that  
3 just should not be. It should not be that second and  
4 third tier cities in this country are better funded  
5 for collections than we are. The other thing, in  
6 Brooklyn we have in addition to all the branches what  
7 we call deposit collections, over 200 pop-up  
8 collections in senior centers and in other places  
9 where we know people who will not be—necessarily be  
10 able to get to a branch or have access to material if  
11 we're not already delivering it to them. So, I mean  
12 we all are deeply committed to providing access, and  
13 we're doing it in the most creative ways that we can  
14 imagine.

16 TONY MARX: So, we're talking about the  
17 incarcerated as well. Is it the Brooklyn Library  
18 that has the Video Visitation Program?

19 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you talk a little  
21 bit about that program?

22 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes, it—it started with  
23 us, but now we're joined by everyone.

24 TONY MARX: By all 15 sites across the  
25 three systems.

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1

2

DENNIS WALCOTT: Right, we all do.

3

LINDA JOHNSON: We're all doing it now.

4

5

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You're all doing it  
and how is that going? Do you have numbers on it of

6

how many people take advantage of this program?

7

8

LINDA JOHNSON: Yes, if you'll give me  
one second, I'll--

9

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure. [pause]

10

11

LINDA JOHNSON: So, in this Fiscal Year  
2,500 visits.

12

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How many?

13

LINDA JOHNSON: 2,500.

14

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 2,500.

15

16

LINDA JOHNSON: It's very labor  
intensive. That's a very large number given the  
amount of planning that needs to happen in order for  
it to be lined up with the incarcerated person and  
the--and the family and the library.

17

18

19

20

TONY MARX: [off mic] I apologize. I see  
here first of all that we have seen at Rosie's--

21

22

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Can you  
put the mic on--?

23

24

DENNIS WALCOTT: Tony.

25

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2 TONY MARX: Since we are—the facility our  
3 branch at Rosie's a 400% increase in material  
4 circulation and we are now doing—I apologize. I am  
5 finding the actual number—the visitation number for  
6 you. So, I will have to get that to you. I  
7 apologize.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That 2,500, is it  
9 Brooklyn?

10 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Wow, wow, it's  
12 amazing.

13 LINDA JOHNSON: Across all three systems.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Across all three.  
15 Okay that's still an amazing number. I mean, that's  
16 really unbelievable.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: And at—in Queens, we  
18 provide the service at our Central as well as at Long  
19 Island City, as well as Far Rockaway, which serves as  
20 a swing site as well, and I can tell you from Central  
21 when we walk in the hallways and the video visitation  
22 is taking place, you can just hear the emotion and  
23 the connection, and the value that it brings to the  
24 families and as articulated by the woman in the video

1 as well, and that truly captures I think the dynamic  
2 of what's happening for the video visitation.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think the woman in  
5 the video said the key to lowering recidivism rates  
6 is keeping families together. So, you know, it takes  
7 at least 12 hours to get up, go and get on the bus,  
8 go over to Rikers, go through the visitation center.  
9 Get on another bus to go to the prison, to go and  
10 then wait another hour and then see the person. It's  
11 a whole day thing for people. So, this is a—a  
12 tremendous program for them to be able to take  
13 advantage of.

14 LINDA JOHNSON: And, of course, it's all  
15 centered around reading. So, it elevates the  
16 importance of reading in a family, and frankly, if a  
17 child is going to visit a parent, it means missing an  
18 entire day of school.

19 TONY MARX: [off mic] And we have—

20 DENNIS WALCOTT: The mic, Tony.

21 TONY MARX: --well corrections. We  
22 circulate 13,000 copies of those a year, as you  
23 gotten—it's gotten bigger and bigger and what I find  
24 incredibly powerful is, you know, the folks coming  
25 off of Rikers, the first stop on the bus stop when

1 you get to Manhattan is right in front on the library  
2 on 125<sup>th</sup> Street right before the bridge there.

3 That's their first stop. They know they can use  
4 computers for free. They know they can let their  
5 family know by email or—or however that they're—  
6 that're they're out. They can start researching  
7 immediately. With our help, options for places to  
8 live for how to gain skills, how to get jobs, and  
9 we're not satisfied that that's good enough. With  
10 your help as part of Ten-Year Capital Plan we'll be  
11 spending about \$20 million on just that branch to  
12 make it absolutely what it should be. We want the  
13 New Yorkers who have had the unfortunate experience  
14 of spending time forcibly on Rikers Island to come  
15 off and come first into our library and see that New  
16 Yorkers actually are in investing in them and  
17 believing in them. With the books, with the  
18 communication, with the programs, but even with the  
19 power of what a space says about respect for people,  
20 and that's what—an image that we need if we want  
21 folks to rebuild their lives.

22  
23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Another program that  
24 was very popular. My mom was in a nursing home, and

1 she really enjoyed the Library by Mail I think it's  
2 called.

4 TONY MARX: Uh-huh, available.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: and-and having the  
6 large print book boy that was-that was fantastic for  
7 seniors that find themselves in that situation. So,  
8 another fantastic program. I know that you've all  
9 been mentioning capital and we do have some  
10 questioned around capital. So, the Library's  
11 Executive Commitment Plan includes \$1.15 billion in  
12 Fiscal 18 to 22. Yet in Fiscal 17 the library system  
13 committed only \$18.5 million or 4.3% of its annual  
14 Capital Plan of \$433.6 million. Why do the libraries  
15 only get-manage to commit that 4.3%? What's holding  
16 it up? We want to know and we want to try to work on  
17 that with you.

18 TONY MARX: I'm sorry you aske, Mr.  
19 Chairman. [laughter] We-and we're happy to share  
20 with you these statistics. We've done it before.  
21 When we do our projects, when we manage our projects  
22 ourselves, and-and that's true of our largest  
23 projects, whether it's the private investment in the  
24 Schwartzman Building or the largely city investment,  
25 but matched by us with private funding in the new

1 Mid-Manhattan, which will be this fabulous Central  
2 Library in Manhattan that has never existed as far as  
3 I can tell. When we do that ourselves compared to  
4 when we work with DDC and we respect the hard work  
5 that they're doing, it literally takes twice as long  
6 and costs twice as much money, and that's on average.  
7 There are outliers way beyond that. Iris here could  
8 tell you some fabulous stories. The—I'm be  
9 facetious. The—the—this is craziness. I understand  
10 that this was designed to provide necessary  
11 oversight, and we will accept any oversight that  
12 anyone wants because our record is without blemish.  
13 Let us do these projects for ourselves so that you  
14 bet twice as much bang for your buck, so that the  
15 citizens of New York don't have to wait twice as long  
16 for the libraries they deserve, and elected  
17 officials— I have had friends and colleagues on the  
18 City Council who invested millions of dollars in  
19 projects. They get—got held up and then never  
20 happened while they were still sitting on the City  
21 Council. That's crazy. Just the current DDC  
22 projects currently are roughly on average 75% now  
23 over the original estimate. Time goes by. It costs  
24 more. We've got projects that are close to 100% over  
25

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1 the original estimate, and we have to make up the  
2 difference in the funding never mind the money we  
3 have to borrow to—when we do our own projects and  
4 have to wait for the city reimburse us. Look, I  
5 don't want to—I—I want to be clear. WE are  
6 incredibly grateful to be in the Ten-Year Capital  
7 Plan. We are incredibly grateful for getting  
8 systemic infrastructural work done at a scale that  
9 has never happened before, but the roofs are still  
10 leaking, the librarians are still running around with  
11 buckets in order to catch instead of running around  
12 helping catch that kid who's falling behind in  
13 school, and that's just--that just can't be in New  
14 York. [pause]

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I remember with the  
17 Queens Library, Council Member Chair Van Bramer was  
18 there for the design and eight years later after he  
19 got elected to the City Council, it finally opened  
20 up. So, can you—I—I—can you be more specific. Where  
21 do you think it's being held up in DDC? What—what is  
22 it that we need to look at to make that—to make that  
23 happen?

