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COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 1

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

January 28, 2020  
Start: 1:06 p.m.  
Recess: 3:30 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: JOSEPH C. BORELLI  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
ALICKA AMPRY-SAMUEL  
JUSTIN L. BRANNAN  
FERNANDO CABRERA  
ALAN N. MAISEL

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 2

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

3 Lillian Bonsignore  
4 Chief of Emergency Medical Services, EMS

5 Alvin Suriel  
6 Assistant Chief of Emergency Medical Services,  
7 EMS

8 Stephen Rush  
9 Deputy Commissioner for Recruitment and Retention  
10 At Emergency Medical Services, EMS

11 Nafeesah Noonan  
12 Assistant Commissioner for the Recruitment and  
13 Retention at Emergency Medical Services, EMS

14 Oren Barzilay  
15 President of Local 2507 of District Council 37

16 Vincent Variale  
17 President of Local 3621

18 Joseph Pataky  
19 President of the EMS Superior Officers  
20 Association of the FDNY

21 Anthony Almojera  
22 Vice President of Local 3621, the EMS Officers  
23 Union

24 AJ HERNANDEZ Hernandez  
25 Uncle of Yadira Arroyo who was EMS of FDNY

Crystel Cadett  
Paramedic for Eight Years in the FDNY

Jose Prosper  
Fire Fighter, President of the FDNY Hispanic  
Society

Michael MacNeil  
President of the Boston EMS Division of the  
Boston Police and Patrolman's Association

David Lin  
President of the FDNY Phoenix Society

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COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 3

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

Michael Greco  
US Marshal for the Southern District of New York

Kathleen Knuth  
President of the FDNY Women's Benevolent  
Association

Dalvanie Powell  
President of the United Probation Officer's  
Association

David Cook  
Paramedic from Station 31 in Brooklyn

2 [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: They give you a  
4 gavel but it's not as powerful as the T.V. camera so  
5 we'll just... I'm sorry for delaying everyone, I hate  
6 that we started eight minutes late and I'm... I have to  
7 apologize in advance because I have so much to read.  
8 Good afternoon I'm Council Member Joseph Borelli, I'm  
9 Chair of the Committee on Fire and Emergency  
10 Management. I'm joined by committee members Deutsch  
11 and Brannan. I want to begin by thanking those who  
12 are here today to discuss this very important topic  
13 of EMS worker attrition. For quite some time the New  
14 York City's fire department has been experiencing an  
15 alarming rate of attrition amongst personnel within  
16 the bureau of emergency medical services. Many  
17 factors have been cited as a... as resulting in this  
18 high rate of turnover including relatively low pay,  
19 stressful work environments and long hours. EMS  
20 employees often find themselves needing to work a  
21 second job and maximizing overtime pay to ensure they  
22 are earning a living wage. This situation results in  
23 overworked employees, low staff moral and a constant  
24 shuffle of the newly trained EMTs and paramedics  
25 serving in our city's ambulances. Today the committee

2 seeks to examine how the fire department evaluates  
3 EMS operations in light of high rates of employee  
4 turnover, how the department aims to improve EMS  
5 working conditions and what steps the department has  
6 taken to ensure the most qualified and experienced  
7 EMTs and paramedics are retained within EMS all to  
8 ensure that the department is able to deliver the  
9 highest quality emergency medical services.

10 Additionally, the committee will also hear two pieces  
11 of related legislation sponsored by Council Member  
12 Daneek Miller. First Intro 1731 will require that the  
13 fire department issue annual public reports on  
14 emergency service... medical services personnel  
15 resignations with such reporting including  
16 information on job titles, length of employment and  
17 final salaries of individuals who leave the EMS  
18 ranks. Additionally, we will hear Resolution 1062  
19 which calls for the salaries of New York City  
20 emergency medical service personnel to be comparable  
21 to New York City fire fighters and police officers.  
22 The committee looks forward to hearing both from the  
23 fire department on this public important oversight  
24 topic, excuse me and the important... introductions  
25 being heard. I would now ask... well no, I actually

2 have to stop you because I've been asked to read the  
3 opening statement by Council Member Daneek Miller who  
4 is unable to attend. So, pretend I'm Daneek. Our  
5 greatness as a city is owed to the dedication...  
6 dedicated civil service who add immeasurable value to  
7 it every day this is especially true of our emergency  
8 first responders, but we do not value all of these  
9 workers equally. The more than 4,000 members of the  
10 emergency medical services division of the New York  
11 Fire Department 64 percent of whom are women and  
12 people of color are terribly overworked and grossly  
13 undercompensated compared to their fire fighter and  
14 fire officer counterparts. These brave women and men  
15 dive headfirst into danger 24/7 to deliver immediate  
16 lifesaving medical care to more than eight million  
17 New Yorkers. They are shot at, they're assaulted,  
18 they even rush into burning buildings and as the EMT  
19 family of Yadira Arroyo will tell you today they die  
20 in the line of duty yet the city has taken the  
21 position that they're work is different compared to  
22 their fellow first responders at police and fire and  
23 it pays them 8,000 dollars less in starting salary  
24 and tens of thousands of dollars less after five  
25 years of service. EMS members love their job but many

