

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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February 27, 2009

Start: 10:22 am

Recess: 12:05 pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
LEWIS A. FIDLER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Elizabeth Crowley
Alan J. Gerson
Melissa Mark-Viverito
Miguel Martinez

A P P E A R A N C E S [CONTINUED]

James Bolas
Director of Education
Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services
Chair
New York City Association of Homeless and Street-
Involved Youth Organizations

John Welch
Program Director
Safe Horizons Streetworks
Lower East Side

Karen Remy
Director of Mental Health And Personal Development
The Door - A Center of Alternatives, Inc.

Nancy Downing
Director of Advocacy
Covenant House New York

Theresa Nolan
Divisional Director
Green Chimneys Children's Services
New York City Division

Joey Lopez
Coordinator of Policy and Training
Ali Forney Center

Lucky Michaels
Program Director
MCCNY Homeless Youth Services

Charles Taylor
Client
MCCNY Homeless Youth Services

Paul Sealy
Program Director of Independence and Programs
SCO Family of Services

A P P E A R A N C E S [CONTINUED]

Megan Annito
Counsel
Committee on Youth Services

Michael Benjamin
Policy Analyst
Committee on Youth Services

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2 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: I'm assuming
3 that we'll be joined by some of my colleagues
4 shortly. I know at least one called to say they
5 were running a little late. About six years ago I
6 chaired the first Youth Services Committee Hearing
7 on Runaway and Homeless Youth in New York City.
8 We did a little tally. This is actually our 13th
9 hearing on or related to runaway and homeless
10 youth since that time. It was an eye-opening
11 experience for me but it was also jaw-dropping.

12 I became determined to open the
13 eyes of other New Yorkers to the stories of the
14 kids that all of you in this room know all too
15 well. You live it every day, both in your
16 victories and unfortunately in those moments when
17 you feel defeated. I know for many of you that
18 the work that we have done together over these
19 past years has made a huge difference. We have
20 increased funding for shelter beds and services
21 and have also made inroads, documenting the
22 numbers and needs of homeless youth, by performing
23 the Runaway and Homeless Youth Count and Survey of
24 2008.

25 When I hear your stories of a

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2 child, abused and neglected at home or on the
3 streets who is able to move in, to get back into
4 school, get off of drugs, get a GED, I know that
5 our determination has paid off. Most importantly
6 I know that that child has finally been treated
7 with dignity and respect. But there is always
8 more that needs to be done, that has to be done.

9 In this economic climate we are now
10 faced with greater challenges than any of us could
11 have foreseen. I have heard from you and I know
12 that you are being tested. More kids are knocking
13 on the door. And these kids are younger,
14 increasingly more fragile and present with a
15 longer list of needs than in the past. The
16 stresses at home and on the streets have grown
17 forcing many already strained families and
18 children to their breaking points.

19 As we're being asked to do even
20 more with less, our voices are more important now
21 than they have ever been. No matter what comes
22 our way we cannot be a city that allows our most
23 vulnerable to endure life on the streets. I will
24 stand firm in my support for the runaway and
25 homeless youth in our city and those who serve

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2 them. I remain committed, now more than ever, to
3 seeing the day when every child who needs a bed
4 will have one, to getting them services, and to
5 ending the shameful failures of our city that
6 contributes to the number of kids on the street.
7 I believe that this is literally a question of
8 life and death.

9 Today we will hear testimony about
10 proposed changes in State and Federal law
11 contained in Reso number 1227-A that we believe
12 would assist the city's ability to serve our
13 runaway and homeless youth without costing
14 significant new revenue. These are commonsense
15 changes that will make a big difference.

16 I want to thank all of you, not
17 just for coming today, and for all the work that
18 you do, but for being such a great assistance to
19 me and to the Committee staff in developing this
20 agenda.

21 Now we do have a number of you
22 signed up to testify. And I'm going to call you
23 up in panels. Let's start with Jim Bolas from the
24 Empire State Coalition, John Welch from Safe
25 Horizons and Karen Remy from The Door.

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[Pause]

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[Witnesses getting settled]

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CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: And one of you just jump in there.

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[Pause]

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CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: You know, we don't even have, you know, like, like Channel 74 TV taping this. And I have to tell you that, I mean I don't want to start off on a downer but it is extraordinarily frustrating to me. You know, yesterday we had a very long and agonizing day at City Hall, especially from an inside baseball kind of way, especially if you were from Brooklyn. And, you know, every reporter, and the blogs was there, you know, doing, you know, hour by hour of the inside baseball torture over the importance of the City Clerk.

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We don't have a reporter in the room here. We don't have--I mean just to me, the sense of priorities about this issue continues to be frustrating. And that is why we continue to have these hearings because every now and then somebody pays attention. So even beyond the, you know, the notion that, you know, today perhaps we

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2 can move forward on some of these agenda items.

3 And I do hope to move this Reso at the next Youth
4 Services Hearing 'cause we cannot vote on it on
5 its first hearing, you know, it would be nice, you
6 know, if we got some attention from the rest of
7 the world for this problem. I mean I know that
8 everyone in this room is committed to it, so.

9 Jump in there Jim. Sorry.

10 [Pause]

11 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: And we're even
12 joined by Council Member Mark-Viverito and Alan
13 Gerson. Good. Perfect timing.

14 [Long pause, microphone not on]

15 MR. JAMES BOLAS: --and it's not--
16 oh there we go. It's [chuckling] It's not that
17 adolescence starts at this particular age and then
18 all of a sudden you hit 21 and you're an adult.
19 You know, we know that it's a period of time, we
20 know that adolescence is about moving from the
21 concrete to abstract thought. That's our job as
22 providers.

23 We believe that many adolescent
24 youth go beyond the age of 21. As a
25 representative of the National Council on Youth

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2 Policy, we believe that this is a condition of
3 homeless youth in our nation not just in New York
4 City. So this is all over. And as a
5 representative of the US--as a US representative
6 of the International Society for Mobile Youth
7 Work, I also know that this presents as a global
8 condition as well, so we're not alone in the
9 thinking in this process.

10 We did a survey in 2007 and found
11 that each night--it wasn't a head count, so but
12 each night there's at least 3,800 youth that go
13 without housing in New York City. We also found
14 that of those 1,000 youth that we interviewed for
15 that survey, we found that the average age of the
16 young person living on the street was 20. We
17 found that the average age of the young person
18 leaving home was 16. So not a lot of the young
19 people were, you know, fell into the 14-year old
20 runaway and that sort of thing. The majority of
21 them were hitting the older ages. And I'm just
22 summarizing because I know that you like that.

23 [Laughing]

24 [Audience laughing]

25 [Off mic]

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2 MR. BOLAS: In the late 80's I was
3 working at the Streetwork project and in the late
4 1980's we understood, at that time, and this was
5 20 years ago, that homeless youth don't stop being
6 adolescents at age 21. We also found that
7 homeless youth don't necessarily--that adult
8 homeless services don't necessarily meet the needs
9 of a 22-year old, or for that matter a 24-year
10 old. Right. So adult homeless services aren't
11 necessarily prepared to deal with the adolescent
12 mind, the delayed adolescent mind that a runaway
13 and homeless adolescent is experiencing.

14 Many youth spent their adolescence
15 compensating to survive. This much we know. And
16 as a result were arrested in their developmental
17 process in order to survive on the street you have
18 to become an adult really fast. And so if you
19 become an adult really fast, you sort of shut
20 aside the adolescence. So a lot of that
21 adolescent development gets sort of squashed or
22 repressed.

23 And we found at holiday and
24 birthday parties for example, we found these youth
25 from 16 to 24 who were responding to gifts of

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2 stuffed animals and teddy bears and the like in
3 the same childlike way as someone who was 10 years
4 younger. We know that, well through--we know
5 throughout New York State, we know that this is a
6 condition, not only in New York City, also
7 throughout our country. This happens in Buffalo.
8 This happens in Schenectady. It happens in LA,
9 Chicago, Minneapolis. We're all confronted, all
10 of these homeless youth are confronted by an
11 arrested development, grounded in the need to
12 survive on the streets.

13 Many homeless youth either their
14 20's and begin to see the reality of the
15 situation. So coming into that concrete thought--
16 that abstract thinking, they begin to sort of see
17 this is the reality of my situation. Maybe now I
18 need to start making some changes. And it doesn't
19 usually happen until they hit their 20's a lot of
20 the time, on the average. And my colleague can
21 confirm or deny that as well.

22 And they begin to see the reality
23 of the situation. Unfortunately the eligible age
24 for full access to transitional housing is often
25 cut short due to the laws of Federal age

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2 requirement. So a young person who's spending
3 time being moved from shelter to street to
4 shelter, finally finds themselves ready to
5 structure their lives, and if space is available,
6 goes into some sort of a transitional living
7 component, transitional living program.

8 However the person who's finally
9 ready at age 21 doesn't get the full benefit of
10 the 18 months allowed by Federal and State runaway
11 and homeless youth regulations for transitional
12 living. And then they're discharged. And usually
13 it's to adult services, if that, where they're not
14 effectively served.

15 So what then happens is they use
16 this, this can cause them to revert to their past
17 behavior where they often leave adult services and
18 are back on the street beginning to move more
19 rapidly into chronic adult homelessness.

20 As the Director of Education at
21 Empire State Coalition since 1994, we've been
22 working, you know, in a professional development
23 capacity around the issue of working with youth
24 who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and
25 Questioning. The data from our 2007 survey also

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2 confirmed that approximately 30% of these youth
3 that are homeless are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual,
4 and that 5% are identified as Transgender. And
5 this is confirmed by national surveys as well. We
6 not sort of like grabbing it out of the box.

7 We've been talking about the needs
8 of LGBT homeless youth for as long as I've been in
9 this field. At Empire State Coalition we are glad
10 to see this in this resolution. And we believe
11 that it's finally time for the government to
12 officially recognize that at least one-third of
13 these youth who are living on the streets identify
14 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or in many
15 cases of adolescents, are questioning their sexual
16 identity, as a natural step in their adolescent
17 self-identity.

18 Empire State Coalition, we speak
19 regularly with the homeless youth providers and
20 the homeless youth who--and the homeless youth on
21 a daily basis whether they're calling us to ask us
22 about emancipation issues or whether agencies are
23 calling to ask us about resources for
24 transportation for a young person who needs to get
25 to shelter. We keep an ear to the ground about

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policies, about regulations, about trends.