24 LINDA JOHNSON: The problem is that it's—  
25 it's happening at absolutely every stage from going

1 out for bid to procurement, finding that you've got a  
2 contractor that's been selected, but then it's seems  
3 as actually on a list of contractors that the city is  
4 no longer allowed to do business with. I mean it is  
5 absolutely at every stage of the construction  
6 process.  
7

8 DENNIS WALCOTT: And to add to add to  
9 that, so obviously we know about the case where Chair  
10 Van Bramer's library at Hunter's Point, and where we  
11 are and where we are not, and the delays and the  
12 delays and the delays that are taking place, and we  
13 can talk about that, but I'll put another library on  
14 the table in Far Rockaway, and that Far Rockaway is,  
15 which is pivotal to the redevelopment of the Far  
16 Rockaway area, and that bid came in extremely high.  
17 I mean it was so high it was ridiculous and only as a  
18 result of working with OMB and the City and the  
19 elected officials were we able to get funding to meet  
20 the high responses, and so it even starts there. But  
21 then there are construction delays and issues, and  
22 challenges and gaps in communication and there are a  
23 whole host of things, and as I indicated, I think at  
24 prior hearings, I'm—I'm spoiled in that when I was  
25 Chancellor we had the School Construction Authority,

1 and obviously a different type of animal, a different  
2 creation, but I always cite the case where we built a  
3 school. Well, quite frankly, three schools up in the  
4 South Bronx along the rail yards that were  
5 contaminated. We remediated it, built three schools,  
6 and opened them up in three years. Three years  
7 remediated the land, spent \$240 million and as a  
8 result of that, the community had something right  
9 away. Part of the challenge is for us at least, and  
10 that we have to get money from here, we have to get  
11 money from there, and you're putting funding packers  
12 together. As Tony so ably put it, then when we're  
13 not doing it ourselves when we have to go through DDC  
14 and the breakdown takes place with them, but also in  
15 fairness just in the way the funding evolves as well,  
16 and I think there has to be a better to do this.  
17 This is unacceptable. It's unacceptable to me. It's  
18 unacceptable to you as elected officials, but most  
19 importantly, it's unacceptable to the public at  
20 large, and we have to find— I mean we're all  
21 creative, intelligent individuals. We shouldn't  
22 allow politics to interfere with putting a better  
23 mousetrap in place to allow us to build libraries in  
24 a more efficient way. [background comments, pause]  
25

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1  
2 LINDA JOHNSON: It is true that the  
3 funding structure is creating a lot of the problem,  
4 and it's creating a situation where there are stops  
5 and starts.

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: Yes.

7 LINDA JOHNSON: And, you know, we're  
8 excited frankly this year because we might actually  
9 hit 50% commitment rate. We're excited about that.  
10 Just think about it. I mean that's--

11 TONY MARX: So, the improvement over 1%.  
12 What--what you're getting was not because of anything  
13 we were lacking to do, but let me be clear in the  
14 answer to the question, Mr. Chairman. In our view  
15 the DDC has done a good job of estimating costs.  
16 They're estimates are out of date. There--the  
17 contractors have learned that because it takes twice  
18 as long that they should charge a premium to doing  
19 business with DDC. So, the bids come in at close to  
20 twice the price because they know that's what it's  
21 going to cost, and then you just have a vicious cycle  
22 that keeps going in the wrong direction as well as a  
23 lack of competition with DDC's prequalified bidders.  
24 Let me give you an example: Close to Queens in  
25 Queens Roosevelt Island we have a branch there.

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1 We've been waiting four years for the, you know, sort  
2 of final go-ahead, and in those four years the  
3 construction estimate has gone up from—it was \$4.1  
4 million and it's now \$3.1 million more. So, it's 75%  
5 increased. In those four years of waiting to give  
6 the good people of Roosevelt Island the branch that  
7 they deserve I don't know, just down at the other of  
8 the island Cornell seems to be able to build  
9 something much bigger probably much more complicated  
10 as a science facility at a whole lot faster and  
11 cheaper, you know, for, you know, as a result. So,  
12 something is not working here. I apologize. You  
13 asked me and I'm trying to be honest.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I really want to hear  
16 it. It happened to me in the Elmhurst Library as  
17 well. We finally do have a beautiful library.

18 TONY MARX: Uh-hm.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And insanity to me is  
20 doing the same thing over, over again and getting—  
21 thinking you're going to get different results. I've  
22 also heard, and—and I'll say it in regards to the  
23 Elmhurst Library the, discussion that I've had with  
24 President Walcott that when a mistake is made in the  
25 design, you can't use capital dollars to fix the

1 mistake because that has to last for five years  
2  
3 before you can then add capital dollars to it again  
4 even though the mistake was there from the get-go. So  
5 this is again another piece of insanity.

6 TONY MARX: No, we know from  
7 conversations not only with the City Council, but the  
8 folks on the Mayor's side and his senior team.  
9 Everybody understands that we have an issue here that  
10 New Yorkers need us to solve. It may not be the sort  
11 the tabloid news of the day, right. It doesn't sort  
12 of grab at that, you know, sort of terrible single  
13 human tragedy, but it is an ongoing tragedy for the  
14 governance of this city, and the finances of this  
15 city. And as far as I can tell, everyone that I talk  
16 to at the City Council and everyone I talk to on the  
17 Mayor's side are in agreement we need to find a  
18 solution that works, and—and respect the—the good  
19 folks who work at DDC and the DC37 members who were  
20 there were not. We—we understand that this is going  
21 to be complicated, but we also understand the current  
22 system is not working.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right, and think we—I  
24 think we need some type of a Design-Build situation  
25 for just the libraries as well, but anyway, I want to

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1 turn it over to Chair Van Bramer, but I want to  
2 announce that we've been joined by Majority Leader  
3 Laurie Cumbo, by Council Member Karen Koslowitz and  
4 Council Member Joe Borelli, and Council Member Van  
5 Bramer.  
6

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
8 much. So, I'm going to be relatively brief because I  
9 think we've covered a lot of ground already, but I  
10 think it is imperative for us to repeat where all of  
11 you were during your testimony, which is we have done  
12 some great things over the last several years. We  
13 have restored six-day service. We have baselined  
14 six-day service. We have put libraries in the Ten-  
15 Year Capital Plan. We've added hundreds of millions  
16 of dollars, and yet there is more to do, and all of  
17 you have come in here responsibly with a very  
18 reasonable requests: \$16 million on the expense side  
19 in a budget of \$90 billion is a rounding error, and  
20 what it would for the people of the city of New York  
21 is incalculable in many ways. So, this council has  
22 always led the way. In fact, we have pushed the  
23 other side of City Hall in many cases to a place of  
24 supporting libraries in a meaningful way, and I  
25 believe it will continue to do that. The \$60 million

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1 again a drop in the bucket and, you know, the-the  
2 situation with the Department of Design and  
3 Construction is one that boggles the mind, and is so  
4 frustrating, and we've all become experts in  
5 construction of-of these capital projects because I  
6 feel like we have to manage them almost ourselves,  
7 and-and that shouldn't be, but I think some people  
8 throw up their hands when it comes to the DDC and  
9 these capital projects because everyone knows that  
10 it's a disaster, but yet the fix isn't there yet,  
11 and-and we need it. It's absolutely a disgrace that  
12 the people of the City of New York it is their tax  
13 dollars that are going into these projects, and then  
14 they are not seeing the return on their investment in  
15 any kind of timely manner. As Chair Dromm mentioned,  
16 I worked for the Queens Library 20 years ago, and  
17 some of those projects started 15 years ago, and only  
18 now are we seeing some of those projects come to  
19 fruition that I get to go to the ribbon cuttings. As  
20 the chair of the committee, on a project that I  
21 remember starting 15 years as a staff member of the  
22 library, that's insanity. Chair Dromm's Elmhurst  
23 Library is one of those examples, but there are  
24 plenty of others all across the city of New York.  
25

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1 So, we've got to do better, but I want to speak to  
2 all of the library supporters, and you know, we're  
3 not allowed to officially clap here, but when like  
4 something and we agree we do this, right. So, how  
5 many of you think that libraries deserve \$16 million  
6 at a minimum? And how many of you think that \$16  
7 million is a drop in the bucket and we should get  
8 that as well? And now many think that library  
9 workers are the best people in the city of New York.  
10 [laughter] So, I just want to say the Council and  
11 certainly myself, and I know we have an amazing  
12 collection of Council Members, who are on this dais  
13 who believe that libraries, the truth is we call  
14 ourselves and rightfully so, and we defend our right  
15 to be a sanctuary city, but libraries were the  
16 sanctuary before we started talking about sanctuary  
17 cities. You are the sanctuary in the sanctuary  
18 cities, and-and-and I know the Queens Library where  
19 the New Americans Program was started over 40 years  
20 ago that's how far ahead libraries are of the rest of  
21 society when it comes to decency and democracy and  
22 making sure that every single person is valued, every  
23 single person has access, every single person no  
24 questions asked can come and be at home and be safe.  
25