2 of them have to work double shifts in order to keep  
3 food on their family's tables. The stress of low pay  
4 and low moral become so unbearable that they leave to  
5 become fire fighters or seek gainful employment with  
6 other municipal agencies because the job simply does  
7 not pay. And because EMS does not pay members take  
8 their expertise with them when they leave depriving  
9 New Yorkers of a less skilled and less experienced  
10 work force yet the FDNY does not see their exit as an  
11 actual loss for EMS because they retain them within  
12 the department. This flawed view has ignored a  
13 chronic and glaring issue at the expense of public  
14 safety. We must have a complete understanding of the  
15 crisis that has overtaken EMS which is why I'm proud  
16 to sponsor these pieces of legislation. Intro 1731  
17 would require the FDNY to report on the resignations  
18 of EMS members that voluntarily leave the division to  
19 become firefighters or gain employment with another  
20 municipal agency. Reso 1062 calls on the  
21 administration to provide salary parity for FDNY EMS  
22 personnel as first responders. All labor has dignity  
23 said Dr. King. The time has come for this  
24 administration to be consistent with its progressive  
25 values and provide equal pay for EMS. I thank Chair

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2 Borelli, that's me, for supporting this legislation  
3 and holding this... today's hearing on this urgent  
4 issue. So, now I would like to ask those members of  
5 the administration who plan to testify to state your  
6 name for the record and raise your right hand as the  
7 committee council administers the oath.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Do you affirm to tell  
9 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth  
10 in your testimony before this Committee and to  
11 respond honestly to Council Member questions?

12 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I do.

13 STEPHEN RUSH: I do.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK: Please all of you state  
15 your name as well and then proceed.

16 NAFEESAH NOONAN: Nafeesah Noonan.

17 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Lillian Bonsignore,  
18 Chief of EMS.

19 ALVIN SURIEL: Alvin Suriel, Assistant  
20 Chief of EMS.

21 STEPHEN RUSH: Stephen Rush, Deputy  
22 Commissioner for Budget.

23 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Good afternoon Chair  
24 Borelli and all the Council Members present. My name  
25 is Lillian Bonsignore and I am Chief of EMS. I join



2 today.. I'm joined today by Alvin Suriel, Assistant  
3 Chief of EMS; Stephen Rush, Deputy Commissioner for  
4 Budget and Finance and Nafeesah Noonan, Assistant  
5 Commissioner for Recruitment and Retention. The  
6 Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, EMS, is busier  
7 than it ever has been. Over the course of this  
8 administration the Department has received over 60  
9 million dollars in additional funding for EMS and it  
10 has added nearly a thousand new personnel. In 2019 we  
11 responded to more than 1.5 million medical calls as  
12 responses fall... EMS responses fall into one of two  
13 broad categories. Segment one through three calls  
14 which include life threatening emergencies such as  
15 cardiac arrest, unconscious and choking calls and  
16 segment four through eight calls, incidents which are  
17 triaged as non-life-threatening incidents. In 2019,  
18 FDNY EMS responded to 563,920 life threatening calls  
19 and 967,950 non-life-threatening calls. Thank you for  
20 the opportunity to speak today on the topic of  
21 attrition among members of EMS. As Chief of EMS I  
22 value our workforce and I know that our members love  
23 the job, they work and train hard to become EMTs and  
24 paramedics because they love helping people. Those  
25 who leave EMS don't do so without a good reason.

2 While there are many factors that could lead a member  
3 to depart, I'd like to discuss two of the biggest.

4 One factor that contributes to, to the attrition  
5 among our members is the firefighter promotional exam  
6 which enables age eligible EMS members to take a  
7 civil service test and be appointed as fire fighters.

8 This exam is uniquely available to EMS members and  
9 the two most recent tests, exam 2500 and exam 7501

10 resulted in approximately 1,400 members of EMS being  
11 appointed as fire fighters between the beginning of  
12 2013 and the end of 2019. The department prepares for