The trends that directly or indirectly impact their lives, and by their, we mean both the youth and the professionals that serve them. We don't just talk about in our advocacy, we're not just talking about the youth because we know that in order to effectively serve the youth, there need to be strong providers and strong agencies.

In many cases we recognize the needs of adolescents because the professionals in the agencies who serve them tend to speak up. It's the agencies that identify the trends and the conditions that these youth face. We don't discover them, you know, just out of nowhere. So we make the changes for the youth but often we leave the functionality of the agencies out of the equation.

It often feels as though the public funders and the regulations established don't understand there are professionals serving these youth, a lot of times. And when the agencies' hands get slapped they don't realize the, the regulators don't always realize that the agencies

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tend to know what they're doing.

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The regulators also don't seem to take into consideration the reality of the fiscal and organizational needs required to keep an agency that provides shelter, drop-in or outreach afloat in this economy. An agency can't effectively run by volunteers alone. We've seen that tried and we've seen it fail.

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An economic stimulus package isn't going to immediately change the available staff needed at a housing program for 24 hours when the youth are either at work or at school. When there's no youth there, we don't really necessarily see the importance of staff being--a full staff being there.

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24 hour staffing is not something that's necessary. Finances are already tightened and with the threat of voluntary homeless youth services being lumped together with mandatory services in Statewide block grants, and cuts in funding, we'll virtually be asphyxiated.

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Funders point to foundations and as a result of economic malfeasance, foundations either close their doors or are putting programs

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2 they used to support in an unspecified holding
3 pattern. So everyone's sort of passing the buck.
4 And by easing up on the 24 hour transitional
5 staffing certification requirements which goes
6 beyond the State and Federal requirements, we're
7 able to effectively provide support to the youth
8 most in need of it when they're at our programs.

9 Many programs have the desire and
10 the models to provide services to homeless youth.
11 With over 3,800 homeless youth each night and only
12 300 shelter beds, approximately, we need to look
13 at the ways and means to make shelter and housing
14 more available. So between the lack of
15 affordability and limited community support for
16 the development of emergency housing programs
17 wanting to serve homeless youth, we are
18 additionally challenged by the State certification
19 process.

20 At Empire State Coalition, we
21 understand the need for standards of care and
22 regulations. I mean we train people on it. We
23 train programs and providers on that. We don't
24 want youth sleeping in dangerous situations, of
25 course. We understand the need for professional

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2 skill development for effectively serving these
3 youth.

4 But we also need to accept the
5 reality that in order to effectively set up a
6 homeless youth program, an agency, however large
7 or small, needs to be given some leeway in the
8 form of these startup grants in order to
9 effectively meet these comprehensive State
10 regulations. It's never an easy process. We hear
11 that all the time in talking with these programs.

12 So with--I mean with Empire State
13 Coalition and its over 30 years of history of
14 advocating and meeting the needs of homeless youth
15 in New York City, and as someone with 20 years of
16 working with this population, and the committed
17 programs that house and counsel them, we offer our
18 continued support and commitment to these programs
19 and the youth and young adults that they serve.
20 If you have any questions or concerns--

21 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: [Interposing]
22 We'll hold questions--

23 MR. BOLAS: --please feel free to
24 let me know.

25 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: --until the

1
2 whole panel is done. I just before our next
3 witness testifies, you made some reference to the
4 State block grant issue, and I just wanted to tell
5 everyone here and particularly those who
6 participated in our task force meeting that we
7 attempted to set up a meeting with the appropriate
8 legislative stakeholders from Albany for this
9 afternoon. And we did not succeed.

10 But I will tell you that I did have
11 a direct conversation with Senator Kruger who
12 chairs the Finance Committee and he was fully
13 conversant with the issue before I even spoke to
14 him about it. And, you know, we're guardedly
15 optimistic that we will not be thrown into that
16 box.

17 And, you know, I think we need to--
18 because the State situation is far from solidified
19 and probably will get worse before it gets better,
20 you know, we need to continue to press our
21 colleagues in Albany to make sure that we are not
22 competing for resources against mandated programs
23 and other agencies. So. You know, let's stay on
24 top of that.

25 MR. JOHN WELCH: Good morning. I'm

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2 John Welch, Program Director at Streetworks Lower
3 East Side, which is a program of Safe Horizon, a
4 victim assistance agency serving people impacted
5 by violence in the entire City.

6 I would like to thank Council
7 Member Fidler for being a fierce advocate for the
8 homeless young people of New York City and the
9 Youth Services Committee for hearing my testimony
10 today.

11 Streetwork operates 2 daytime drop-
12 in centers, providing support and comprehensive
13 services to homeless people ages 14 to 24. These
14 services include concrete supports: food,
15 clothing, laundry facilities and showers as well
16 as counseling, case management, legal advocacy,
17 mental and medical services, and an array of other
18 services.

19 We also operate 2 short-term
20 emergency shelter programs, 36 beds in all. The
21 beds in these programs are always full and waiting
22 lists have risen to about 100 per day in our 30-
23 bed program and 45 a day for our 6 bed program for
24 younger kids. We have seen a 30% increase in
25 client visits to our 2 drop-in centers from 2007

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2 to 2008 and are seeing on average 140 people per
3 day between the two sites.

4 At the same time funding cuts have
5 forced us to eliminate 3 case managers and 2
6 supervisors at our drop-in programs and to cut
7 mental health services in half. Part of the
8 reason Streetwork is overwhelmed with new clients
9 at a time when budgets are eroding is that the
10 current runaway and homeless youth laws cap
11 service eligibility at age 21, and therefore there
12 are far fewer programs and many fewer beds
13 available to absorb what appears to us to be an
14 increase in homeless youth on the streets in the
15 past year.

16 Streetwork set its age limit at 24
17 long ago to address the obvious service gap
18 produced by ending youth services at 21. The
19 changes proposed in Resolution 1227-A recognize
20 that homeless youth are not just kids who are
21 temporarily on the outs with their families or
22 having difficulty following rules at home, but are
23 people with multiple and complex problems that
24 usually started very early in their lives,
25 problems that can be adequately addressed, but

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2 will not be resolved sufficiently for them to
3 become independent by 21 or report to adult
4 service programs used by older people.

5 Streetwork youth, at 21, are both
6 like and unlike more mainstream 21-year-old New
7 Yorkers. They are like them in that they are
8 struggling to make it in one of the most expensive
9 cities in the world while still young and in need
10 of support; unlike them in that they are doing so
11 with no connection to any trustworthy adult whose
12 couch they could safely sleep on if nothing works
13 out, and no history of receiving adequate
14 consistent care from any adult while growing up.

15 They are like them in that they
16 would rather surround themselves with friends
17 their own age than be among older people; unlike
18 them in that, when things haven't worked out for
19 them by age 21, they are expected to report to
20 prison-like adult shelters full of older people,
21 many of whom try to exploit them.

22 Like their more mainstream
23 counterparts, homeless youth are developmentally
24 wired to prioritize friendships, romances,
25 sexuality, exploration of self and others, and

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testing their abilities and limits, sometimes to the detriment of practical future planning.

They are unlike them in that any safe community or context in which these normal pursuits could be shaped by caring adult guidance, or tempered by reminders of the need to deal with the practical realities is yanked away at 21.

At 21 most of our kids are just beginning to be able to think in a future-oriented way and to plan their lives realistically as they struggle to assimilate and accept all that has happened to them as children. These are people who have not had childhoods, meaning they have not experienced a minimum of emotional and physical safety that would allow them to internalize the basic sense of power over their own lives that most people develop by 21, despite their many difficulties.

Almost all homeless youth have suffered repeated early trauma and need the extra time and support to develop. Many Streetwork clients get housed and work their way into the mainstream economy before they age out of Streetwork but almost none do so before 21. Those

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2 who do are the few whose childhood trauma was less
3 severe or who had high levels of support through
4 trauma.

5 Ending services at 21 invites
6 involvement in street life and the street economy,
7 and this is a danger not only to our young people,
8 but to public safety, especially in these times
9 when the City will be losing resources to deal
10 with unsupported young people living their lives
11 on the streets, in parks, in Starbucks, on
12 rooftops, in the subway system, in stores with
13 cheap computer access, in Penn Station, etc.

14 To change service eligibility to 24
15 will let homeless young adults make their mistakes
16 in our shelters and drop-in centers and not on the
17 streets because, at 21, homeless young people will
18 not be reporting to adult service programs that
19 don't feel welcoming to them, but they will be
20 reporting to the streets.

21 Another realistic and positive
22 change proposed by Resolution 1227-A is the
23 relaxation of the 24-hour staffing requirement in
24 RHY shelters. While 24-hour staffing is the gold
25 standard we would all love to live by, there 3,800

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2 homeless youth in New York City alone on any given
3 night according to Empire State Coalition's 2007
4 Homeless Youth Survey, made was possible through
5 the support of the City Council.

6 And these young people need easy
7 access to nighttime beds first and foremost. To
8 continue to insist on 24 hour staffing is to deny
9 the emergency nature of youth homelessness.
10 Loosening this requirement will allow us to
11 stretch our budgets to take care of the most basic
12 needs first and to cooperate with other providers
13 who may offer services our programs cannot.
14 Thanks for listening.

15 MS. KAREN REMY: Hi I'm Karen Remy,
16 Director of Mental Health at The Door. My--after
17 I finished writing my testimony at 11:00 o'clock
18 last night my boss reminded me that you--or she
19 told me that you liked bullets. But--so I'm
20 trying but I just--

21 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: [Off mic]
22 [Interposing] I have no doubt that you will--

23 MS. REMY: [Interposing] [Laughing]

24 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: --do - - ,
25 experience.

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2 MS. REMY: Okay. Of course I'd
3 like to thank you for the opportunity to speak
4 today in support of the resolution.

5 I want to talk to you a little bit
6 about The Door. Since 1972, The Door has provided
7 comprehensive services for young people at a
8 single site, free of charge, and confidentially in
9 a youth-centered environment. The Door has a long
10 history and extensive experience with New York
11 City's population of disconnected young people,
12 including homeless and runaway youth, and is known
13 for developing innovative programs that meet their
14 specific needs. Runaway and homeless youth, as
15 well as LGBTQ youth, parenting youth, young people
16 in the foster care and juvenile justice systems,
17 and other young people at high risk of becoming
18 homeless have always been included in significant
19 numbers in The Door's membership.