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1 All of you save New Yorkers every single day, but you  
2 can't do that unless the doors are open. You can't  
3 do that if the roof is leaking. You can't do that if  
4 there's no AC in the summer and no heat in the  
5 winter. So, we've been there. We have accomplished  
6 some great things particularly in the last four years  
7 on behalf of libraries, but we have a ways to go, and  
8 I would just suggest again every time you play that  
9 video, you can't play enough, you can't show people  
10 enough what you're doing to impact the lives of our  
11 constituents. If we are committed to one city, if we  
12 are committed ending inequality, then the quickest  
13 and best way to do that is to support public  
14 libraries absolutely no questions asked because you  
15 do that better than any other institution in this  
16 city. You always have and you always will as long as  
17 you have all of these great library workers with you  
18 supporting you and doing that work. So, I don't  
19 think you need to have to any questions from me  
20 because you know where I am. This is my life's work.  
21 This is my 20<sup>th</sup> budget either chairing this committee  
22 or working on behalf of libraries, 20 years of being  
23 at this hearing, and I'm still fighting as hard as I  
24 did that first time. Thank you to the person who  
25

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1 went up there like that, and I just want to say thank  
2 you to everyone for fighting the good fight, and  
3 certainly I'm going to be fighting for this money.  
4 This is incredibly important. All of you need it,  
5 and our people need it more importantly. So, thank  
6 you. Thank you DC37 for being out there at the rally  
7 in a big way earlier today. Appreciate the support  
8 of great leaders like Henry Garrido and—and so many  
9 of the—the working people of the city of New York who  
10 make our libraries work. So, thank you, Chair Dromm.  
11 Thank you to my colleagues. I know other folks have  
12 questions, but I want to make a statement, which is  
13 you deserve this money. You need this money. You  
14 should get this money. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Chair Van  
17 Bramer. We have questions now from Council Member  
18 Moya followed by Adams and then Borelli.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you to Chair  
20 Dromm and to Chair Van Bramer. I'm about to  
21 embarrass myself a little bit so if you'll indulge  
22 me, my colleagues. As I've always said my mother who  
23 watches this consistently texted me and asked if Mr.  
24 Walcott would look into the camera and wave at here.  
25 [laughter] So, yes. Thank you.

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1  
2 DENNIS WALCOTT: How much is that worth?

3 [laughter]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I have to—I mean  
5 given the embarrassment, I have now—

6 DENNIS WALCOTT: It's a mother because  
7 somebody mentioned that to me outside as well. So, I  
8 will--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I can deal with the  
10 embarrassment now than deal with her wrath later.  
11 So, thank you for—[laughter]—indulging me and to my  
12 mom who is always watching.

13 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you, sir.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: So, I thank you—  
15 thank you for—for being here. I also want to  
16 reiterate how important the funding is for our  
17 libraries. Growing up in Corona being an avid user  
18 of the Corona Library I know what it means to have  
19 these programs come through. The programs that we  
20 see for the Adult Learners Program has been a—a  
21 tremendous advantage for us, but as Chair Van Bramer  
22 said, the New Americans Program is so critical for us  
23 in communities like mine where we have high immigrant  
24 communities. These services are—are just vital for  
25 my constituency. The job that you all do is

1  
2 incredible. I couldn't think of where we could be  
3 investing more than in our libraries, and if you come  
4 to Corona, you will see that we're busting at the  
5 seams, but there is just such a great energy when you  
6 look into the eyes of these children and adults who  
7 go in there because that is their only opportunity  
8 that most of them have to access to the Internet, the  
9 ability to learn a new language. This is very, very  
10 important for us and I think that I-I stand with my  
11 colleagues in saying \$16 million is-is-is nothing.  
12 We should be pushing for more, and I think that this  
13 is a top priority for myself, and I know my  
14 colleagues here, but just really quickly. Can you  
15 just tell me where we are with the Corona Library if  
16 we've made any progress?

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: As you know, we had a  
18 meeting with you and the Borough President and the  
19 Assembly Member and also I think representative from  
20 the State Senator's Office to discuss the Corona  
21 Library. My VP of Capital who is the audience is  
22 working on the project. We've submitted some ideas,  
23 and our goal is to move forward. As you know, we're  
24 also engaging with the community group that wanted us  
25 to be sensitive to the property that we own adjacent

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1 to the library itself, and I think as we indicated in  
2 the meeting that we understand where they're coming  
3 from and want to deal with the essence of the  
4 individual they say lived in the house next door and  
5 how we incorporate that into the designs. But we're  
6 moving forward as far as ideas on the Corona Library,  
7 and again, we want to build the connection between  
8 the existing library as well as with the house and  
9 knock down the house, and then build up an extension  
10 there. So, we are moving forward on our design plan,  
11 but also being sensitive to the community as far as  
12 some of the suggestions they want us to incorporate  
13 in preserving the essence of Crockett Johnson.

14  
15 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great, and thank  
16 you so much.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council  
19 Member Adams.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Good afternoon,  
21 Presidents Johnson, Marx and my beloved President  
22 Dennis Walcott. So happy to see you all here today,  
23 and I am so upset that I didn't wear my T-shirt. I  
24 am a proud former member of the Queens Public Library  
25 Board of Trustees, and we are the body that so

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1 proudly brought Dennis Walcott to the system that we  
2 are just bursting at the seams with pride at the work  
3 that he has done and continues to do for the Borough  
4 of Queens for all of us especially I-I-I consider he  
5 came in at a very tumultuous time, and he really,  
6 really came in and just took the bull by the horns  
7 when we were having such a difficult time in Queens,  
8 and I have thanked him, but I can't thank him enough  
9 for the work that he has done and continues to do.  
10 That experience for me was one of the most valuable  
11 experiences of a lifetime. You will always have an  
12 advocate in me--

14 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: --for our  
16 libraries. I grew up in St. Albans so I practically  
17 lived at the library, and the work that we do across  
18 the board in New York is an amazing work for adults,  
19 for children alike. It is unmatched, and as my  
20 colleagues have said, and we will continue to say, we  
21 will fight for the funding that you need, and \$16  
22 million in a mere drop in the bucket. We all know  
23 that. All of us up here know that, and we will fight  
24 for that--for that and then some. We have seen in the  
25 past the issues of DDC. I can tell you personally

1 behind the scenes it is a nightmare and there is no  
2 reason that in year 2018 that we should still be held  
3 hostage to a system that cannot seem to work itself  
4 out when it comes to the building, the maintenance  
5 and the expansion of our libraries. So that said, my  
6 only question is going to have to do with  
7 initiatives, and the initiatives that we are proud of  
8 here in the city. What is the role that the  
9 libraries are playing when it comes to the city's  
10 First Readers Initiative? I'm a big fan of South  
11 Jamaica Reads and Link and I'd just like to hear  
12 about that initiative. Thank you.

14 DENNIS WALCOTT: [pause] So, I'll pick  
15 up on the South Jamaica program in that we have, as  
16 you know, a very collaborative relationship as a  
17 result of both funding from the city, the library and  
18 the Foundation as well, and looking to expand that,  
19 and as I think Tony has indicated and what I've also  
20 done is met with the Chancellor on collaboration with  
21 Department of Education and making sure we expand  
22 both the reading initiatives that we have in place,  
23 but also around our UPK Programs as well. So, we're  
24 definitely involved in that process, but with South

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Jamaica Reads [bell] that is a primary programmatic  
thrust for us as far as our outreach is concerned.

COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Are we dittoing  
that, President?

LINDA JOHNSON: We'll ditto it and we'll  
give you some numbers. Last year we had 229-279,000  
children enrolled in the first who benefitted and  
attended programs in the First Read Program, and we  
were very grateful for the funding that we got for  
that program so-

TONY MARX: At the New York Public  
Library, as I mentioned, we're now about three-  
quarters of a million visits to our Early Literacy  
Programs. You know, we just can't keep up, but we've  
got to keep up. We've seen the circulation of  
material from youth since FY16 go up by close to  
600%--600%. The--and we have delivered over 105,000  
early literacy kits over the last three years.  
Again, with thanks to the City Council's support. .

DENNIS WALCOTT: And just to fill in the  
numbers, with our Toddler Learning Center we have  
served 1,170 families through 78 of our programs in  
our kickoff to kindergarten, our K2K Program. We  
have served 675 families through 45 of our programs,

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1 and then we have our Universal Pre-K, which serves 36  
2 students, and then we have overall children services  
3 which have basically served over—close to 469,000  
4 children through 30,000 program contacts.  
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: That's amazing.

7 We know that those numbers are going to do nothing  
8 but increase and increase and increase. So, we're  
9 very proud of your work, and we're very grateful for  
10 everything that you do. Thank you for your testimony  
11 today.