13 this by hiring additional personnel ahead of time so

14 that we are overhead counted in anticipation of the

15 members being appointed as fire fighters. While we

16 don't have specific feedback from every member who

17 resigned we know that another key factor in the

18 members departing is pay. Other reasons include

19 taking other civil service jobs, retirement,

20 childcare challenges, pursuit of less dangerous

21 employment, furthering education and moving out of

22 New York City and New York State. EMS members are

23 some of the hardest working individuals on the

24 planet, shifts can be long and grueling. Some days

25 the action is nonstop with call after call and not a

1 lot of time to catch your breath in between. The job  
2 involves providing emergency medical care in a wide  
3 range of environments and sometimes that means our  
4 members place themselves in situations that are  
5 dangerous or may become dangerous. Most members have  
6 dealt with combative individuals whether it's a  
7 patient, a patient's family member or an onlooker.  
8 Fire department EMTs and paramedics operate with the  
9 highest level of training for pre-hospital work and  
10 each year we confront... we confront the growing number  
11 of calls, 2019 was the busiest year yet for medical  
12 calls. I think that working in EMS is the best job in  
13 the world, it has given me an opportunity to save  
14 lives every single day. What was supposed to be a  
15 summer job has stretched into a 29-year career. I've  
16 worked my way up through the ranks to become Chief of  
17 EMS and along the way I've gotten to know many of my  
18 fellow members, I've reported to them, I've worked  
19 alongside them on calls and in my most recent  
20 position as Chief of EMS training I've trained a huge  
21 portion of our workforce. I know the value that EMS  
22 members provide to this city and to the community. I  
23 wish that I had the ability to increase salaries but  
24 within the civil service system that falls under the  
25

2 responsibility of the city's office of labor  
3 relations which negotiates with our unions as well as  
4 with our unions representing employees in a 150  
5 bargaining units across the city. My team has focused  
6 on improving the quality of work life within EMS by  
7 addressing aspects that are within my control. We've  
8 sought and acted upon feedback from the members, we  
9 strengthened relationships, working relationships  
10 within our ranks and we foster better communication  
11 with both members in the field and their union  
12 leadership. I am proud of the improvements that we  
13 have made and will keep striving to improve life for  
14 our members. I am also very proud of the support that  
15 this administration has provided to EMS including a  
16 thousand new positions that I referenced earlier in  
17 my testimony. Each of the... each of the unions that  
18 represent our members will soon be involved in  
19 negotiating their next contract. I think that all EMS  
20 members should be well compensated for the important  
21 work that they do, and I hope that the parties are  
22 successful in reaching agreements at the bargaining  
23 table that are satisfactory to all parties.

24 Introduction 1731 would require the fire department  
25 to make annual reports on personnel resignations. In

2 section two the bill calls for department... for the  
3 department to report on a variety of categories  
4 regarding individuals who have departed from EMS  
5 including job title, final salary, length of  
6 employment, date of resignation and within a year of  
7 resignation whether the individual is employed by a  
8 city agency, state agency, Nassau county agency or  
9 Suffolk county agency. Of these the department has  
10 and would be able to report job title, final salary,  
11 length of employment and date of resignation. Some  
12 employees who are departing take a new position  
13 immediately, volunteer that information as they exit  
14 but it is self-reported, and many choose not to. For  
15 members who begin new employment at some other point  
16 within a year after departing the department has no  
17 way of knowing if, if a departed employee has taken a  
18 job with state agencies or agencies of counties  
19 outside of New York. City agencies other than FDNY  
20 may be able to ascertain whether an employee joined  
21 another city agency at some point during that time  
22 period, the fire department does not have that  
23 ability. In section four the bill requires the  
24 department to report the number of EMS employees who  
25 have taken a departmental promotional exam during the

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2 past two calendar years and if so which exam. This  
3 information that we have... this is information that we  
4 have and would be able to report. We are happy to  
5 further discuss whether modifications to the bill  
6 produce a set of requirements that are feasible for  
7 the department to meet. I would be happy to take your  
8 questions at this time.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and we  
10 have some questions. First, we're joined by Council  
11 Member Alan, the mayhem maker, Maisel, it was a joke  
12 Alan. So, the first question just some basic  
13 statistics, what is the average duration of  
14 employment for paramedics, for EMTs and for fire  
15 fighters, is there a way to break that down?

16 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Are you looking for  
17 salary or...

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: No, no, average  
19 duration of employment.

20 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Oh the, the duration  
21 of employment, yes... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I imagine that if  
23 you... if you have the title of fire fighter... [cross-  
24 talk]

25 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yes... [cross-talk]

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Your, your duration  
3 is going to be 21 years, 22 years...

4 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah, so the  
5 duration of employment for our members is an average  
6 of 6.7 years for EMTs and ten years for paramedic.  
7 However, during, during the years that we have  
8 promotional exams and, and they are going to fire we  
9 have an average length of service being 3.5 years for  
10 EMTs and 4.5 years for paramedics.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And is, is there an  
12 annual attrition rate for EMTs?

13 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah, the annual...  
14 the annual attrition rate is 6.5 percent.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is that something  
16 you guys track?

17 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yes, we do.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And is the 6.5  
19 percent a high, a low, is it normal?

20 STEPHEN RUSH: EMS attrition is higher  
21 than the comparative which I think you were thinking  
22 about as a fire fighter attrition.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: How often are there  
24 classes of, of EMS recruits?

2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I'm sorry, repeat  
3 your question.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: How often are there  
5 classes for EMS recruits?