20 In 2008 we saw 11,000 young people
21 from all the City. A little over 7,000 of those
22 were newly enrolled in 2008. 9% of that 7,000
23 reported that they currently were homeless or in
24 foster care, though the percentage who are at-risk
25 for homelessness is much higher. The risks that

1
2 we see for homelessness among our new members are
3 13.4% identified as LGBTQ although we think that's
4 probably higher, another 5% had children under the
5 age of 3 and 8% reported that they had experienced
6 violence at the hands of someone they lived with
7 or cared about. So that just brings The Door,
8 from our data, 35% of our young people who were
9 newly admitted in 2008 had at least one risk for
10 homelessness.

11 The Door's experience clearly
12 indicates a need to provide services to young
13 people well beyond the age of 21. Of the 11,000
14 young people that we served in 2008, 13% were
15 already between 20 and 21, and 12% were over 21,
16 this represents a quarter of our current
17 membership. These young people have experiences--
18 they experienced, you know, multiple system
19 failures and from come from families coping with
20 intergenerational poverty, substance abuse, and
21 mental health issues.

22 50% of our members who are 20 and
23 over access mental health services, which
24 provides, among other services, crisis, including:
25 counseling, intensive case management, emergency

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2 meals and clothing, and referrals. Over the past
3 eight years, government funding for innovative
4 programming to provide critical youth services,
5 including education and work readiness, has
6 diminished substantially, instead becoming
7 increasingly restrictive and limited in scope.

8 We were speaking specifically about
9 some of the work-readiness programs that we have
10 that have a very high demand in documentation of
11 income eligibility, you know, address and, you
12 know, those are the kinds of things that runaway
13 and homeless youth are just automatically not
14 eligible for.

15 Young people who are finally able
16 to access services require substantial time and
17 support in order to become self-sufficient, a
18 process which for a 20-year old will often take
19 much longer than 12 months. Taken as a whole, our
20 experience at The Door demonstrates a compelling
21 need to decrease strict eligibility requirements
22 around program participation, increase the maximum
23 eligible age for services to at least 24 and to
24 align measures regarding length of stay for youth
25 in transitional living programs to correspond with

1
2 the achievement of milestones that demonstrate
3 independent living skills and self sufficiency
4 rather than the calculation of their 21st birthday.

5 We're currently in the 3rd year of a
6 contract for discretionary funding through DYCD
7 which supports an outreach program. We do--with
8 this discretionary funding we do outreach,
9 mediation, and harm reduction at the Christopher
10 Street Piers, Pier 45. This program originated as
11 a result of research The Door was tasked with
12 conducting in 2005 on the youth who congregate at
13 the Pier and in the West Village area.

14 The purpose of the assessment was
15 to get a better sense of who the youth are, where
16 they come from, what services they receive or
17 need, and other variables affecting their
18 activities. We renewed some of our data from the
19 original 2005 assessment during 2008. We
20 completed a survey with LGBTQ youth and the
21 results for housing were pretty much the same as
22 they were in 2005 which was that this group of
23 young people indicated that 22% of them were
24 marginally housed; meaning that 17% of them had
25 moved 2 to 3 times in the previous year and 5%

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2 reported having moved more than 5 times in the
3 previous year. Our survey however did not address
4 quality and appropriateness of those who reported
5 not moving in the previous year.

6 The Door frequently must refer
7 LGBTQ young people in crisis to emergency shelters
8 catering to the general homeless youth population,
9 okay, and--where anecdotally we can attest that
10 they are at greater risk for harassment and
11 violence as a result of their sexuality. The
12 majority of homeless LGBTQ youth we serve choose
13 to survive on the streets often through
14 prostitution, thereby placing them at escalated
15 risk for HIV infection and in other inadequate and
16 unsafe conditions rather than to experience
17 violence and abuse in the shelters. Clearly, this
18 demonstrates a compelling need to change shelter
19 guidelines pertaining to LGBTQ youth.

20 The Door firmly believes that
21 implementing the changes proposed in this
22 resolution is vital to providing the most
23 effective and meaningful level of service to
24 homeless and runaway youth in New York City.
25 Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you and
3 we've been joined by Councilwoman Crowley and
4 Councilwoman, I--my opening statement I pointed
5 out that this was our 13th hearing on runaway and
6 homeless youth, and this is your first. So
7 welcome to the club.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Council Member
10 Gerson, I understand you have some questions.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: Excuse me.
12 Thank you very much Mr. Chair and I--it's probably
13 the 13th time with the start of my questioning one
14 of these hearing, then where I have acknowledged
15 but I feel ever compelled to do so, your
16 leadership, in making sure this issue remains at
17 the top of the City Council's agenda.

18 [Applause]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: He deserves
20 that.

21 [Applause]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: I think
23 your testimony truly speaks for itself. So I just
24 want to ask two questions, kind of the way like, I
25 don't know if devil's advocate is the right word,

1
2 but thinking out loud, brainstorming, you know,
3 stretching the limits.

4 On the age cutoff and we know we've
5 heard this and I certainly support the Resolution
6 without questions and we understand the practical
7 benefits as well as the theoretical, but should
8 we? You know, in a more perfect world, which we
9 should, you know, at the same time as we take
10 practical strides aimed to attain, rather than an
11 age cutoff, should we aim to kind of formulate a
12 clinical definition of if you will, the clinical
13 definition for when adolescent type services for
14 homeless young people could--should be deemed
15 complete and that person either no longer homeless
16 or in more of a category of being more
17 appropriately served within the grouping of adult
18 level services?

19 In other words, should, you know,
20 24 is also going to be arbitrary. What if, you
21 know, someone who's 25 and I'm sure based on the
22 testimony of what you said in terms of
23 developmental issues, other issues, may not be
24 that different from a 22-year old. I can imagine
25 some 23-year olds might be, you know, more further

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2 along and really belong in the category of
3 treatment of 30-year olds.

4 So I'm saying would it make more
5 sense to develop a clinical definition describing
6 the type of young people who should be treated as
7 adolescents and those who should be treated as
8 adults within the universe of people without
9 homes?

10 MR. BOLAS: That's a really--that's
11 a very good question actually. And I love it when
12 someone plays devil's advocate. [Chuckling].

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: You do a
14 good job of that yourself. I know about that.

15 MR. BOLAS: I do too.

16 [Laughing]

17 MR. BOLAS: You know I think it's--
18 in a perfect world, yeah maybe. I don't know
19 that--I mean I think at some point there has to be
20 a line. And we know that developmentally, we know
21 from experience if we're talking about
22 adolescence, we have to keep into consideration
23 the transitional process of adolescent to
24 adulthood.

25 And so I don't think that an

1
2 individual sort of goes, you know, reaches a
3 clinical sort of realization or reaches a clinical
4 point and then sort of moves--always moves
5 forward. We go backward. We go forward. We go
6 around. So I don't think it's a linear process
7 per se.

8 So the reason that we're saying 24
9 is just from experience for the past--my
10 experience for the past 20 years, of trying to
11 sort of create more of a transitional means to
12 engage adolescents and not sort of--and sort of
13 create a setting of moving someone into chronic
14 homelessness. So I don't know if that--that
15 really--I'm not sure if that answers your
16 questions completely.

17 But I don't think it's--there isn't
18 an easy answer. And I think we tend to sort of go
19 down that road of, you know, well let's not have
20 the age thing. Let's talk about, you know,
21 indicators and, you know, yeah, but... I don't think
22 that this City or this country, you know, can
23 really get to that point any time too soon. I
24 mean I think it's good to sort of put it out
25 there. But I think let's start with the age thing

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2 first.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: Well I agree with that which is why I'm a co-sponsor of the Resolution--

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MR. BOLAS: [Interposing] Right.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: --I think as you pointed, it's helpful to think about this and think about--anyone, please.

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MR. WELCH: Yeah. I just want to add that I think a lot of times, you know, I run a drop-in center. And when people are--no matter how nice we try to make our drop-in center, when people are kind of squared away and do reach a point of stability, there's a natural self-selection process that they don't come around in the same way any more. Do you know what I mean? And so in a way it sort of sorts itself out with people who might be ready--

20

COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:

21

[Interposing] Hum.

22

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MR. WELCH: --younger. And--but there is--I think there is some value of having an arbitrary line also because somebody who is, you know, 30 and developmentally still just really not

1
2 ready is in a youth program, it's not going to
3 feel as safe for a 15-year old to be--so there's,
4 you know, you do draw an arbitrary line at 24 but
5 it just seems from, you know, the work I've done
6 over the years that that is when people start to
7 get some things together for themselves. So.
8 Around that age.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: Okay.

10 MR. WELCH: Those situations.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: And then my
12 second question really goes to the issue of
13 dropping the requirement of 24 hour staffing. And
14 I certainly understand the point that you take
15 care of emergency needs first.

16 But are we losing anything of
17 value? Are we losing the ability for your
18 organizations and your sister organizations to do
19 the type of follow-up, placement, the type of
20 intervention, work that can only be done during
21 business hours if we don't insist on some staffing
22 around the clock? Keeping in mind that once we
23 drop a requirement, knowing how things work, it's
24 always going to be hard to, you know, bring it
25 back or add on, especially the way things are

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2 going.

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Should we keep the 24 hour requirement and just fight for more--which is also difficult I recognize, more resources during the evening hours when there is that emergency situation? But, or--I mean are we losing anything that cannot be compensated for if you don't have trained personnel able to follow up, you know, during daytime hours?

MR. WELCH: Well actually in my program we have, we have one--an RHY shelter that is a 24 hour staffing, smaller shelter. And then another that's able to be not staffed 24 hours and is just staffed at night. And there is something really valuable about being able to provide that 24 hour staffing.

But also there's with the--our shelter that's only staffed at night, we have drop-in centers that allow us to do the same kind of follow-up work and case management work during the day with the folks who are sleeping in the shelter at night.

COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: So you could cross fertilize so to speak.

1
2 MR. WELCH: Yeah, and it's just
3 about keeping communication and working together.
4 And I think that can happen between different
5 programs also. I just felt like it's maybe not
6 realistic because of the resources that exist and
7 I just personally feel like--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:

9 [Interposing] You're probably right.