12 DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Oh,  
14 and you got your shirt. [laughter] It's nice. Ask  
15 and ye shall receive. I love it. Alright, I know  
16 that Commissioner Finkelppearl is in the wings. So,  
17 we are rounding out and closing out here. So, I know  
18 Council Member Cumbo and Koslowitz are here for  
19 questions, and then we will wrap up the Libraries  
20 portion of the hearing.

21 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: I don't have a  
22 question, but I just have a comment. I've just been  
23 so very pleased as a new mother seeing all of the  
24 educational programs for children and babies. As you  
25 know, we go to Wednesdays reading time at 10:00 and

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1 then we stay for the second session at 10:30 a.m. and  
2 I was even more excited when I learned that you had  
3 Japanese as well as Spanish speaking classes for  
4 babies as well. And so we're debating about which  
5 one we're actually going to take. But I would have  
6 never seen that lens of the library if not for my  
7 son, and so I understand as a new mom just how  
8 expensive all of these classes and programs are  
9 throughout the city, and an average class or  
10 opportunity for a baby for like a 12-week session is  
11 like \$400 anywhere in the city for just about  
12 anything. And so, to have this free opportunity is  
13 valuable and anybody watching out there on television  
14 I encourage you bring your child to the muse—excuse  
15 me—to the library. I'm getting ready for the next  
16 presentation. Bring your children to the library  
17 because they have so many great programs and they're  
18 free, and they've got Elmo and they've got all the  
19 toys and they've got other babies in order to  
20 interact with. So, that's been such a great pleasure  
21 for me and—and I hope that we can and the Council  
22 find ways to continue because early education like  
23 really early education for babies shouldn't be only  
24 for the wealthy, and it shouldn't be only for the  
25

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1 well connected. It should be for everyone, and so  
2 the library certainly levels the playing field for  
3 that. So, children of all economic backgrounds,  
4 races, religions, geography can take advantage of the  
5 programs. So, my son has sold me, and I am  
6 definitely a huge supporter of the work that you do.  
7 Thank you.

8  
9 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, we thank your son  
10 and it's my goal to get you guys in for the next big  
11 play date, which will be really nice.

12 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: [interposing]  
13 Yes, I'm so upset I missed that, but we will be at  
14 the very next one. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council  
16 Member Koslowitz.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ: Thank you.  
18 [coughs] I do not have a question. I just want to  
19 say thank you, thank you to Dennis Walcott. Queens  
20 is very lucky to have you. You've made my 1993  
21 vision of the library in Rego Park a reality in 2018.  
22 So, I just want to say thank you, thank you, thank  
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I think  
25 we've learned a few things here today. Dennis Walcott

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1 is beloved by all. Mrs. Moya watches a lot of TV,  
2 and I know that we will all have arrived when she  
3 tells her son, could you ask Jimmy, Danny, Karen, and  
4 Adrienne to wave to the camera.  
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Let's do it now.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We love you,  
8 Mrs. Moya. So, I just want to say in closing this  
9 great to hear the level of support for libraries from  
10 all of the colleagues here. I think you know that we  
11 believe in you. We believe in everyone here the work  
12 that you do, and I know that when I worked for the  
13 Queens Library, I felt so good knowing that every  
14 single day I came to work helping people, and I hope  
15 every single person who works for one of these three  
16 systems does that as well that you feel you own  
17 that. That every single day all of those libraries  
18 over 200 libraries, every single day you are changing  
19 the world for the better. Each of you is doing that  
20 for the people of the city of New York. You should  
21 all feel incredibly proud to work for our public  
22 library systems, and we here on this side need to  
23 make sure that we're continuing to give you the  
24 resources to do all of that work. So, I want to  
25 thank all of our colleagues, and thank the chairs of

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the respective committees, but also the three  
presidents and CEOs for representing today.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Chair Van  
Bramer. We'll now take a 10-minute break, and then  
we will come back for the Department of Cultural  
Affairs. [pause for break] [background comments,  
pause] [gavel] Okay, we will now resume the City  
Council's hearing on the Mayor's Executive Budget for  
Fiscal 2019. The Finance Committee is joined by the  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and  
International Group Relations Chaired by Council  
Member Jimmy Van Bramer. We just heard from the  
Library System, and now we will hear from the  
Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs  
Tom Finkelppearl, and in the interest of time, I will  
forego making an opening statement, but before--  
[background comments, pause] Okay, but before we open  
them--before we hearing testimony, I'll open the mic  
to my Co-Chair Council Member Van Bramer.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
Chair Dromm. I'll be very brief only to say that I  
am thrilled that City Council has over the last four  
years in particular dramatically increased the City  
Council Cultural initiatives to record funding

1 levels. We've also successfully joined and pushed  
2 for what is now the largest budget that the  
3 department has seen and is able to allocate  
4 particularly for our program groups. We've seen  
5 amazing increases on cultural capital, but we still  
6 need more, and I look forward to hearing from the  
7 Commissioner and working with him to advocate for the  
8 additional funding and for baselining once and for  
9 all this cultural funding, which is so absolutely  
10 essential. We have got to take our cultural  
11 organizations, our cultural groups out of any  
12 political ping-pong match and make sure that this  
13 funding is permanent and baselined and increased  
14 because we know the difference it's making in the  
15 city of New York. We know how important this funding  
16 is, and we absolutely must increase it and baseline  
17 it. So anxious to hear the testimony, but I want to  
18 make sure that we are all forcefully advocating on  
19 behalf of this community that we so love.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you,  
22 Chair Van Bramer and Commissioner it's great to see  
23 you. Whenever you're ready to start.

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, excuse me. We  
need to swear you in.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm that your  
testimony will be truthful to the best of your  
knowledge, information and belief?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do. Okay.  
Good afternoon--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] It's  
just that I think of you still as my Queens Museum  
Director. You get Dennis with the Administration now.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I'm with the  
Administration now. Good afternoon, Chair Van Bramer  
and members of the committee. I am Cultural Affairs  
Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl here today to testify in  
regards to the Mayor's Fiscal 2019 Executive Budget  
Proposal for the Department of Cultural Affairs. I'm  
joined by a number of my staff from the agency. I'll  
begin with a look at the numbers. DCLA's total FY19  
Executive Budget is \$145.3 million. By comparison at  
this point last year, our FY18 Executive Budget was  
\$143.1. The FY19 Executive Budget includes \$28.5  
million for the Cultural Development Fund; \$108.3  
million for the Cultural Institutions Group; \$1.25

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1 million energy support for groups on city property  
2 under the Cultural Affairs; \$6.1 million for energy  
3 operations—agency operations; and \$1 million for  
4 capacity building other agency programs. As always,  
5 these figures do not include the excellent City  
6 Council initiatives that are typically added at  
7 adoption. I'm happy to report that we have baselined  
8 the \$1.25 million in energy support for cultural  
9 groups on DCLA property. This group consists of 10  
10 diverse organizations around the city from BRIC and  
11 Wheatsville in Brooklyn to Ardennes (sic) Theater in  
12 the Bronx. We first proposed this funding on a one-  
13 time basis in 20—in Fiscal Year 17, and again in  
14 Fiscal 18. This baselined funding will provide a  
15 source of stable support for these groups that server  
16 as community anchors for their respective  
17 neighborhoods. Have you ever been to a Celebrate  
18 Brooklyn concert or a seen a performance at Harlem  
19 Stage, you can appreciate the vitality and vibrancy  
20 of this particular group of organizations. [coughs]  
21 DCLA's Four-Year Capital Budget, which I testified on  
22 at the Preliminary Budget Hearing in March is  
23 unaffected by the Executive Budget. It allocates  
24 \$933.84 million to projects for 250 cultural groups  
25

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2 citywide. This investment continues to provide  
3 extraordinary cultural facilities accessible to all  
4 New Yorkers. Just yesterday I joined National Museum  
5 of American Indian Director Kevin Gover just a few  
6 blocks south of here to cut the ribbon on the new  
7 Imaginations Activity Center with funding from the  
8 Mayor, City Council and Madam Borough President. The  
9 multi-million dollar upgrade transformed office space  
10 into a modernized education and exhibition space that  
11 engaged young visitors in learning native innovations  
12 throughout history, and next month, we'll help cut  
13 the ribbon on a much anticipated Ocean Wonders:  
14 Sharks! Exhibit at the New York Aquarium in Coney  
15 Island. This project represents a major city  
16 investment marking a milestone in the institution's  
17 recovery from Hurricane Sandy. As of the Executive  
18 Budget, DCLA's FY18 Modified Budget is now \$186.5  
19 million. This remains the largest allocation in  
20 agency history and the largest public source of  
21 cultural funding anywhere in the United States  
22 outside of the federal government. We proud to work  
23 alongside the City Council to make these historic  
24 investments. The roadmap provided by the Create NYC  
25 Cultural Plan has made this extraordinary year of