6 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: EMS academy runs  
7 three to four depending on the, the size of the, the  
8 length of the class, we have two different... we have  
9 two different classes that come in for new employees,  
10 one is longer than the other so depending on which  
11 class we're doing we run mostly about three, three  
12 classes a year, three classes of 180 students a year.

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, can you just  
14 explain then why ones longer than the other?

15 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah, so we, we take  
16 in people who have certification, an EMT  
17 certification already..

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay..

19 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: And then we have a  
20 separate class that we hire people that have no  
21 medical training and during that particular class we  
22 provide the training for their EMT basic and they get  
23 certified while they're in a class so that is a  
24 longer class.



2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And what is the  
3 cost per, per employee to train from scratch, a new  
4 EMT?

5 [off mic dialogue]

6 STEPHEN RUSH: So, there's... so, there's  
7 two groups obviously to EMT and the EMT cost, this is  
8 for instructors, equipment, supplies; approximately  
9 11,000 dollars including fringe and for the paramedic  
10 class, which is considerably longer, 22,000.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: What are the  
12 percentage of EMS workers on the job with less than  
13 one year of experience?

14 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Less than one year  
15 we have... [cross-talk]

16 STEPHEN RUSH: 13 percent... [cross-talk]

17 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...EMTs are 13 percent  
18 that are less than one year, and paramedics are zero  
19 percent.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Right, so for EMS...  
21 for a person getting an ambulance or having an  
22 ambulance respond there's a, a larger than one in ten  
23 chance the person responding has less than one-year  
24 experience?

25 [off mic dialogue]

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2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah, I don't... I'm...  
3 I don't... [cross-talk]

4 STEPHEN RUSH: That, that'd be difficult...  
5 [cross-talk]

6 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...know... [cross-talk]

7 STEPHEN RUSH: ...because some of them are  
8 paired with more... [cross-talk]

9 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah... [cross-talk]

10 STEPHEN RUSH: ...senior EMTs and  
11 paramedics.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Why would you pair  
13 them with more senior... [cross-talk]

14 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Any, anybody with  
15 less... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: ...employees?

17 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...than one year is  
18 generally with a senior person because they do their  
19 probation and internship out of their training class  
20 so if they're... if they're hired from the time they're  
21 hired they have a one year probation, when they  
22 finish the EMS academy and go to the field they're  
23 considered interns and the interns will work with  
24 somebody with more than one year on the job.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: What is the value  
3 of having them paired with someone who has more  
4 experience?

5 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: There's, there's  
6 tremendous value, I mean one is having somebody who  
7 can teach them and make sure they're... they provide  
8 them mentoring and help them really kind of find  
9 their way when they're, they're going out to the  
10 streets for the first time.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there  
12 significant value in having EMTs who have more  
13 experience on ambulances?

14 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Like with any other  
15 profession, the more you do it the better you get, I  
16 would say that's true of any profession.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Does that value  
18 added translate equally to the dollar value assigned  
19 in EMS contracts? It's an opinion question.

20 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Say that again  
21 please.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Well there's a step  
23 increase for pay...

24 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yes...

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is the value of  
3 one's experience equal to the value that's offered in  
4 pay increases each year say?

5 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: The, the fire  
6 department values all of their employees, all of  
7 their first responders, they do a tremendously  
8 difficult job and they save lives every single day.  
9 I'm not sure how you might assign a... you know a...  
10 [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But, but we do, I  
12 mean that's affectively what we do in contracts,  
13 right?

14 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: So, the... [cross-  
15 talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: We say if you're  
17 here for three years you're worth, you know whatever,  
18 10,000 dollars more than someone who's here one year,  
19 I mean is that... does the... does the value added in the  
20 contract per year equal the value added in experience  
21 and saving lives?

22 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: So, there is a  
23 stepping in salary during, during their, their time  
24 here, they do get increment increases as they go on.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Does EMS experience  
3 translate directly into better outcomes for patients?

4 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Again, there are  
5 some folks who, you know are very, very, very good at  
6 what they do very early in their careers. Many, many  
7 of our people come here with EMS experience so they  
8 may have a short period of time here, but they may  
9 have worked other places for many years. So, it, it's  
10 not something I can say... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Do you... do you...  
12 [cross-talk]

13 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...as a... as a blanket  
14 I can say that with, with experience comes comfort,  
15 your comfort level so the, the more comfortable you  
16 are the easier that job becomes for you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, if, if there's  
18 people who are really good and some not so good at  
19 their job would we ever pair an intern with an  
20 experienced EMT that's not good at their job?

21 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Every one of our  
22 EMTs, everyone of our paramedics have met the  
23 standards of the fire department and of New York  
24 States certifications so every single person is  
25 trained to the highest level of, of training.