10 MR. WELCH: --yeah, like it's--
11 seems most important to, to get people off the
12 street at night, for starters, you know.

13 MR. BOLAS: You know, I mean I
14 think there's a difference here between emergency
15 staffing and transitional staffing. You know, and
16 with transitional youth, and there's transitional
17 programs here who can speak to this much more
18 adequately than I can, but with transitional, the
19 young person is at a point, there--I mean there
20 are standards that the young person needs to meet
21 in order to get into transitional, the
22 transitional services, behaviorally, structurally,
23 etcetera, that the crisis--there's crises but
24 they're not as intense as someone who's coming
25 from the street into an emergency shelter.

1
2 So in the emergency shelter, maybe
3 there's more of a necessity for, you know, one or
4 two overnight people there to deal with the
5 crises. In transitional, maybe not so much. It's
6 about transitioning into independence. That's the
7 important thing to keep in mind.

8 And if there's an adult always
9 underfoot, or if they always have to report to
10 24/7, how are they then transitioning? We're not
11 really sort of giving them that transition. And I
12 think that that's something that we sort of need
13 to keep in mind in regards to this. And I was
14 glad to sort of see that this is in there.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: And I just
16 want the record to be clear though that if, you
17 know, we're--if we go this route, we're doing so
18 in response to prioritizing emergencies in a day
19 of very scarce resources but no one but--you know,
20 feels there's no value to having, you know,
21 daytime follow-ups in order to break the cycle of
22 emergency, of homelessness among this population.
23 But--

24 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: [Interposing]
25 Well Councilman--

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: --but first
3 things first--

4 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: --I don't
5 think that the Resolution precludes--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:
7 [Interposing] No, no, I read for it--good point--

8 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: --24 hour
9 staffing, so, I mean it's, you know--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:
11 [Interposing] That's a very good point.

12 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: --it just
13 seeks to provide the flexibility when it makes
14 sense. I mean I think the last point that Mr.
15 Bolas made about the transitional living and 24
16 hour supervision for someone who is transitioning
17 to become an adult is extraordinarily pertinent
18 and some of those circumstances you would not even
19 want to, if you could, provide 24 hour
20 supervision. It's probably not, you know, I mean
21 I think that's the intent.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: No, no, I
23 understand that. I just want to make sure the
24 record's clear that we're not, you know, we're not
25 under--understating or undermining the need for

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2 that additional follow-up in any way. Okay thank
3 you very much Mr. Chair. Thank you. Keep up your
4 good work.

5 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you
6 Councilman. Councilwoman Mark-Viverito.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:
8 Thank you Mr. Chair. And I also, you know, want
9 to commend the work that you've been--and the
10 leadership you've taken on, on this issue. I know
11 that this is my fourth year in the Council and I
12 think it might be my fourth or fifth hearing on
13 this issue. And obviously we can never speak
14 about it enough 'cause there's so much work that,
15 you know, still needs to be done. So I really
16 want to thank you for continuing to shed light on
17 the needs.

18 And I think that these kinds of
19 hearings also demonstrate the crucial role that we
20 have as a City Council to really making sure that
21 regulations lead to most efficient use of our
22 resources and in what ways we can ensure that most
23 effectively we implement services for particular
24 populations. And so I know that these resolutions
25 are important for us because it really helps shape

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2 what our priority agenda is going to be with our
3 counterparts in the State legislature. So these
4 are things that we take and we move forward and we
5 really try to ensure that they get implemented in
6 one way or another. So that's important and these
7 hearings are important for that.

8 And I only have one question, kind
9 of just on the issue of the 24 hour staffing. Is
10 there, have you as agencies been able to quantify
11 like what, what in terms of resources it is asking
12 of you to continue this regulation of the 24 hour
13 staffing? How much is it costing you versus, you
14 know, obviously being able to invest that money in
15 direct services and other ways? Have you, do you
16 have an idea?

17 MR. WELCH: I think there are a
18 couple of other people who are going to testify
19 who would have--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

21 [Interposing] More direct.

22 MR. WELCH: --that looks like from
23 the faces in the crowd over here, that, you know,
24 you're going to get that information from them.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

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2 Great. I look forward to getting that. So that
3 was just my quick question, but yes, if you want--

4 MR. BOLAS: [Interposing] I mean I
5 know, you know, from talking with programs and I
6 look forward to hearing from them as well,
7 specifically about the breakdown. You know, but
8 if we remove a staff person from, you know,
9 working, you know, in the evenings and move them
10 to a daytime or move them into a much more
11 tangible role where they're not sitting there and
12 playing babysitter but they're actually doing case
13 management or they're doing referrals or whatever,
14 working on a young person's case, when people are
15 around, you know, that they can make these phone
16 calls, that's much more effective.

17 I mean I don't know the exact
18 dollar amount and I hope that someone out there
19 does. But I think that just strategically that
20 that makes much more sense.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

22 Okay. All right. I appreciate that. I'll--we'll
23 wait for the other advocates to be able to speak
24 to that. Thank you Mr. Chair.

25 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Well thank you

1
2 and I want to thank this panel. I obviously got a
3 chance to ask most of the questions I had, well,
4 when we had our task force meeting. So that I
5 appreciate again your testimony and your work.
6 And hang around. All right.

7 I'll call up our next panel.

8 Theresa Nola, Green Chimneys, Nancy Downing from
9 Covenant House and Joey Lopez from Ali Forney. As
10 I call up the next panel, as they come--make their
11 way up here, I see a lot of familiar faces who
12 have not signed up. I just want to be sure that
13 everybody who wants to testify, you know, has, you
14 know, will sign up, so 'cause I only have two
15 more. So, you know, two more witnesses. So...
16 yeah, Sergeant at Arms we have some...

17 [Pause]

18 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Before you
19 start, I mean I just want to point out that even
20 those of you who have not or are not choosing to
21 testify today verbally, we've gotten many, many
22 responses to the e-mails that we sent out in
23 preparation for this hearing from all of you. And
24 I've read them all. You know, they really have
25 helped create this meeting and, you know, will

1
2 shape our agenda going forward. I, you know, I do
3 appreciate your cooperation and assistance.

4 [Pause]

5 MS. NANCY DOWNING: Good morning.

6 My name is Nancy Downing and I'm the Director of
7 Advocacy for Covenant House New York. I'd like to
8 thank you for holding this hearing. We certainly
9 support Resolution 1227-A.

10 My testimony, my written testimony,
11 I'm not going to read it. It's rather generalized
12 support in terms of the Resolution. What I would
13 like to say and I'll be brief is that most of the
14 youth that we see are probably ages 19 and 20.
15 And it seems like the ages seem to be rising.

16 In our transitional living program,
17 if someone enters our transitional living program
18 before the age of 21, they can stay for the period
19 of the transitional living program. That's how we
20 run our program. But--and what we're seeing is
21 that we're having more and more youth who are
22 coming to us who need transitional living services
23 and they're already close to the age of 21. So if
24 they can't get into a program that is going to
25 provide them with the supportive services that

1
2 they need, they're really stuck back at the adult
3 single shelters.

4 I'd like to tell you the story of
5 one young woman who came to our crisis shelter and
6 she was just about 21. She was within a month of
7 turning 21. She in fact turned 21 while she was
8 in our crisis center. We tried to find her
9 transitional living services. We didn't have room
10 in our program at the time. We were able to find
11 a program that would take her up to the age of 24.
12 She being 21 and wanting to make her own decisions
13 decided that she thought it would be better to go
14 to the single adult shelter system which she did
15 despite our counseling for her to go to the
16 supportive transitional living program.

17 The night--she was there one night.
18 She called the next morning, left a message on my
19 voice mail crying, get me out of here, you have to
20 do something to get me out of here. Young people
21 at the age of 21 don't always make good decisions.
22 We know that. We've been there. Our decision
23 making abilities at that age are still not the
24 best.

25 And for kids who are runaway and

1
2 homeless and at risk youth, they haven't had the
3 role models in their younger life to really
4 develop the skills for making good decisions. So
5 they make bad decisions. They need an opportunity
6 to have a longer span of time to practice making
7 good decisions in a safe, supportive environment.
8 That's what we see with the numbers of kids that
9 we're seeing every night.

10 I'd also like to speak to the
11 increase in the number of youth that we're seeing.
12 Over the last 6 months of 2008, we, on a nightly
13 basis, served 191.5 average youth. And we didn't
14 have a .5 youth but--[Laughing] but in our
15 shelter. For the same period in 2007 it was
16 127.5. That's an increase of 64 youth per night.
17 Per night, in our shelter, in our crisis shelter.
18 Where are these kids going? And a lot of them are
19 19, 20-years old. They're about to be 21.

20 Where are they going to go?
21 They're not going to make it in our adult shelter
22 system. They don't make good decisions. We've
23 seen that on a daily basis. So I think it's
24 really critical that we increase the age to 24 and
25 allow the opportunity for them to learn to make

1
2 good decisions in a supportive environment where
3 they're going to be safe.

4 With respect to--certainly I think,
5 you know, Covenant House has long had a good
6 reputation in terms of dealing with the LGBTQ
7 community. We have worked very hard at improving
8 our ability to serve the LGBTQ community, and I
9 think it is important. They comprise up to a
10 third of the youth who are runaway and homeless.
11 And I think it's important to recognize them, on
12 paper. Let's put it right out there.

13 Because they do need to be
14 recognized to ensure that staff are properly
15 trained and to ensure that there are provisions of
16 services directed towards their specific needs.
17 We've learned that, and I think that it needs to
18 be learned, not only Citywide but probably
19 countrywide and worldwide. It's a serious problem
20 and it needs to be addressed.

21 With respect to 24 hour staffing
22 requirement for residential programs, particularly
23 with respect to transitional living programs. As
24 it's already been said, we're trying to give these
25 young people an opportunity to learn how to behave

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responsibly on their own. If we're going to have
24 hour monitoring of them, it doesn't really give
them that opportunity to grow.

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I'm not saying that they don't need
some supervision at times or let's say case
management, to give them the opportunity to speak
with an adult, who again in terms of making good
decisions and learning to make good decisions, we
do need that in place. But 24 hours I think is
overly restrictive for the youth, it doesn't give
them that opportunity to grow and I think we need
to look at that in terms of the transitional
living programs.