1 progress and new beginnings in the cultural  
2 community. One big theme that ran through our  
3 hundreds of meetings with tens of thousands of  
4 interactions with the public through the Create NYC  
5 engagement process was a strong desire for more  
6 integration of cultural activity across city  
7 government. People saw opportunities for arts to  
8 enrich a wide spectrum of public services. They also  
9 identified a range of new and existing services that  
10 could help artists in wider cultural communities to  
11 stay and thrive in New York City. It's important to  
12 understand that culture has long been integrated to  
13 programs across city agencies. With so---with full  
14 support of the Mayor and City Hall, art and culture  
15 are valued across a wide range of portfolios that may  
16 not typically---typically be linked to the arts. This  
17 is not---this not only brings remarkable of culture to  
18 the city services, but directs hundreds of million of  
19 dollars to artists and cultural workers. Even in  
20 agencies with a long history of support the arts,  
21 we've seen a major boost in support on this  
22 Administration and City Council. For instance, the  
23 Department of Cultural---the Department of Education  
24 alone invested more than \$400 million in arts  
25

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1 education last fiscal year, an all-time high thanks  
2 to the Mayor and City Council's \$23 million increase  
3 in arts education funding. DOE employed 2,770 full-  
4 time art teachers last year, 377 more in the—than in  
5 the 2013-2014 school year, a remarkable fact that  
6 marks a major investment in the future of the city.  
7 Some other ways city agencies beyond DCLA are working  
8 to support culture include these. Just this month  
9 First Lady Chirlane McCray under the Department of  
10 Correction announced a pilot program designed to  
11 allow mothers, currently—currently incarcerated at  
12 Rikers Island to visit and participate in activities  
13 and their children—wit their children at the  
14 Children's Museum in Manhattan. By providing  
15 incarcerated parents and their children the  
16 opportunity to engage in creative, supportive  
17 contacts. They can reconnect simply as parent and  
18 child instead of incarcerated parent and child. In  
19 this way the power of culture reduces some of the  
20 most oppressive burdens of incarceration. Last  
21 month, the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment  
22 announced the five—the Women's Fund, a \$5 million  
23 grant program to support film and theater projects  
24 by, for and about women. This is a major investment  
25

1 in expanding the voices that are heard in our  
2 creative community, but it's also just one of a range  
3 of programs at MOMA that MOMA has launched to list of  
4 creators from diverse backgrounds and we're proud to  
5 work alongside them on these efforts. The City's  
6 first ever Office of Night Life was created thanks to  
7 the leadership of the Council especially Council  
8 Member Espinal. In March, Mayor de Blasio appointed  
9 Ariel Palitz as the first Executive Director.  
10 Members of the City's DIY community were among the  
11 most vocal and passionate advocates throughout the  
12 cultural plan process. We were thrilled to see that  
13 one of Ariel's first public engagements at the Secret  
14 Project Robot in Bushwick where she heard first hand  
15 the range of issues putting pressure on our vibrant  
16 and diverse and DIY spaces. We look forward to  
17 working with this new office to continue the dialogue  
18 around supporting safe, vibrant nightlife. Along NYC  
19 EDC and the Mayor's Office, DCLA continues to build  
20 on the Mayor's commitment to expand the supply of  
21 affordable artist work space. With a \$30 million  
22 capital commitment to the Affordable Real Estate for  
23 Artists Initiative or the AREA Initiative, we've  
24 dedicated—we're dedicate to keeping artists in here  
25

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1 in New York City. So much of our creative energy  
2 comes from being a city where art isn't just  
3 displayed and sold but actually made. We also want  
4 to make sure that the arts remain deeply connected  
5 and rooted to the communities where they're made.  
6 Tens of thousands of square feet of projects are in  
7 the works including the Peninsula in the Bronx and  
8 Art Belt Brooklyn at the Brooklyn Army Terminal. We  
9 plan to announce additional projects in the coming  
10 months. Another interagency cultural partner-  
11 partnership is not new, but continues to reach new  
12 heights in its 40<sup>th</sup> year. The one and only Materials  
13 For the Arts based in Chair Van Bramer's district in  
14 Long Island City, Queens is a collaboration between  
15 DCLA the Department of Education and Department of  
16 Sanitation. We like to say that MFTA was green  
17 before green-when green was still just a color  
18 diverting millions of pounds of waste from the  
19 landfill each year. This year it will provide  
20 materials valued at over \$9 million to thousands of  
21 cultural non-profits, public schools and city  
22 programs entirely free of charge. To put that in  
23 perspective, that's roughly the amount of funding  
24 that the city of Philadelphia will provide to  
25

1 culture. Next we—we did some London's Culture  
2 government and Sanitation sectors are visiting for  
3 three days to learn more about MFTA with an eye  
4 toward setting up their own version. We're proud  
5 that his remarkable organization was started and  
6 continues to thrive right here in New York. In my  
7 March testimony on the Preliminary FY19 Budget I  
8 provided more in-depth updates on the Mayor's grant  
9 for cultural impact and the Public Artists and  
10 Residents programs. These are just a few of the ways  
11 DCLA is working with fellow agencies to build  
12 programming around the power of culture address some  
13 of our most intractable issues. Now, for a few  
14 updates on our efforts to promote a more diverse,  
15 equitable and inclusive cultural sector since the  
16 March budget hearing. [coughs] We announced the  
17 Create NYC Leadership Accelerator in March to help  
18 mid-level cultural workers grow into leadership  
19 positions. The demographic survey of DCLA grantees  
20 released in 2016 showed that there is far less  
21 diversity at the top of the org chart for many  
22 cultural groups. This data highlights barriers  
23 within the sector that prevent advancement for under-  
24 represented groups. The Leadership Accelerator  
25

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1 Program participants will examine systematic issues  
2 that prevent more than—more diverse leadership.

3 Twenty-five individuals will take part in this pilot  
4 starting at the end of this month, and we hope to  
5 expand it in the future. We announced another  
6 exciting outgrowth of the Cultural Plan on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

7 The CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund will offer a  
8 total \$350,000 for programs that deepen the

9 engagement in the arts for people with disabilities  
10 as artists, cultural workers and art exhibits. (sic)

11 Promoting greater access and inclusion in the arts  
12 for people with disabilities is one of the

13 cornerstones of CreateNYC. Through this new fund, we  
14 want to expand existing programs and invest in new

15 efforts from workforce training to disability art  
16 programs. We're eager to see how our cultural

17 constituents respond to this call to action.

18 Applications are due on June 1<sup>st</sup> so please spread the  
19 word among your constituents. Additional information

20 is available at NYC.gov/culture. On May 4<sup>th</sup> the  
21 latest group of CUNY Cultural Core students

22 celebrated their graduation at Lehman College in the  
23 Bronx. Supported by DCL and the Rockefeller

24 Foundation these extraordinary students, more that  
25

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1 120 of them, had paid internships with 62 cultural  
2 partners. To date, two-over 230 students have  
3 completed the CUNY Cultural Core Program. About 20%  
4 of participants have received job offers from the  
5 host sites, and many have gone onto explore careers  
6 or areas of study in arts and culture. The Cultural  
7 Core has brought hundreds of students into the  
8 cultural community who might not otherwise have  
9 considered the arts as a career path. Meanwhile,  
10 cultural organizations have been thrilled with the  
11 smart, skilled students they have the opportunity to  
12 work with through the program. This is laying a  
13 solid foundation of professional and personal  
14 relationships on which these students can build their  
15 careers. Unemployment is a systematic issue for New  
16 Yorkers with disabilities. The Office of the people-  
17 the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, MOPD  
18 estimate that 77% of New Yorkers with disabilities  
19 are unemployed. DCLA's definition of workforce  
20 diversity includes disability. So, this is an issue  
21 we're committed to making progress on. In March, we  
22 collaborated with MOPD to offer a workshop on the  
23 subject for culture-for our Cultural Institutions  
24 Group members represented from -representatives from  
25

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26 organizations met at Carnegie Hall to hear from

Cultural workers with disabilities, gain insight to

best practices for engaging with the disability

community and learning more about MOPD's NYC At Work

Employment Initiative. We hope to host a similar

workshop in the future for our Cultural Development

Fund grantees. Finally, the requirement for

Diversity Equity and Inclusion, DEI plans for the

members of the Cultural Institution Group as

announced by the Mayor when he released the Culture-

the Create NYC Cultural Plan. As you know, the CIG

consists of a wide range of organizations from larger

museums to community-based performing art centers,

zoos and gardens. Their DEI plans will have to

reflect these disparate sizes, disciplines and

audiences, but across the board the groups see this

as an opportunity to dive into critical issues that

will shape the future of this sector. As our

population grows more diverse, our cultural

institutions will have to keep pace to continue

programming that makes them vital and relevant

institutions. I thank the Council for its ongoing

commitment to supporting Arts and Culture NYC, and

25

1 I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have  
2 at this time.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And thank you very  
5 much, Commissioner. We appreciate you coming in and  
6 answering some questions and giving testimony. Let  
7 me start off by just talking a little bit about the  
8 Budget Response. The Council called on the  
9 Administration to increase the budget for the  
10 Department of Cultural Affairs by \$10 million in  
11 order to ensure that the goal's intention is to  
12 create New York City Cultural Plan is met—is met and  
13 that the funding of the cultural community needs.  
14 Why was this funding not reflected in the Executive  
15 Budget?