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But there's an  
3 assumption... [cross-talk]

4 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: If they, they would  
5 not be in the field if they weren't qualified to be  
6 in the field to, to protect and serve those people of  
7 the communities that rely on us.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But, but there's an  
9 assumption that with experience added there is a  
10 knowledge benefit and a perhaps composure benefit  
11 under stressful circumstances that is important  
12 enough for us to team them with interns.

13 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yes, any, any, any  
14 kind of emergency response will benefit from  
15 somebody's experience, right, so putting somebody who  
16 is new to our service doesn't mean they're new EMTs,  
17 I mean in some cases it does, in a... in a case of our  
18 trainee classes which is the class I talked about  
19 before, those people are new to medicine and new to  
20 being first responders but the other ones that come  
21 in with training already may have a lot of years,  
22 they may have no years, it really depends on, on that  
23 individual. Now putting somebody who is new to the  
24 field with somebody who has experience is always  
25 beneficial no matter what profession we're talking

2 about, it is a... it is a way to have direct mentoring,  
3 it is a, a way to provide guidance, it is a way to  
4 even access the help that you might need along the  
5 way whether it be a question or whether it be a  
6 protocol issue, whether it be a process issue. These  
7 are things that are beneficial to people, sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Look I, I, I  
9 certainly am someone who believes in mentoring and,  
10 and that idea, I'm glad that we're... there were  
11 elected officials that came before me who I was able  
12 to bounce off, you know stupid questions to but I  
13 mean the, the fundamental question though for the  
14 public is whether EMS experience translates into  
15 better outcomes for the patient, I understand that  
16 every single person we put on an ambulance is going  
17 to have qualifications and certifications and be  
18 competent but as a rule of thumb or as a general  
19 statement does EMS experience translate to better  
20 outcomes?

21 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Outcomes are really  
22 patient dependent. So, so, we're working under the  
23 same protocols, we have a... we have a set of protocols  
24 that our EMTs and our CFR members and our paramedics  
25 follow so our assumption is and always should be that

2 our members no matter how long they're on the job are  
3 following those treatment protocols and outcomes of  
4 patients are related to that individual patient and  
5 how they respond to that specific protocol that we  
6 are using. So, whether, whether you're here for two  
7 months or you're here for two years the protocols are  
8 exactly the same and these are the things that guide  
9 our treatment.

10 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, the University  
11 of Pennsylvania did a study in 2011 by the Leonard  
12 Davis Institute of Health Economics and they found  
13 that experience and outcomes were corelated with  
14 paramedics over six years of service was... is the  
15 number they cite, not to bore you but the U Penn  
16 study basically says that more experienced paramedics  
17 in this case lead to better health outcomes for the  
18 patients they serve, does the fire department have  
19 any of its internal data or studies to negate or  
20 refute the findings of the U Penn study?

21 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: No, we don't... we  
22 don't have... we don't have any reason or information  
23 to dispute their findings but again our... I mean I...  
24 coming from a training background also I have to just  
25 be clear about what I'm saying. I am not disputing



1 the fact that experience is a good thing, I mean in  
2 any job the more experience you have the easier that  
3 job becomes without a doubt but when it comes to  
4 patient outcome and in an environment where we are  
5 working within a set protocol the protocol is the  
6 treatment so that does not change based on how long  
7 you're here, maybe how smoothly you execute that  
8 protocol may be different from having some  
9 experience, how... you know how... I guess how familiar  
10 you are with the, the... every single step may be a  
11 little bit better but the protocol is the treatment  
12 that we provide for all of our patients and we are  
13 proud of our EMS members, our EMTs and our paramedics  
14 and all of our first responders, we are proud of the  
15 work that they do and coming from a training  
16 perspective I can tell you they are trained to the  
17 highest level. Now when they go to the field they  
18 have all met the same standards, there is nobody that  
19 is being sent to take care of patients that are  
20 subpar, they've all been... they've all been assessed  
21 the same way, they've been taught the same way, they  
22 have provided the same number and the same protocols  
23 to operate under and they do a good job. Now as you  
24 progress in your career of course you become more and  
25

2 more comfortable with that, I don't have any data  
3 for... to provide you that says that somebody who is  
4 here less than another will have a worst patient  
5 outcome, I, I do not have that and I also don't  
6 believe that, I, I believe that, you know it... they're  
7 trained appropriately, they have the protocols to  
8 guide them, they have people surrounding them, nobody  
9 is an island here, we all participate in saving lives  
10 every single day and you know I think they do a  
11 tremendous job.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: When, when you were  
13 in an ambulance or as a, a supervisor were there ever  
14 instances where you corrected a more junior member of  
15 the service for doing something that, that you would  
16 not have done in that situation or differently  
17 perhaps?

18 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Absolutely, of  
19 course, I mean that is the whole nature of being a  
20 supervisor but there are also many, many situations  
21 where I corrected senior people so, you know it, it  
22 really was not... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: You're smart, I  
24 mean come... you know you're... [cross-talk]

25 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I'm sorry?