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I think in terms of crisis we do
need probably to have 24 hour service 'cause many
of these kids are in crisis and there are other
issues that come up that need addressing at
various times during the day and night, as we have
seen.

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So that's all I'd like to say at
this time. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Before you
pass the mic to Theresa, I just, I do want to
express my appreciation for the comments that you

1
2 made about Covenant Houses' recognition of the
3 LGBTQ population. I know that going back to
4 before, you know, your tenure when I first visited
5 Covenant House, I had a significant issue with the
6 manner in which Covenant House addressed the LGBTQ
7 population.

8 And, you know, reputation will
9 follow reality, you know, in time. It always lags
10 but it always will. But I appreciate the fact
11 that you, you know, that there's an attitude
12 change. And I think we all do and it's impossible
13 for you to serve runaway and homeless youth
14 without addressing the fact that one out of three
15 are likely to be LGBTQ, and I just want to thank
16 you and thank Covenant House for coming around on
17 that. Thanks.

18 MS. THERESA NOLAN: Good morning.
19 I'm Theresa Nolan, Division Director of Green
20 Chimneys for our New York City programs. We
21 operate foster care and runaway homeless youth
22 programs for LGBTQ youth. We currently 20 beds in
23 our RHY division which are all transitional
24 living. Half of them are funded through DYCD and
25 the other half are Federally funded.

1
2 And I just want to express my
3 appreciation for Council Member Fidler and the
4 Youth Services Committee around addressing the
5 issues of youth homelessness in New York City.
6 I'm not sure how many of those 13 hearings I've
7 been at, at this point, but I appreciate the
8 tireless efforts in this area.

9 Most of what I want to address has
10 been touched on already. But I just want to
11 highlight three particular issues that were part
12 of the resolution that particularly affect the
13 work that we do at Green Chimneys.

14 One of the State regulation
15 requirements in RHY residential settings is that
16 youth be segregated by gender in their residential
17 setting. This is a particular issue for us.
18 First of all because we operate an LGBTQ youth
19 program, so when we talk about gender segregation,
20 first of all my biggest concern is that we are
21 expecting youth to pick a gender that they
22 identify with when for some youth they don't
23 necessarily have one that they identify with. So
24 it's pigeon-holing a lot of young people who
25 aren't ready for that.

1
2 The second issue is that it's my
3 assumption, although I wasn't present when the
4 State regulations were created, that gender
5 segregation is a result of peoples' fear of youth
6 engaging in sexual behavior. For obvious reasons
7 that's not a concern if we're doing a mixed gender
8 setting when it comes to LGBTQ youth. It's
9 actually when we segregate gender that we have
10 more of an issue around that.

11 And not--it seems relatively silly
12 to me to have to tell a young person I'm sorry I
13 can't put you in the one open bed we have right
14 now because you don't fit the gender requirement.
15 That's kind of ridiculous in my experience. And
16 it also seems like a waste of resources. When we
17 get money to have a bed, we have to keep it open
18 until we find the right gendered person to fit it,
19 kind of feels wasteful.

20 My second issue I want to bring up
21 is a DYCD requirement for TIL operation that
22 requires the mandatory 24 hour staffing. I did
23 some quick math for you Council Member. Our
24 current TIL budget which is our DYCD budget, we
25 spend over \$200,000 a year in personnel expenses

1
2 for our direct care staff. Now when we talk about
3 staffing, I just want to specify that I'm
4 referring to those direct care staff that are
5 there onsite 24 hours a day.

6 We also have staff obviously that
7 are in the office, Social Work, Case Work, Life
8 Skills, Development people that are part of our
9 staffing. The two--I'm not counting them in that
10 \$200,000, that's in excess of that. Ad we would
11 obviously, Council Member, have--those staff would
12 still be there during the day at the office for
13 example.

14 But it's particularly the glorified
15 babysitting issue that happens in TIL programming.
16 Again it's been brought up but I'd like to
17 emphasize that my Executive Director feels like
18 he's constantly wringing his hands over spending
19 all this money on watching apartments that are
20 sometimes empty because our young people are
21 working and in school but we have to have staff
22 there. And it kind of seems silly.

23 We have--our Federal requirements
24 do not actually ask us to have 24 hour staffing
25 and allow us to have flexibility in our proposed

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2 model. The DYCD Request for Proposals does not
3 allow any flexibility. They tell you what the
4 model is supposed to be. You write a paper that
5 says you'll give them their model. So I'm just
6 suggesting that potentially DYCD open up the idea
7 for other models.

8 There are clearly some youth that
9 even in TILs may have been 24 hour staffing. I
10 recognize that. I just think that it'd be much--
11 it would behoove everyone who's involved in the
12 finances to offer other options for that. Our TLP
13 which is our Federal budget for example is our
14 entire budget which includes our rent of our
15 apartments, the food expenses, everything is
16 \$250,000. That's the same amount of beds we serve
17 in our TIL. So we're spending almost as much in
18 direct care staff for our TIL as we spend in our
19 entire TLP budget. So again it's just not a
20 really good use of resources.

21 And the third point I want to
22 address is sort of a sub-issue under the age limit
23 concern. I won't repeat all the issues around
24 expanding past 21 but what I would like to say is
25 I would think at the very least what we could

1
2 potentially do is allow youth that enter TILs,
3 close to their 21st birthday, allow them the full
4 18 months. So even if we can't extend to 23 or
5 24, that if a young person comes in at 20 years
6 old, they don't only get a year. They have a--at
7 this point they have truncated lengths of stay
8 based solely on their 21st birthday, not on how
9 long we usually give anyone that comes into the
10 program.

11 I would also want to--I just--I
12 appreciate you Council Member Fidler for
13 addressing the block grant issue. I think it's
14 dramatically impacted our colleagues across the
15 State. We haven't had as much of the impact quite
16 yet in the City but I certainly don't want to be
17 one of those people that only addresses it when it
18 becomes a concern for my backyard. I mean I think
19 this is a big issue across the State.

20 And what it means to me is if
21 programs across the State are closing, some of
22 those youth are eventually going to migrate to the
23 City where there are services. And our programs
24 will be quickly overwhelmed with that.

25 I want to thank you so much for the

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2

opportunity to testify today.

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CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you.

4

And we've been joined by Council Member Miguel

5

Martinez.

6

MR. JOEY LOPEZ: Good morning. My

7

name is Joey Lopez. I'm the Coordinator of Policy

8

and Training for the Ali Forney Center. We're an

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organization that works with LGBT, homeless,

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runaway and street involved young people between

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the ages of 16 and 24.

12

We'd like to thank the Council and

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especially the Chairman Fidler on his leadership

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on this issue for the past 13 hearings. And

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predece--and, you know, to your predecessors who

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chaired this Committee before who also began to

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champion this issue many years ago. This issue is

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not something that just popped up five years ago.

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It's been around for a very long time.

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I'm here to testify in support of

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Resolution 1227-A which would ask the Federal

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government and the State government to amend their

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age limit of the Federal Runaway Homeless Youth

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Act from 21 to 24. But even more importantly we'd

25

like to thank the Council for adding the language

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2 in Resolution 1227-A which would include the
3 language of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
4 Youth as its own category within the Runaway
5 Homeless Youth Act which may be able to open up
6 services specifically for that population.

7 The Ali Forney Center was created
8 in 2002 to fill a gap in services not only just
9 for LGBT youth, but especially for those LGBT
10 youth between the ages of 21 and 24. AFC is a
11 handful--is one of a handful of youth service
12 providers which works with both LGBT young people
13 but also LGBT young people between the ages of 21
14 and 24.

15 The services we provide have become
16 very challenging not only due to fiscal climate
17 but also due to the restrictions that we must
18 follow that are pertaining to the guidance of the
19 Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Where most of the
20 funding that we get, coming from DYCD, which
21 provides most of our services, it does limit us
22 because we're only allowed to service young people
23 up to 21. And most of the young people that we've
24 been seeing for the past year are now really
25 between the ages of 21 and 24. I couldn't give

1
2 you a percentage but--off the top of my head, if I
3 had to guess I would say over 50% of the young
4 people fit that age criteria.

5 We believe in this Resolution, if
6 this Resolution was passed, our ability to serve
7 those between the ages of 21 and 24 with DYCD
8 funding would greatly increase the chances of that
9 young person, that young person's ability to break
10 that chain and that cycle of staying homeless and
11 becoming that chronic homeless adult that we see,
12 not only on the streets and on the subways, but in
13 the adult shelter system.

14 We've seen first hand the dangers
15 of long term homelessness with deaths of many LGBT
16 young people who were not fortunate to access
17 services and this includes the young person that
18 our program is named after, Ali Forney who was
19 murdered on the streets in 1997 and until this day
20 his murder still goes unresolved.

21 We've seen young people who are HIV
22 positive, due to their homelessness, come into our
23 programs and become more treatment adherent and
24 become less willing to engage in risky behavior
25 due to having a bed to sleep in every night,

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2 compared to those who don't know where they're
3 going to sleep that night and continue to engage
4 in such behavior.

5 These examples are just a few of
6 many in which direct services can not only save a
7 young person's life but can help them become
8 productive members of society. You know, first
9 hand, you know, I'm one of those young people who
10 was homeless at one time.

11 I went to Covenant House. I tried
12 to make it in Covenant House. I couldn't make it
13 in Covenant House and ended up on the street. And
14 through some form of grace, I'm not dead. I'm
15 still alive but I did go through a lot of
16 hardships, you know, prison, I also became
17 infected with HIV. I'm HIV positive, been living
18 with HIV for 12 and a half years.

19 I've been privileged to be able to
20 turn my life around but many other young people
21 who may be living the same story that I'm living
22 may not have that privilege or that opportunity.
23 So this is why I feel that the Resolution would be
24 important into helping those young people have
25 that chance to be able to change their lives

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2 without having them to put themselves at risk like
3 I did in a dangerous city. You know?

4 And, you know, hopefully the State
5 will come along and follow the guidance of the
6 Council and the Feds will change the regulations
7 and hopefully a lot of young people will be able
8 to change their lives and maybe one day sit in the
9 seats that you sit in and become productive
10 members. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you.
12 Council Member Mark-Viverito.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:
14 Thank you all three for your testimony. I think
15 it's very important to hear that, you know,
16 organizations that are providing the direct
17 service and thank you for sharing your experience.