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, we are  
17 where we were last year at this time. Last year that  
18 money, in fact, more than that money the \$10 million,  
19 \$15 million was added at adoption. That's happened  
20 in the last two years, and that's been the first  
21 significant increases in the cultural budget in a  
22 very long period of time. So, we look forward to  
23 working with you and I expect vigorous communication  
24 about the budget as we head towards adoption.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, I know that  
Chair Van Bramer will certainly be communicating with  
you on this.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I think—I  
anticipate that to be the case. [laughter]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Capital equity. How  
many capital projects does the agency currently have  
and how many cultural organizations are these  
projects being done?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, we're  
working on projects with I think 250 organizations.  
I have this information here if you want to know the  
exact number. There are 250 organizations with  
capital projects in their—in all five boroughs.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How does that DCLA  
track the Capital projects? Can you provide  
breakdown by borough?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: We can. I  
don't have that with me right, but we do have that  
information yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How do you track it?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
We'll get that to you, and what do you mean by  
tracking?

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I mean you--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

We a have Capital Project Manager for every one of  
those capital projects. Those capital projects are--  
are in three of four different categories, DC, DDC  
managed, EDC managed, and then there are CCGs. You  
know, those grants through DDC and funding agreements  
through EDC. So, some of them are actually projects  
managed by the private sector and some are by the  
public sector, but we have project managers who are  
tracking the project, the process of each of those  
capital projects.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, how do you find  
the process with DDC? We just had the libraries and  
it's a huge problem for us, are you have better luck  
with them?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I have had  
very good experiences on some capital projects with  
DDC. I know that the--the--and so for example, I can  
say that there's a exemplary project recently, which  
is a very complex project, which is the  
reconstruction of the Wavertree, the ship down in the  
South Street Seaport. Chairman Van Bramer was there  
to ring the bell when it we arrived back. That's a

1 very complicated project that was done with a very  
2 good vendor in Staten Island who—the shipyard that  
3 rebuilt that it absolutely can be done. There are  
4 many, many rules governing procurement that make  
5 sometimes projects more expensive.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do the larger  
8 culturals have an easier time because they can fund  
9 the money.

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Larger  
11 cultural institutions generally speaking don't work  
12 with the city agencies, don't work—I mean they—if  
13 we're funding, for example there is a big project as  
14 everybody knows at Natural History coming up.  
15 There's a \$350 million project. We're throwing in  
16 \$80 million by the Council--thank you very much--and  
17 us splitting that. They are going to privately  
18 manage that. That's still tracked by our staff and  
19 by EDC. It's the EDC Funding Agreement. So, that's  
20 a private sector job with public money in it. There  
21 are many rules that are different that make it easier  
22 for the private sector to get this work done, but  
23 those big institutions have the capacity, they  
24 capital units. When I was at the Queens Museum,  
25 you've been to the Queens Museum many times by now,

1 we didn't have a capital unit. We relied on DDC to  
2 manage the project. We had a person on our staff  
3 going to all meetings, but that's not something where  
4 the Queens Museum had the capacity to manage a \$68  
5 million project. In that--so in that case, that was  
6 the appropriate thing that the city managed the  
7 project, the city built it. In the case of the  
8 Metropolitan Museum of art or--or natural history or  
9 the very large institutions, which are often raising  
10 very large amounts of private money, they have  
11 capital units that manage those projects. And by the  
12 way, there's significant risk involved, but there are  
13 cost overruns. The city does not come in and say  
14 okay, we're going to, you know, figure out how to do  
15 this. It's in the hands of the Metropolitan or the  
16 Natural History or whatever. Those large  
17 institutions, the zoo to raise that additional money.  
18 So, big risks involved in managing your own project  
19 as well.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: In Fiscal 2017, the  
22 department--I think it's 2017, the Department of  
23 Cultural Affairs committed \$147.4 million or 27.2% of  
24 its annual capital plan of \$542 million. The  
25 Executive Plan has \$358 million in Fiscal 2018. What

1 does DCLA expect to commit in 2018 and will be rolled  
2 over?

3  
4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I mean I  
5 don't have the exact numbers in front of me. I can  
6 provide them to you, but I know that the commitment  
7 rate is of concern, and there's a reason that I can  
8 give you. There is a very complicated set of reason  
9 that I can give you. There is a very complicated set  
10 of reasons, but I just wanted to explain the  
11 difference between us and let's say the Police  
12 Department. So the Police Department is one agency,  
13 and it's building precincts or renovating precincts  
14 all over town. It can put resources towards projects  
15 that are moving forward. In the case of the  
16 Department of Cultural Affairs we have a separate  
17 budget code for every single one of those projects.  
18 They are not transferrable. So, when a project  
19 doesn't move forward, it's not a situation where we  
20 can—or when a—when a budget line comes in and there's  
21 a bid that's excessive, you can't say okay, well,  
22 we're going to slow down on this precinct and put it  
23 over here. It's all separate. So, one of the things  
24 that we've been doing, we've been working closely  
25 with OMB on this, and this requires Council

1 participation and collaboration s well is to put the  
2 money in the year that it's actually going to be  
3 spent. Right, so that's something where by September  
4 when we do the plan by-against which the commitment  
5 rate is judged we should have the money in the proper  
6 fiscal year. But it's a very-it's apples and  
7 oranges, to any other situation. I think the closest  
8 comparison would be libraries, but the difference  
9 with us is that many of the cultural organizations  
10 are private organizations. They're all separate, and  
11 I think it better-it was a great, great innovation by  
12 the last administration, if I may praise, to allow  
13 cultural capital money to be spent outside of the  
14 CIG. Before that, all the cultural money was  
15 essentially spent for the most part with some  
16 exceptions. On CIG institutions, this widened it out  
17 to democratize the Capital Budget, but there's been a  
18 big problem with commitment rates, and I understand  
19 what you're talking about. I know that's the answer.

20  
21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, you're working  
22 with OMB on that?

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.  
24  
25

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And you're going to  
get back to us on that? You're going to work with us  
on that?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: The-yearh,  
yeah, we can get you statistics of that commitment  
right now.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. What-what is  
the percentage of capital projects funded as compared  
to those who apply that are eligible?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, that  
depends from year to year. It's been, you know, a  
little under 50% of capital projects are funded, but  
you have to understand capital projects can be  
anything from buying a vehicle for \$40,000 to  
building a wing of a museum or a ground-up-the  
institution like City Museum in Harlem for \$100  
million. So, there's a wide range of what you say,  
but those are, you know, counted as both our count-  
counted as individual budget requests.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How-how do you  
prioritize those needs, those capital needs?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, there's a-  
a set of criteria. We've added two new criteria this  
year, which has to do with disability access and

1 green initiatives. We're very concerned that the  
2 Green Initiatives, and that was one of the  
3 discussions in the Cultural Plan. So, we—we're  
4 hiring and we're about to hire an energy expert who  
5 is going to be on our staff who is going to be  
6 looking—because we spend, as you know, well over a  
7 third of our budget is energy. So, there are a set a  
8 criteria that relate first of all to trying to finish  
9 projects that are already in process and might need  
10 some more money. There's broad distribution and  
11 equity, and then there's sort of the service to the  
12 city that these cultural capital projects will be  
13 rendering.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you. I  
16 just want to say we've been joined by Council Member  
17 Gibson, Cumbo and Cornegy, and Chair Van Bramer has  
18 questions.

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
21 much, Chair Dromm. So, you both alluded to the fact  
22 that we would probably have vigorous conversations  
23 and communications about the budgets. So, why don't  
24 we start that right now?