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: You're, you're a  
3 smart one, I mean come... you know...

4 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Well I try but, but  
5 you know... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: But how, how often...  
7 how often would, you know these, these corrections or  
8 advice or just the, the imparting of wisdom would,  
9 would take place on a typical tour?

10 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Well if you... if you  
11 know anything about me that's an eight-hour process,  
12 I am... I am... I am constantly engaging with the members  
13 constantly trying to teach at some point and trying  
14 to learn from them because many of them come with a  
15 tremendous amount of knowledge in other areas of  
16 medicine but I would say as an officer, as a  
17 supervisor, as somebody who is responsible for those  
18 members, I did it as much as I could. Now were, were  
19 the corrections always very critical, no. Sometimes  
20 the corrections were very minimal and it was really  
21 about behavior and it was really about interaction or  
22 application that, you know I felt if we addressed  
23 right now they wouldn't... it wouldn't lead to a bigger  
24 problem so it was more about the interaction and  
25 providing mentorship and less about the actual

2 correction although, you know supervisors don't shy  
3 away from correcting people when, when necessary.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And they shouldn't.

5 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I am going to turn  
7 it over to Council Member Adams who has joined us as  
8 well.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you very  
10 much Chair Borelli and thank you very much for your  
11 testimony today, appreciate you being here. I have  
12 pretty much participated in pretty much all of the  
13 hearings pertaining to equity when it comes to EMS,  
14 I, I dare say I have a personal interest in assuring  
15 equity for EMS and am a proud co-sponsor of Intro  
16 1731 and Reso 1062 so with that said I'm just really  
17 interested in and maybe you don't know this but there  
18 is a history in language when it comes to the  
19 comparison between FDNY and EMS and the term on the  
20 exam offers and, and I think that you... I wasn't here  
21 for your testimony but I'm reading it and it calls  
22 the examination the quote, "firefighter promotional  
23 exam and then in your testimony you go on to, to say  
24 that it enables age eligible EMS members to take a  
25 civil service test and be appointed as fire fighters

1  
2 so I'm just interested in the language there and the  
3 consideration of movement from EMS to FDNY considered  
4 a promotion.

5 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Thank you for that  
6 question, I know that's a very... you know a sensitive  
7 word in the EMS community, and I can certainly  
8 understand why. I will say that the word promotion  
9 comes from the actual civil service environment, it's  
10 a... there are two types of exams that are offered, one  
11 is an open competitive which everybody has the right  
12 to be on and one is a promotional civil service exam  
13 which is... which is unique to a specific group. So, in  
14 this particular case in order to give EMS preference  
15 over the open competitive, the people on the open  
16 competitive they must take what is called the  
17 promotional exam and that is a promotional within the  
18 department that only people within the department are  
19 eligible to take. So, we also have a paramedic  
20 promotional exam. So, as an EMT you can take a  
21 paramedic promotional exam even before you're a  
22 paramedic, so you go onto the paramedic promotional  
23 exam and from that list is the list that we call for,  
24 for paramedic basic so these are... these are two

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2 tracks and they are specific to the EMS member which  
3 is why it is called a promotion.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: So, does that...  
5 does that necessarily delineate a, a hierarchy then?

6 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Not as far as we're  
7 concerned, I, I could see how, you know many may feel  
8 that way but from, from our perspective it is nothing  
9 but a process issue. It is... it is the name of an exam  
10 that provides preferential hiring for people within  
11 EMS to go to fire.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, I'm just  
13 concerned as far as have you gotten any feedback from  
14 EMS workers as far as what the message... you've got  
15 over 4,000 EMS workers what that message may  
16 particularly say to them?

17 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Of course Madame,  
18 I'm, I'm, I'm one of those 4,000 EMS workers so I  
19 completely understand the, the message and how it  
20 might be perceived, I get it but it doesn't change  
21 the fact that in order for us to give preferential  
22 treatment to EMS members through DCAS they must take  
23 what is called the promotional exam. That, that, that  
24 does... that is not something that we control, that is  
25 not something that we asked for it to be called, it

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2 is just what it is, it is an open competitive versus  
3 a promotional, everybody allowed versus just a  
4 specific group allowed so we are in a place now where  
5 although it is a very sensitive word and, and people  
6 are, are... I could see how they perceive it, you know  
7 that certain way and again we've spent 30, 30 years  
8 in EMS so it's not... its not secret to us but it is  
9 just that, it's a process issue, it's the... it's the  
10 name of the exam so that they can have preferential  
11 treatment over hiring over, over the open, open  
12 competitive and again the same thing happens on the  
13 paramedic side.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Alright, I  
15 appreciate that clarification very much. Do you know  
16 the year that the promotion to fire fighter exam  
17 first offered to EMS members how many members  
18 voluntarily resigned from EMS during each year that  
19 it was offered?

20 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: When it first... when  
21 it first started you mean?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Uh-huh.