18 Just going back to the issue of the
19 expenses, right, because did you indicate that
20 \$200,000 is what you're spending for that 24 hour
21 supervision that you could probably reallocate?

22 MS. NOLAN: Absolutely--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:
24 [Interposing] That's quite significant.

25 MS. NOLAN: --for the direct care

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staffing. Right. Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

[Interposing] It's quite significant.

MS. NOLAN: Right. We could easily open more apartments or, you know, we could do a lot of things with that money--

COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

[Interposing] Right.

MS. NOLAN: --that would be very useful, yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: And that's out of a total contract of?

MS. NOLAN: \$425,000.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Wow so more than half--

MS. NOLAN: [Interposing] Well--

COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: --almost--well close to half.

MS. NOLAN: Yeah, close to half.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: So you--and then you indicated that it's the State or is it the Federal regulations that are more flexible, it's the City one that mandates--

MS. NOLAN: [Interposing] It's the

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2 City--

3 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: --

4 right, the 24 hour.

5 MS. NOLAN: Correct. Correct.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Okay

7 so the State and City don't.

8 MS. NOLAN: The State and the

9 Federal government do not require--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

11 [Interposing] Okay. I'm sorry, State and Federal

12 government don't.

13 MS. NOLAN: --the City does, right.

14 Right.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

16 Okay. So that definitely, I mean is something

17 that--I was just mentioning to the Chair that we

18 could, you know, discuss at maybe our budget

19 hearings or question that a little bit more. So

20 thanks for that clarification.

21 MS. NOLAN: You're welcome.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Okay

23 so that was basically my question. Thank you.

24 MS. NOLAN: Um-hum.

25 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: And--

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2 [Off mic]

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CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Before I call on Councilman Gerson, I just want to point out that we did invite DYCD here today and they probably have participated in all prior 12 hearings. There was a policy that City agencies do not testify in resolutions and even though we tried to get around that by calling this an oversight hearing, they didn't see it that way and there was a little bit of confusion back and forth.

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But I did see Commissioner Mullgrav last night at an Inwood House event and I, you know, I have frequently been critical of City agencies. I am not, you know, I'm very appreciative of the efforts that have been made at DYCD under this Commissioner. And I think we probably should open a dialog with her directly on that 24 hour requirement--

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COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

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[Interposing] Um-hum.

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CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: --and I think she gets it. And hopefully we'll be able to make that change.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Mr.
3 Chair, I'm sorry, I did forget one additional--

4 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: [Interposing]
5 Sure, go ahead.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: --
7 quick question, I'm sorry. For Covenant House,
8 actually, in terms of your testimony, you indicate
9 here that you might not be--we would not support a
10 revision in State or Federal law that mandates the
11 provision of services to age 24 years, but rather
12 we support allowing programs to use City, State
13 and Federal funding to provide services to runaway
14 and homeless youth up to age 24. So, I'm not sure
15 if I understand, are you saying that you want to
16 allow flexibility in the use of the money or--

17 MS. DOWNING: [Interposing] Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: --as
19 opposed to--

20 MS. DOWNING: [Interposing] To be
21 able to--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: --to
23 a mandate.

24 MS. DOWNING: That's right. That's
25 right. Particularly because--if we're mandated to

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provide services to youth up to age 24, the difficulty is there isn't the funding available right now to do that.

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But if we have the choice of being able to provide the services then we can do it--as she was saying, when a bed is available, you know, who are we, if we have someone who comes in who's 23 years old, can we fill it with a person who's 23 years old? But if we don't have a bed available, you know, we don't have the services available. So I don't--what I wouldn't want to see is that we're required to provide services but that it be flexible and allow us to do so.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO: Okay I appreciate that. And I think what you were mentioned before with regards to the lack of flexibility, you know, that DYCD prescribes in its RFPs, I think is an issue, not just with regards to this particular issue. I know it's an issue, you know, overall with regards to other programming and funding. And I know that that's an issue that I'm hoping we can bring up as we discuss the community centers and the NYCHA facilities Mr. Chair, because I know that they're

1
2 being extremely rigid about their requirements.
3 But that seems to be an overall theme with DYCD
4 that we may have to address in a larger way. So
5 thank you very much for your testimony.

6 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Thank you.
7 Council Member Gerson?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: I just--
9 could you describe how you presently deal on a,
10 you know, practical basis with the ageing-out
11 phenomenon? What is the kind of exit process that
12 you implement? What type of referrals? What type
13 of, you know, counseling, to what extent do you
14 continue to provide services, post the current
15 youth or adolescent age cutoff?

16 And while we're at it, well as we
17 have Ali Forney and Green Chimneys here, could you
18 just give us any brief update on the status of the
19 shelters that you have opened with the funding
20 from the special Council initiatives over the past
21 year? If you have that information?

22 MS. NOLAN: Well to address the
23 ageing-out issue first. I think, you know, we
24 find that youth that have less time in the program
25 for transitional living specifically that they're

1
2 just--I mean it's obvious, they're less prepared
3 to be out on their own when they leave. So they
4 end up seeing--needing a lot more support after
5 they leave the program.

6 We have a very unfunded philosophy
7 around lifetime aftercare. Now that doesn't
8 necessarily mean we can always, you know, give
9 them a Metro Card if that's what's needed but we
10 have support services and, you know, we do what we
11 can around monetary needs for young people. And
12 it's definitely the youth that are just freshly
13 out of the program. If they haven't had the full
14 time to really develop their plan. Because there
15 was some insight when they created the 18 month
16 model, like, you know, there is an appropriate
17 length of time--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:

19 [Interposing] But the one thing you're suggesting
20 makes perfect sense in terms of the stop-gap until
21 we get to the 24 cutoff.

22 MS. NOLAN: Thank you. I--we
23 didn't actually open any recent special funding
24 shelters. We've been doing the TIL program so I
25 can't answer that second part of your question.

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2 MR. LOPEZ: In reference to your
3 question, in reference to have we opened up any
4 programs, we have finally opened up some beds
5 'cause we were one of the programs that was not
6 certified. So we had--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:

8 [Interposing] That's right.

9 MR. LOPEZ: --to go through that
10 whole certification process and it took a while.
11 Last I heard is the program's up and running but
12 the contracts have not been executed through DYCD
13 so we have gotten no money.

14 So when the money comes, which is
15 now, March, so March, April, May, we'll have less
16 than four months to spend the contract down.
17 Because we still haven't received an executed
18 contract from DYCD. We were told any day now,
19 from the beginning of maybe January, maybe
20 February, I'm not 100% sure, but we have not
21 received the money yet. So--and this is one of--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:

23 [Interposing] And how many beds are involved in
24 that?

25 MR. LOPEZ: We're talking 6, 12,

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2 18, possible 22 to--

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COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:

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[Interposing] Um-hum.

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MR. LOPEZ: --24 beds. So these
beds have been running. They've been operational.

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We've been paying staff because they have to be

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run 24 hours with money from other funding

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streams. And we still haven't received our

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contract money yet.

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So this is one of the other issues
that not only our program deals with, I'm pretty

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sure there are other DYCD funded programs in the

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audience that deal with the same thing, the

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execution of contracts and dealing with OMB and

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that whole process just takes such a long time,

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you know. Here it is probably what seven, eight

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months into the contract and we still haven't

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gotten any money. So.

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MS. NOLAN: And can I just add to

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that statement. I mean I would agree, yes, there

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are plenty of us that have had that experience.

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And some places are able, like Joey's explaining,

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Ali Forney, can maybe front the money through

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other sources. But I know there are other smaller

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programs--

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MR. LOPEZ: [Interposing] Um-hum.

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MS. NOLAN: --that can't do that--

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MR. LOPEZ: [Interposing] Um-hum.

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MS. NOLAN: --and can't pay staff.

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MR. LOPEZ: [Interposing] Um-hum.

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MS. NOLAN: --and haven't been able

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to pay staff and have continued on volunteer and

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good hearted--

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MR. LOPEZ: [Interposing] Um-hum.

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MS. NOLAN: --people to make their

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programs run. So I think that's a major issue for

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a lot of us.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: Does

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Covenant House want to add anything about the

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ageing out?

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MS. DOWNING: Yeah. The story I

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told you about the young woman, we actually had

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extended her stay past 21 to try and get her

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supportive housing services. She made the

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decision to go to the adult single shelter. We

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didn't--we didn't require her to do so.

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So we--I mean we look at it on a

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case by case basis to try and address the needs of

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2 the individual but we don't want to be putting
3 people out on the streets.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: Thank you
5 Mr. Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Well thank the
7 three of you for your testimony and your
8 assistance today.

9 [Applause]

10 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: I'll call our-
11 -wow we don't usually get applause for panels.
12 That's great. We have Lucky Michaels from MCCNY
13 Homeless Youth Services and Charles Taylor from
14 the same organization, and Paul Sealy from SCO
15 Family of Services. Is this the last panel?
16 Yeah.

17 [Pause]

18 [Witnesses getting settled]

19 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: One of you
20 jump in there.

21 MR. LUCKY MICHAELS: Okay, I
22 suppose I'll go first. Lucky Michaels, Program
23 Director of MCCNY Homeless Youth Services which
24 runs Sylvia's Place which has emergency shelter
25 and drop-in services for LGBTQ youth. I'm going

1
2 to my best to summarize a couple of these
3 paragraphs, the more important ones I'll have to
4 read.

5 MCCNY Homeless Youth Services is
6 entering its sixth year of service to LGBTQ
7 homeless and runaway youth. In that time our
8 staff has joined the growing body of support for
9 massive reform to the policies regarding runaway
10 and homeless youth.

11 First the age eligibility, since we
12 opened in 2002, Ali Forney and Sylvia's Place got
13 its birth at the same time in 2002, we have been
14 serving runaway and homeless youth up to the age
15 of 24 and are currently seeing many of our youth
16 move onto places like Ali Forney and then they
17 reach their birthday and are, you know, discharged
18 without being able to get into Green Chimneys
19 because of the age requirement and come back to
20 Sylvia's Place.