25 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: \$15 million

added at budget adoption last year. No one knows  
more than you and I how hard you and I fought to make  
that possible, but the Mayor did not baseline that  
funding, and did not include it in his Executive  
Budget. So, that \$15 million has gone a long way and  
done some very good things I think you would agree  
between Budget adoption and today. So, do you  
believe that it is important that that funding be at  
a minimum restored to the budget?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, first of  
all, I want to agree with you that the money was well  
spent, and as you know, it's sort of divided into  
three pots. One was some CIG support, some program  
support, individual artist and then goals related to  
the cultural plan. So, I will say without hesitation  
that we could use that money well. It could be well  
spent again, and I look forward to working with you,  
working with the administration, and I will I am sure  
hear from the constituents as well as we approach  
adoption.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, it sounds to  
me like you agree that that \$15 million is really  
important, was well spent, and—and I would argue that

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1 the work of that funding is undone, right. It  
2 continues--

3  
4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-hm.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --that the  
6 several million dollars that were specifically  
7 earmarked towards advancing the goals as a enumerated  
8 in our Cultural Plan, that--that work hasn't finished  
9 with the funding that was allocated this year, right.  
10 We haven't included--we haven't reached all of the  
11 goals when it comes to diversity and inclusion and  
12 inequity. So, so I'm assuming that you would also  
13 agree that--that if we were able to both include that  
14 funding in the budget again that the work continues,  
15 no?

16 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes,  
17 absolutely.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And--and so if we  
19 were not to see that funding restored, that would in  
20 essence be a cut to the very things that you and you  
21 and this Council and the Administration believe in  
22 and have fought for.

23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I'm not  
24 going to disagree, but I will create a little analogy  
25 here in relationship to the word cut, which is if you

1 receive a certain base salary, and then you receive a  
2 bonus in a particular year, and the next year the  
3 bonus isn't the same or doesn't come back, is that a  
4 cut? That's the question. So, we are where we were  
5 last year. We added a bunch of money at adoption,  
6 which was again great to have and well spent and I do  
7 commend many people on that side of the table  
8 particularly the chair for fighting for that, and I  
9 just wanted to say one other thing about the-- So,  
10 with the Cultural Plan, there are many goals, and  
11 some of the goals are in--very much in---integrated  
12 into that money that was added, but there are certain  
13 goals that just permanent changes in the way we do  
14 business, and I just wanted to mention that quickly.  
15 So, for example on the CDF Application there are two  
16 questions, there are not just one year, but  
17 permanently added, which related to the Diversity,  
18 Equity and Inclusion practices of organizations on  
19 their staff and board is one question, and another  
20 question relates to their audiences. And the  
21 adoption by all the CIGs of Diversity, Equity and  
22 Inclusion plans I think will have a fundamental long-  
23 term effect. So, there are some things happening  
24 that are long-term, but I do not want to disagree  
25

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1 with your sentiment that that's well--the money is  
2 well spent.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, look with  
5 all due respect I mean we shouldn't engage in a game  
6 of semantics here. The truth is that the funding  
7 that we were able to include in the Budget last year  
8 to further the goals of the Cultural Plan, that you  
9 enumerate in your testimony including the Disability  
10 Forward Fund--

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --\$360,000. I'm  
13 assuming you would agree that that work is not  
14 complete with the \$350,000 that we allocated, and  
15 that if we don't see that \$350,000 back in the budget  
16 this year at a minimum, that that would actually be a  
17 meaningful step back in the goal of furthering access  
18 and inclusions for those with disabilities. The same  
19 thing with some of the other programs, and--and so, I  
20 think we've got to call a cut a cut and not engage in  
21 a game of--of semantics and games respecting your  
22 position within the Administration. But I would also  
23 say to you that baselining this funding is imposs--so  
24 important and critical, and would you then agree that  
25 we're able to make sure that \$15 million is in the

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1 Budget again this year at a minimum, but if we were  
2 able to have \$30 million that we would actually  
3 double all of the good that we were able to do, and  
4 maybe even do a lot of additional things when it  
5 comes to diversity, inclusion and equity.

7 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I can't argue  
8 with that. I mean I think that the--

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]  
10 Good, it's done.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [laughs]

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: \$30 million and  
13 this--

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
15 But I think many commissioners coming in front of  
16 you--

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]  
18 I'll text the Mayor and let him know you agree.

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay, fine.  
20 I think that many commissioners coming in front of  
21 you if they were--if you were asked, you know, Polly  
22 that DOT could use extra money to pave more roads,  
23 she would say yes as well. So, there's certain, you  
24 know, limit and there's certain resources. I would  
25 say that the--you know, the money has been well spent.

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1 If the money is back in our budget this year it will  
2 be well spent again. I agree with that.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, you know, I  
5 appreciate the—the—the analogy with the Department of  
6 Transportation and certainly, you know, Chair Dromm  
7 has seen a lot of commissioners come and go in the  
8 last ten days and, you know, a lot of them who—who  
9 are—are appointed by the same person that—that you're  
10 appointed by, you know, come in here, and—and to  
11 varying degrees fight for increases in their budget  
12 or want increases in their budget and see where they  
13 could do additional work if they were able to see  
14 additions to their agency's budget and I think, you  
15 know, that's where I'm—I'm asking you because I know,  
16 that there's a level of advocacy that goes on behind  
17 the scenes and that's really important, but I also  
18 think it's important for the cultural community to  
19 know that you are in there fighting incredibly hard  
20 and that—that we are a team essentially to make sure  
21 that we get the resources that we know this community  
22 deserves, and—and this agency needs. Some very good  
23 things have happened over the last couple of years,  
24 and we need to continue that progress, and make sure  
25 that we don't fall back. Certainly making sure that

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the agency itself wants this funding, needs this  
funding and is fighting for this funding is  
imperative in the process both public and private.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I mean  
those commissioners you referred to are my, you know,  
my colleagues, and we talk about this, and I  
understand that they, you know, that many agencies  
like ours are also in the position of seeking  
additional funding. So, that's the process. What  
goes on behind closed doors obviously is behind  
closed doors.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I—I just  
want to close by saying again the monies that we have  
been able to allocate have been a good step forward  
in giving organizations the resources that they need.  
If we are not able to see that funding in the budget  
again, they will see cuts to their budget.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That would be  
wrong. We cannot allow that to happen. So, I know  
that we will all, everyone in this room who cares  
about culture and the arts will be making sure in the  
budget process that not only are we making sure that  
the \$15 million that was added last year, it was

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added again and baselined, but that we go further.

\$30 million gets us a long way to where we need to

go, and even then we're not finished, but it is a

good start. So, I want to say thank you to you in

advance for agreeing to everything that I just said--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and look

forward to delivering for this community with my

colleagues. Thank you very much, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Majority

Leader Cumbo.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Thank you to my

Chairs and thank you so much for being here

Commissioner Finkelpearl. Want to ask you is there

any agency or has it quantified in terms of which

agencies bring in the greatest amount of revenue for

the city of New York?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I mean I--

that's an interesting question to-to quantify agency

like agency by agency?

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Because each

agency does--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

I haven't see that--

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1  
2 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: --something  
3 different.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, yes.  
5 That's right.

6 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Right, so ACS is  
7 not a revenue generator--

8 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
9 No.

10 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: --for the city.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
12 Right, yeah.

13 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: It provides  
14 valuable services for the children of the city of New  
15 York, but is there an agency that has been identified  
16 as far as which agencies bring in the greatest amount  
17 of revenue for the city of New York?

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I have not  
19 seen such a chart. I think it's an interesting  
20 question. I think there might be some kind of  
21 overlap also. So, for example NYC and Company and  
22 the Department of Cultural Affairs might be claiming  
23 a lot of the same revenue, but then again numerous--

24 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: [interposing] And  
25 a lot of the same partners also.

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2                   COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, yeah.