23 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I don't...

24 [off mic dialogue]

25 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Anything on that?

2 ALVIN SURIEL: We probably.. we can get  
3 you that data, I don't have it with us, but I think  
4 the first promotional was on.. was offered around 1999  
5 if I remember correctly, around the turn of the  
6 century. We can get you the promotional numbers by  
7 year.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, thank you  
9 for that.

10 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Uh-huh.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: In, in looking a  
12 little bit now to, to attrition and some of the  
13 things that Intro 1731 looks to do, now attrition is..  
14 we know its measured to understand longevity,  
15 seniority and expertise so do you feel that it's  
16 forthright for FDNY to suggest that EMS bureau  
17 members who voluntarily resign in order to become  
18 fire fighters are excluded from the official EMS  
19 attrition rates because they stay within the  
20 department?

21 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Again, I think that  
22 is a process issue, I can tell you that the, the  
23 attrition overall, the average attrition, attrition  
24 is 6.5 percent not including those EMS people going  
25 to fire if we were to exclude those. Every four years



2 this promotional exam comes up and every four years  
3 we have people who go from EMS to fire within the  
4 same department, we are all one department. Now  
5 during that time the attrition rate will go to, to  
6 something like 22 percent so in the last... in the last  
7 promotion, in the last cycle we had 873 people from  
8 EMS go to fire and that represented 22 percent but  
9 during the next four years after that exam is done we  
10 should see little to no movement from EMS to fire,  
11 those, those people that go after that are generally  
12 on the open competitive exam. So, there, there are...  
13 there are those peaks although the average is 6.5  
14 percent you know without that promotional, there are  
15 those peaks during that period time that increase  
16 significantly as far as attrition and attrition...  
17 [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Do you... [cross-  
19 talk]

20 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...is not considered  
21 attrition because they're still in the same  
22 department but if... you know if we wanted to isolate  
23 this out, we, we can confirm that during that time,  
24 yes, there is a significant increase.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: And I'm going to  
3 assume from what you're saying that you do consider  
4 that a fair assessment.

5 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: As far as the, the  
6 attrition goes... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Correct... [cross-  
8 talk]

9 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yes, ma'am.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay. Do we know...  
11 [cross-talk]

12 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: May, may I just add...  
13 [cross-talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Yes... [cross-talk]

15 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...just a... just...  
16 [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Please... [cross-  
18 talk]

19 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...another thing? So,  
20 that is not the only... that is not the only reason  
21 people leave EMS to go to fire, there are other  
22 reasons why people leave which I mentioned in my  
23 testimony and for those... for those people who leave  
24 our department to go to some other employment or they

25

2 resign for whatever their issues are that is... that is  
3 what we consider to be that attrition.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, thank you.

5 I'm just going to move on again to, to I think what  
6 the signs are talking about here today, equal pay for  
7 EMS, something that a lot of us champion in this  
8 room. So, FDY... FDNY previously said that it is  
9 extraordinarily committed to being advocates of EMS  
10 members and collective bargaining with the Office of  
11 Labor Relations so how many conversations or meetings  
12 has FDNY participated in with OLR and the three EMS  
13 unions since the June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 hearing one of which  
14 I participated in personally since then by the  
15 Committee on Civil Service and Labor?

16 STEPHEN RUSH: On the... when we're not in  
17 a bargaining session we may meet on regular... labor  
18 management issues but we work close... we are working  
19 close with the unions, in fact we have been working  
20 closely with the union since 2016 on a pilot work  
21 chart that would reduce the scheduled appearances by  
22 25 percent, it's called the 12 hour chart, something  
23 that's very important to the EMS unions, there has  
24 been lots of back and forth with that, we're looking  
25 forward to starting again, it's still... the program is

2 continuing but it's going to be modified slightly and  
3 those things have been going on. So, over the years  
4 the department has advanced and, and willing to  
5 consider differences to improve work schedule which  
6 affect the morale and things of that nature. We also  
7 advanced a special assignment differential that was  
8 originally given to fire fighters and then added on  
9 to our EMS members for our working under hazardous  
10 pay... hazardous response duties as a... as a follow up  
11 to what happened after 9/11 so there has been  
12 paramedic, rescue medics have... now get a 12 percent  
13 differential, the union recently negotiated with OLR  
14 an agreement to extend hazmat pay to those in the  
15 hazmat battalions so we work with the union and OLR  
16 and OMB to try to figure out ways to advance EMS  
17 compensation or other methods that would affect the  
18 workforce in terms of employee morale.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Are you  
20 comfortable with the pace and the progress? How do  
21 you feel about that?

22 STEPHEN RUSH: My personal feelings?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Uh-huh.  
24  
25

2 STEPHEN RUSH: I'm not sure they matter  
3 but I'm... I would say EMS deserves additional  
4 compensation, yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, thank you,  
6 we have that on the record. Okay, so I'm just going  
7 to ask one more... just one more question. The current  
8 capacity, what is the current capacity at the EMS  
9 training academy with respect to offering more  
10 opportunities for EMTs to be promoted to paramedics?