21 MCCNY Homeless Youth Services runs
22 their emergency shelter and drop-in program and
23 are so dependent on other programs and services to
24 provide our clients with longer term transitional
25 housing. We therefore feel the effects of the

1
2 current policy that disregards a young person's
3 need for a full 18 months in a transitional
4 independent living program like Green Chimneys.

5 If the client's birthday falls
6 before the completion of that time period.

7 Clients who leave are programmed for transitional
8 independent living programs often return to us
9 when they have reached their 21st birthday because
10 they are not given the full 18 months usually
11 allocated to establish proper housing.

12 We assert that this is an
13 unnecessarily and easily repaired problem. By
14 allowing a client a full 18 months without
15 abruptly cutting off services on the day of their
16 birth, the system can ensure youth are given the
17 full opportunity to access the services they need
18 to end the cycle of homelessness. Otherwise the
19 policy is ignoring the reality of securing stable
20 housing and forcing agencies to prematurely
21 discontinue service to homeless youth based on
22 arbitrary data.

23 As for the OCFS regulations, we are
24 not OCFS regulated. We operate out of a church
25 and are serving in the crisis youth. And right

1
2 now we are housing 26 youth in our crisis facility
3 and our drop-in services in the past 3 months have
4 seen over 400 new drop-in clients. So with the
5 swell of population that are currently, you know,
6 living either at Ali Forney Center or on the
7 streets, and we don't have the room to house them.
8 And this is primarily the 21 to 24 that, you know,
9 cannot survive in the adult shelter system.

10 Finally the issue of recognizing
11 the unique challenges of LGBTQ runaway and
12 homeless youth in Federal and State policies is of
13 special importance to our agency and to the
14 community at large. It is a vast disservice to
15 all homeless youth to ignore the fact that those
16 youth who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or
17 Transgender often experience challenges that need
18 to be addressed specifically.

19 According to the New York 2007
20 Homeless Youth Survey conducted under the
21 direction of the Empire Coalition of Youth and
22 Family Services, 28% of those surveyed identified
23 as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual, and an additional 11%
24 were unsure or uncomfortable answering the
25 question of gender. Of those surveyed 5%

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specifically identified as transgender.

These numbers are a wakeup call that among the homeless youth community, LGBTQ youth represent a disproportionately high number considering that mainstream society only 10% of population identifies as LGBTQ. So if you look at the 10% versus the, you know, 30-some% of homeless LGBTQ youth, then you see that, you know, it's disproportionately high.

It is irresponsible to ignore these youth or to assume their struggles are being appropriately addressed. MCCNY Homeless Youth Services is insistent that LGBTQ youth are identified in public policy so that the needs of these young people can finally be addressed with the urgency that is required to keep them safe.

So, and I already gave you testimony about our numbers which are, you know, really high at this point. And we're seeing anywhere from 62 or so drop-in clients that we're feeding dinner, giving showers to, put them on the Ali Forney waiting list which it can take anywhere from 3 to 4 months to get them into a bed there. And in the meantime we are highly dependent on

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2 DYCD funds which we don't get currently. We just
3 submitted the DYCD RFP like everybody else.

4 And if we don't get that money, we
5 are, you know, in jeopardy of having to close
6 Sylvia's Place which would lose another 26 crisis
7 beds which they wouldn't have a jump-off point
8 essentially to get into Ali Forney Center or to
9 Green Chimneys, depending on what their discharge
10 plan is. And so if we, you know, don't exist,
11 essentially we are discharging them to the streets
12 or to Streetworks, which thankfully, cover the
13 LGBTQ youth in our stead. [Chuckles] And we have
14 a client with us, Charles, he is currently living
15 in Sylvia's Place and is going to give his own
16 testimony.

17 MR. CHARLES TAYLOR: Hi. It's not
18 easy being homeless, especially at my age.
19 There's a lot of temptations that come your way
20 but you just have to have to find a reason to--

21 MR. MICHAELS: [Interposing] Oh,
22 state your name on the record--

23 MR. TAYLOR: [Interposing] Charles
24 Taylor. You have to have a reason to not engage
25 in those types of activities. There's drugs,

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2 selling drugs, prostitution, but you have to learn
3 how to make a way of your own living, whether you
4 have to go out there and look for a job or, you
5 know, obtain your GED.

6 Me, myself, I've been having
7 trouble for the last two years obtaining my
8 documentation, my State ID, Social Security Card.
9 Just this year I recently got a chance to hold
10 onto all that stuff, you know. I'm going to
11 school for my GED so it's a lot of LGBTQ youth out
12 there that need, you know, help.

13 I mean I have several friends of
14 mine who are either in jail, or, you know,
15 suicidal or, you know, so if nobody doesn't take
16 action for all this that's going on, then who's
17 going to, you know, be the one that's going to
18 take up and say okay well this is what needs to be
19 done so nobody doesn't be on the streets at night
20 or, you know, etcetera, etcetera. So that's just
21 my testimony because that's the situation that I'm
22 in. So.

23 MR. MICHAELS: And just for the
24 record, Charles is 23. He actually started out in
25 Streetworks and has come to Sylvia's Place and is

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on the waiting list for the Ali Forney Center.

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MR. PAUL SEALY: Good morning. My name is Paul Sealy and I'm the Program Director of Independence and Programs. We operate currently four transitional independent living programs in Brooklyn and Queens and one drop-in center in Brooklyn.

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My testimony essentially, I just want to comment on the, on our perspective based on having the age raised to the age of 24. We currently serve young people up to the age of 21 because our contracts are DYCD contracts. Essentially as we see it, it's an issue based on the fact that we're dealing with antiquated regulations that result from probably in the last 70's, early 80's, and hasn't essentially adjusted to the times, and also doesn't recognize the complexity of issues of young people that reside in New York City.

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Essentially it was probably derived from middle America for a young person that runs away from home for a temporary period of time and returns home soon after that. That's not our reality today.

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2 We're dealing with young people
3 that have a complex amount of issues in New York
4 City, ranging from substance use, emerging mental
5 health needs, young people that are having
6 struggling emotionally based on the trauma that
7 they face as they grow up through the years and
8 resulted in them being ejected from the home
9 around their 17th or 18th birthday. We're seeing a
10 whole--a tremendous amount of young people that on
11 their 18th birthday, they're being asked to leave
12 the house. Their parents are choosing their
13 paramour over them.

14 And for the most part, young--those
15 young people haven't had an opportunity in order
16 to be able to develop and essentially start to
17 assume the responsibility for themselves. In our
18 TILs as we operate them, they're 24 hour
19 supervised, and for me, and my staff, I know we
20 won't like to see it any way different. Like for
21 instance last night I was in a staff meeting with
22 some of our staff that operate our boy's program
23 and we were speaking about how we could lessen the
24 amount of issues that may result if we didn't
25 supervise young people appropriately in that

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setting.

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We have to remember. Young people are 18, 19 years old. They're young adults. They're still maturing. So they're going to get into things that routinely kids their age get into, despite the fact that they're working towards self-sufficiency and they're forced to assume the responsibility of an adult. So from our perspective the 24 hour supervision, and as I understand it, over the years that we've operated our programs, is essentially based on your ability to provide adequate supervision for the population that you serve.

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We operate larger TILs and we also operate a smaller TIL. In our smaller TIL we have the flexibility to ensure that there's a staff person present when the young people are present. If they're not in the facility, we have the flexibility to not have a staff person scheduled. And I can tell you that's helped us tremendously in terms of operating, in terms of operating that program, because our grant for that program is substantially less than what we operate in our other programs. For me, I think the issue is not-

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2 -and I hope that DYCD continues to revisit the
3 conversation about looking at more cost effective
4 models for operating TILs in New York City.

5 60% of our budget is staffing.
6 Another 30% is operational costs. So for us, we
7 could clearly, if we could cut back on the
8 staffing, and the staffing all involves around
9 supervision, the majority of it, because our
10 direct care staff line is out of our staffing line
11 is about 80%--probably about 70% of our staffing
12 line are direct care staff line.

13 So if--and we have successfully
14 operated models with young people under the age of
15 21 in situations where we had 1 staff person just
16 checking on them once a day, 7 days a week and it
17 cost us substantially less than what it costs for
18 us to operate a 24 hour supervised TIL. But let
19 me stress this point. I think both models are
20 necessary. Not just one but both.

21 In regards to the age limit being
22 increased to the age of 24. I want to stress I
23 agree with Ms. Nolan's recommendation that young
24 people should be allowed the opportunity to see
25 their plan through. So if a young person comes

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2 into a TIL, based on a present state of affairs,
3 if they come into our TIL at 20 years old, 6
4 months, our staff rapidly tell them when they're
5 setting up their plan, you have 6 months. We have
6 no time to waste. Every day should essentially be
7 like 2 days for you. So you've got to do 2 day's
8 work in 24 hours because in 6 months we have no
9 other alternative but to discharge you to, 9 times
10 out of 10, to adult situation.

11 And really and truly, young people
12 are not ready for that opportunity. If you're in
13 a--if you're now starting out and you're learning
14 how to adapt to the world and learn how to be
15 responsible, it's irresponsible for us as a City
16 to throw young people in a fray with adults that
17 are chronically homeless for most of their lives,
18 have essentially resorted to seeing life as a life
19 of entitlement.

20 At the end, we steer young people
21 away from that. We have them focus on self-
22 reliance and based on hard work and assuming
23 responsibility for themselves because at the end
24 of the day, each adult has to assume
25 responsibility for themselves. But we should give

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2 them an opportunity to demonstrate and based on
3 our current affairs, we're not giving them that
4 opportunity. We're telling them when you turn 21,
5 well, whatever is out there, you got to find it.
6 And I don't think that that's appropriate.

7 For me, also to--based on the fact-
8 -and I think that this filters into a
9 disproportionate amount of young people ages 21
10 through 24, ended up on the streets is because
11 their lack of affordable housing opportunities for
12 our young people in New York City. I could tell
13 you, we do, I tell my staff all the time, I'm
14 amazed by the things that we're able to accomplish
15 with young people in the 18--the 12 to 18 months
16 that they spend with us. And at times, based on
17 the regulation and there are loopholes, there's
18 some rigidity within the State regs, but there are
19 some loopholes, and in TILs, you can discharge a
20 young person, have them come back, and they could
21 say for more than 18 months with you.