3   There have been numerous and by the way MOME, you  
4   know, the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment  
5   and Department of Cultural Affairs both are cultural  
6   agencies. So, when the cultural sector is analyzed  
7   in terms of how many jobs it creates, et cetera, it's  
8   usually a combination of the for-profit and non-  
9   profit sector. So, anyway, you see—you know what I'm  
10   saying because it's a Broadway in the music business  
11   and clubs and this and that like music clubs are in  
12   the for-profit sector and aren't under our agency,  
13   but, you know, I mean, this without doubts. There's  
14   many studies after studies that who that the vitality  
15   of New York City's economy is predicated on having a  
16   lively arts and culture sector. And so, there are  
17   many studies that have quantified the arts and  
18   cultural impact have not seen that compared to other  
19   agencies. The other agencies like if there weren't  
20   roads you couldn't have—you know, if DOT didn't do  
21   their work at all you couldn't have arts and culture.  
22   If there weren't—if ACS--

23                   MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: [interposing] But  
24   if there was not arts and culture, people would have  
25   no reason to be on the roads.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [laughs]

Right. It's circular and I agree with that. You know, there would be nowhere to go. So, yes, it's interesting, but it's all connected. It's also the same thing with police and fire like if you didn't have a city that was safe and where fire just burned out of control, you couldn't have a cultural sector also. So, it's a, you know, all of city government somehow together and the private sector creates the city and then the creative sector is a very important part of the economy, but that—that's an interesting question. I'll have to think about that.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Because I see it more as all of the other agencies that you're talking about provide critical day-to-day survival for a city at baseline, but at the same time, if there's nothing bringing in revenue, then all of the other agencies in this city can't function at its optimal level. I would venture to say that I think that we should do more research on this. I would venture to say that DCLA, Film, Television and Media, tourism, NYC and Co and all of those, I would say combined probably I would venture to say are the greatest revenue generators for the city of New York. I could be very

1 wrong. I mean someone may have some creative thing  
2 to sell so how Sanitation makes great money for the  
3 city. I don't know.

4  
5 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I would say  
6 that EDC would also say that the financial sector is  
7 important to the economy.

8 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Correct. We'll  
9 put that up in there.

10 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

11 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: But I would say  
12 that if we're going to make a leap but I think we  
13 should study this because I feel that if we recognize  
14 that this is an agency that the city of New York is  
15 dependent upon as far as a revenue generator and  
16 everything from job creation to tourism to hotels to  
17 transportation to small businesses to all of these  
18 different things. If we were to really recognize the  
19 impact that this agency has on the vitality of the  
20 city of New York, we're—we're expecting an agency to  
21 be such a backbone, a financial backbone for the  
22 city, but at the same time, we're expecting that  
23 cultural community to work at a level that's  
24 substandard or not in relation to what they offer and  
25 bring to the city. So, I believe and correct me if

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1 I'm wrong, over the last now going on five years,  
2 your agency as far as programmatic funding has only  
3 seen a \$10 million increase. Is that correct from  
4 your agency side?  
5

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I'm  
7 familiar with the last four years.

8 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Uh-hm.

9 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, are you  
10 talking about on the non-CIG funding?

11 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Correct.

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, because  
13 it's over the economy. (sic)

14 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Well, is that-is  
15 that funding altogether, that half goes to one and  
16 the other half goes to the other?

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: It would be  
18 additional funding.

19 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Uh-hm.

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, again, so  
21 this \$186 million budget we have was the biggest  
22 we've ever had. That increases, you know, \$18.5  
23 million that's added at adoption last year. It's one  
24 of the biggest increase that anybody has seen in  
25 recent memory. So, I mean there have been increases

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1 that we've all, you know, collectively fought for  
2 that I think are a good thing and the agency is  
3 agreeing with the Chair.  
4

5 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: [interposing] And  
6 we've put on the Council's side substantial--

7 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
8 The substantial as--

9 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: --over \$30  
10 million.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, the  
12 Council Initiatives have skyrocketed as well.

13 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Uh-hm.

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, you know,  
15 I-I think the other thing to-to mention because there  
16 is the Capital Budget also and the Capital Budget has  
17 been very vibrant, and you also have to understand  
18 that there's about \$2.00 a 2 to 1 ratio in private  
19 investment compared to public investment. So our  
20 public investment in capital leverages twice as much  
21 money in private investment. There's all kinds and  
22 that's also jobs that are, you know, construction  
23 jobs and architectural jobs, et cetera. So, there's  
24 a huge amount of job creation and this has been well  
25

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1 studied. There are numerous studies, and the last-  
2 last one I think is Center for an Urban Future.

3  
4 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: However, many of  
5 our organization are probably very building rich and  
6 staff poor. So, they may not, you know we have these  
7 beautiful buildings but the people working inside the  
8 buildings are probably not commanding salaries that  
9 are of the same scale as the beautiful buildings that  
10 they work in.

11 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I-I think  
12 you're right. That can't be good taste. Yes.

13 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: So, how does  
14 this-explain to me how in this baseline process  
15 because we're still not seeing this really critical  
16 funding baselined, and I guess we have to hope and  
17 pray that come the handshake or the final adoption of  
18 the budget that it's in there. What happens in the  
19 negotiations in terms if you say we really need this  
20 baselined and then the Administration pushes back or  
21 the Mayor pushes back and say, well, we've got to  
22 make sure some other agencies are shored up before we  
23 baseline this funding. Because I guess growing up as  
24 an artist, and as a creative, we in the creative  
25 sector although we recognize economically how

1 important we are, but when it's all said and done,  
2 it's still kind of in the way it's being treated here  
3 as an afterthought. Once we take care of everything  
4 else, and we baseline everything else, then we'll  
5 look at the arts and see if we can do something for  
6 them.  
7

8 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I certainly  
9 don't see it that way, and I don't think the  
10 Administration sees it that way, and again, I think  
11 that what, you know, what has happened has been  
12 pretty good and pretty revolutionary to actually be  
13 adding money so that when think about, you know, the  
14 budget dance in the past history there were cuts to  
15 try to get back to zero--

16 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Uh-hm.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --in the  
18 budget dance and if-if you want to call it that. So  
19 I'm not going to dispute they are cuts against ads,  
20 right. So, we have been able to add money the last  
21 couple of years. It's been terrific. I think it  
22 shows a commitment on the part of the Administration  
23 to arts and culture and I think the money has been  
24 well spent.  
25

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1  
2 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: I just want to  
3 add in closing I feel that it's unfortunate because  
4 every budget cycle we come forward to try to baseline  
5 the \$10 million, and it prevents us from fighting for  
6 the real initial ask, which was \$30 million and \$30  
7 million to be baselined. So, I feel like we're in a—  
8 is it April Fools Day or was it Groundhog's Day? No.  
9 I guess maybe a combination of both right. We're  
10 kind of in the same space as far as the negotiations  
11 that were constantly just asking for a baseline of  
12 \$10 million and every year that you don't get an  
13 increase, it really is a cut because the cost of New  
14 York City and, you know, how inflation. These are  
15 arguments that you made when you were on—the other  
16 side of the table.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: It's true.

18 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Every year that  
19 you don't get an increase is a decrease to your  
20 budget because of the cost of living in the city of  
21 New York. So, I would hope that at the very least  
22 this conversation is different moving forward into  
23 the next fiscal year because we're really doing our  
24 economics sector—the vitality and the resources  
25 that are needed for the city of New York comes from

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1 the cultural community, and we have to support this  
2 cultural community so that they can continue to  
3 thrive, continue to bring in revenue for the city of  
4 New York, and they can continue to afford to live in  
5 New York City with all that is happening here. So,  
6 thank you and I'll turn it back over to my Chairs.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you very  
9 much. Council-Chair Van Bramer.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
11 much. So, just to I think wrap things up, I think we  
12 are going to do a lot more than simply hope and pray.  
13 I think we're going to fight like heck to make sure  
14 that everyone agrees that this \$30 million is  
15 imperative and baselining. Every gain that we make  
16 here is that we make here is absolutely essential,  
17 and we can do that. We have the ability to do it.  
18 We just need the political will to make it so, and I  
19 am ready for that fight, ready to continue our  
20 vigorous ongoing communications, Commissioner, as we  
21 always have and do, and as you pointed out, the \$18.5  
22 million increase last year was substantial. The  
23 cultural capital is great. The City Council Cultural  
24 Initiatives in the last couple of years have doubled  
25 and tripled. CASA was \$5 million four years ago.

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1 It's now \$13.5 million. We are seeing some real  
2 serious investments that's great. We on the Council  
3 have our piece to this, but the Administration has  
4 the ability to dramatically make a move here and once  
5 and for all increase the funding, baseline the  
6 funding. Let's do it together. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, and-but this  
9 will conclude our hearing for today. The Finance  
10 Committee will resume Executive Budget hearings for  
11 Fiscal 19 on Tuesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in this  
12 room. On Monday, the Finance Committee will hear-on  
13 Tuesday, the Finance Committee will hear from the  
14 Department of Education and the School Construction  
15 Authority. As a reminder, the public will be invited  
16 to testify on Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, the last day of the  
17 Budget hearings at approximately 4:00 p.m. in this  
18 room. For any member of the public who wishes to  
19 testify, but cannot make it to the hearings, you can  
20 email your testimony to the Finance Division at  
21 [financetestimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:financetestimony@council.nyc.gov) and the staff will  
22 make it a part of this official record. Thank you  
23 and this hearing is now adjourned. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 12, 2018