22 But--and I could tell you we've had
23 young people that have stayed with us for that
24 period of time and it's proven to be successful.
25 Because what it gives, it allows them to do, it

1
2 allows them an opportunity, one, to essentially
3 achieve their educational goal, because about 60%
4 of the young people that come to us don't have a
5 high school diploma or equivalency. And as we
6 know it, in order for them to get an appropriate
7 paying job so that they could afford the rents
8 that are demanded in New York City, they need to
9 have the minimum requirement.

10 I mean I hear people talk about oh
11 there are a lot of job opportunities for young
12 people. They're not real jobs. Because I could
13 tell you, two things that I had a conversation
14 about with my staff in the last week was, there's
15 a disproportionate amount of young people that we
16 have that we get to the point that they're
17 working. We have young people that have \$6,000,
18 \$7,000 in the bank. And based on the fact that
19 they have a job that pays them maybe \$10 an hour,
20 and they make \$300 a week, it disqualifies them
21 from HRA benefits under Medicaid and they have no
22 medical insurance. That's ridiculous. And then
23 they're asked to pay a portion of that \$300
24 towards them having some minimal level of health
25 insurance. That's ridiculous. And for me that's

1
2 not teaching a young person that being responsible
3 for yourself is the way to go.

4 Also with the housing opportunities
5 and I want to stress this and I want to put this
6 on the record, and I agree with Council Member
7 Fidler that DYCD has been a partner. I can say
8 the current administration has done a great--a
9 whole lot more than any administration has done
10 for RHY young people in New York City. We have a
11 long way to go. But I can say they've done a
12 whole lot more.

13 And recently, within this year,
14 they have been able to establish a relationship
15 with DHS that allows runaway and homeless TIL
16 young people to apply for Section 8 vouchers under
17 the emergency applications. I could tell you, I
18 was very disturbed about a year and a half ago
19 when our young people's priority went from two all
20 the way down to four on Section 8 priority list.
21 They're now back at zero, they're higher than DV
22 women, today. And DHS has committed for this
23 Fiscal Year, 50 Section 8 vouchers to young people
24 that are residing in TIL programs.

25 But one of the things that--the

1
2 problems that we found out last week that a lot of
3 our young people are running into is that they're
4 not being able to meet the income requirement
5 based on the fact that the jobs that they have are
6 not adequate. We have young people like for
7 instance I had a young lady, she was working at
8 Shea Stadium. And dedicated, went to work
9 everyday. But when it came to it at the time, she
10 had an application in to NYCHA housing, and at the
11 time, when she went to NYCHA housing, she said
12 well I have a job. I have savings. She was
13 disqualified based on the fact that when the Mets
14 are out of town, she's not making any money and
15 then she was put into a hole and say well, your
16 income is insufficient. It was very deflating for
17 her.

18 So for me, I feel there are greater
19 issues that we have to address that are
20 contributing factors to the fact that we're having
21 so many young people over the age of 21, between
22 the ages of 21 and 24, that still remain on the
23 street. And for a lot of those young people, I
24 could tell you, if they've come through our
25 programs, what we've done in the past with young

1
2 people that have reached the age of 21, we have no
3 other recourse but to call our friends at Covenant
4 House and say to them, well, we have a young
5 person. They're working. They've achieved their
6 high school diploma. Would you take them into
7 your ROP program?

8 And then they'll tell us well you
9 need to get them down here before they turn 21.
10 So we're hustling to get them over there so that
11 they can get in there, get some extended stay. It
12 shouldn't be. I feel that they should be allowed
13 to remain--they should be able to have an
14 opportunity to finish what they've started.
15 That's my recommendation.

16 Oh and just one more thing
17 [laughs]. I just--for the folks in the room that
18 have discretionary contracts and have
19 discretionary awards, I totally agree. The
20 vetting process is way too lengthy for you to be
21 able to operate a program. The monies that you
22 guys bestowed on us, so generously over the past
23 few years, takes so long before--to go through the
24 process in order for you to be able to operate a
25 program it's ridiculous. Like Joey was saying,

1
2 we're now seven months into the year, and we just
3 had the opportunity to be able to submit our
4 discretionary contracts.

5 And another--I mean another problem
6 that we're experiencing here that we didn't
7 experience in the past, but this is a fiscal
8 issue. And what the fiscal issue is, if you have
9 DYCD contracts that originated from the RFP,
10 they're stand-alone contracts and you get awards
11 at the beginning of the Fiscal Year. If you now
12 have a discretionary contract, it's set up as a
13 separate contract. Based on the fact that it's
14 set up on a--as a separate contract, it creates a
15 smorgasbord of fiscal issues for you.

16 So I mean if anyone is having any
17 issues, I've had a conversation with Assistant
18 Commissioner Haskell in regards to us finding ways
19 that it'll give us an opportunity to be at a--to
20 be better be able to spend our monies without
21 having any conflicts with the original contract.
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: Now the DYCD,
24 first of all, it may come as a surprise to some of
25 you, or maybe not, that DYCD runs more contracts

1
2 than any other City agency. And they run, you
3 know, the gamut from very small to very large.
4 And we have continued to discuss with DYCD their
5 contracting process and streamlining it.

6 Of course the point/counterpoint to
7 that is making sure that that money is accounted
8 for transparently and appropriately. You should
9 know that a great deal of the funding that--well
10 at least some of the \$5,000,000 that comes from
11 the City Council which is affectionately referred
12 to by the New York Post as pork. And they,
13 apologies to the - - Place, sorry--

14 [Laughter]

15 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: But, you know,
16 the fact of the matter is, you know, that they're,
17 you know, there are people in the City who look at
18 that money as dirty money and money that, you
19 know, we need to inspect every, you know, penny
20 because, you know, there's some corrupt motivation
21 and an improper motivation in its allocation. And
22 we need to make sure that the public has
23 confidence in the money that is being spent. So
24 that's the push/pull.

25 I know that on the Council side we

1
2 are streamlining our processes so that the process
3 by which you ask the Council for money, for those
4 of you seeking discretionary money directly from
5 Council Member allocations, it will be streamlined
6 this year. And if you were approved last year,
7 your form will basically say everything is the
8 same as last year, check this box.

9 And so maybe if we can get DYCD
10 moving along those lines, and maybe even more
11 importantly, the Mayor's Office of Contracts and
12 then OMB to understand, you know, the
13 difficulties, you know, we'll make some progress.
14 And at the budget hearings I do intend to ask the
15 Commissioner what her staffing is in terms of the
16 contracting processes.

17 No matter what the topic is when it
18 comes to DYCD I hear this complaint. Whether it's
19 after schools, runaway and homeless youth, any of
20 the DYCD programs, and, you know, I sympathize
21 with them to some degree but, you know, I
22 understand the practical hardship that it causes
23 all of you. Council Member Gerson.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: Just to
25 follow up on this completion of the cycle of the

1
2 18 month period point which several of you have
3 made now. And I think it's a very valid point as
4 I've said. In your opinions, could DYCD on its
5 own, allow or even mandate that once the person is
6 admitted into a program they have to be enabled to
7 complete the full 18 month period irrespective of
8 their age? And if we were to do so, if the City
9 were to do so, is that something that your
10 programs could accommodate without additional
11 funding?

12 MR. SEALY: I mean I could--I'm
13 certainly I could speak for everybody in the room.
14 We do a whole lot of stuff that--without getting
15 funded for it.

16 [Audience agreeing]

17 MR. SEALY: So, forget it being
18 adequate.

19 [Audience laughing]

20 MR. SEALY: We have a deep
21 commitment to the young people that we serve.
22 And--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:

24 [Interposing] So if we allow this, you could do
25 it.

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2 MR. SEALY: If, if you allow it,
3 but based on allowance, it has to go through the
4 State because DYCD follows the State regulation--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON:

6 [Interposing] I see.

7 MR. SEALY: --and they will always,
8 when you raise it to them, they will always resort
9 back to the fact that OCFS has the call on that--

10 MR. MICHAELS: [Interposing] Yep.

11 MR. SEALY: --so the State law
12 needs to have--needs to recognize some level of
13 flexibility to give programs an allowance to do
14 that, granted that you might not be getting paid
15 to, to carry out those services.

16 Like for instance with the Section
17 8 vouchers that we got, we had to commit to a 2
18 year follow-up for each young person that goes
19 into an apartment. We're not getting paid for
20 that but everybody in the room agreed to it
21 because it's necessary for our young people.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: Okay. Well
23 I'm certain that this Committee will follow up on
24 this point. Thank you very much.

25 MR. SEALY: You're welcome.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON FIDLER: And I just, we
3 want to thank you for your testimony and we want
4 to thank everyone for their testimony and their
5 participation. I particularly want to thank
6 Council Member Gerson who has been a partner in
7 this through all 13 of these hearings, and my
8 counsel, Megan Annito and my Policy Analyst, Mike
9 Benjamin.

10 Just on the where we go from here,
11 I intend to ask counsel to rewrite small parts of
12 this resolution to make it clear which level of
13 government we're asking what of. So that our
14 agenda is very clearly stated. I think that's the
15 one thing in re-reading the resolution before this
16 hearing that it occurred to me.

17 So if any of you have any
18 suggestions that are substantively, you know,
19 different from what's in the Resolution, please
20 get them to Megan as soon as possible. It's also
21 my hope that they'll permit me to calendar a vote
22 on an amended resolution on the day that we do our
23 oversight hearing for the budget in March for DYCD
24 so that we can move this to the floor of the
25 Council.

1
2 Lots of things are happening in
3 Washington. And lots of things are happening in
4 Albany. It's, I think it behooves us to pass this
5 resolution at a time when they're in session and
6 possibly paying attention. I also, you know, want
7 to make another effort to reconvene at least the
8 State elected officials that you've identified for
9 this Committee as your point people. There is a
10 woeful absence of dialog amongst us and this
11 resolution I think would set out an agenda for
12 that meeting that might prove productive for all
13 of us.

14 So since we're about being
15 productive and we know that stimulus packages
16 aside money is not something that I'd be
17 optimistic about augmenting this year. You know
18 we do what we can in that environment and I
19 appreciate all your efforts, all your cooperation,
20 and we will continue to march forward. Thank you
21 and we are adjourned.

22 [Gavel Banging]

23 [Applause]

24 [END TAPE 1002]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Laura L. Springate certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura L. Springate". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Signature Laura L. Springate

Date March 9, 2009