11 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Thank you for asking  
12 that question, that's something again I spent a lot  
13 of time there and it is... we, we, we do have a  
14 capacity problem and in order to address that  
15 capacity problem we did work very, very hard to try  
16 to ascertain funding and we received funding so we  
17 just recently got funded for 52 million dollar  
18 expansion of the EMS academy which will be a  
19 tremendous, tremendous asset for us, that, that  
20 construction and that... you know we'll start very  
21 soon, it's already actually started, components of  
22 that have already started and will take place over  
23 the next ten years. So, right now we are maxed out as  
24 far as how many people we can bring in at one time.  
25 We've been able to ascertain some space at the EMS

2 academy that has allowed us to move our paramedic  
3 basics from 60 to 90 which is... you know which is  
4 great for us and we anticipate moving our EMT classes  
5 as we gain this additional space to a higher number  
6 as well. The EMS academy is, is located, I'm, I'm not  
7 sure if you... well you probably do, I think you're  
8 familiar with it, right, its located off Fort Totten  
9 which is an old base so that the, the houses on those  
10 base that we use as EMS academy are fairly small and  
11 we have grown so much over the years that, you know  
12 we have used every inch possible but during this new  
13 phase of expansion it's going to allow us to do a lot  
14 of things that we cannot do right now, we're going to  
15 expand our EVOC field, our EVOC field is where we  
16 teach all of our members how to drive an ambulance,  
17 every single member that comes... that is hired needs  
18 to learn how to drive an ambulance so our EVOC field  
19 is one of those bottle necks for us when it comes to  
20 new classes because the, the, the higher number of  
21 people we bring in the more people we have to train  
22 how to drive and we just don't have enough space to  
23 be able to drive those higher numbers so that is  
24 getting an expansion, we're getting additional  
25 buildings built, a theater which will, will be as a

1 conference... we can use as a conference center, you  
2 know that stuff is, is very, very important for our  
3 growth. Now in order to combat some of the, the  
4 constraints that we've been under from the EMS  
5 academy we had to come up with different solutions,  
6 we did change the way we did medic basic so that we  
7 can allow more access to medic basic and that's the  
8 nine month, you know five day a week, nine month  
9 program that we put our EMTs through to become state  
10 certified paramedics and its really one of the most  
11 incredible courses anywhere as far as EMS goes. We've  
12 changed the way we do our, our entrance screening for  
13 that to allow access to that class for more of our  
14 EMTs, we used to have that paramedic basic run at the  
15 same time so for example, we would have 60 students  
16 on tour two which is a daytime class and 60 students  
17 on the night time class and if you did not get into  
18 that class you had to wait an entire year to get into  
19 medic basic again and we changed that, we moved the  
20 classes so that we have right now 90 EM... 90 EMTs in  
21 the daytime classes in September and 90 EMTs in the  
22 nighttime class in February so if we called you for  
23 the daytime class and you had for example childcare  
24 issues and you couldn't do that then we're going to  
25

1  
2 call you again for the nighttime class and now you  
3 don't have to wait that year so we've been able to  
4 significantly increase the number of paramedics that  
5 we as FDNY can train. Now in order to increase that  
6 as well we, we needed to come up with a way to allow  
7 for our EMTs that did not have the ability to commit  
8 five days a week, eight hours a day for nine months  
9 into this class, we wanted them to have access to  
10 becoming paramedics as well and we, we worked  
11 together with our union partners who worked very hard  
12 on this as, as well as we did to try to get what we  
13 call a forgivable loan. So, a forgivable loan now has  
14 been available to our EMTs and a forgivable is a loan  
15 that is afforded these EMTs who are on the, the  
16 paramedic promotional list so they are promotable,  
17 they.. it allows for them to go to paramedic school on  
18 the outside so if they want to do a, a class that is  
19 maybe a couple of days a week instead of every single  
20 day, they want to do a class that takes a little  
21 longer instead of nine months, this gives them an  
22 opportunity to become paramedics even if they don't  
23 have the ability to do it through us as the paramedic  
24 basic so this money is provided for these members, it  
25 pays for their.. the majority of their tuition and



1 then they agree to work as paramedics for three years  
2 in return. So, so that has been an incredible help  
3 for us to try to maximize where we're, we're  
4 constrained with space on one end, we're coming up  
5 with solutions to have access on the other end and,  
6 and I think that that has been good. Across the  
7 nation EMTs and paramedics are, are... we're struggling  
8 for them and you... if you read any EMS magazine or any  
9 EMS, you know notes or anything you'll see that  
10 everybody is struggling to get EMTs and paramedics,  
11 it, it... there is a shortage across the, the nation.  
12 So, we figured out a way to, to make our own EMTs  
13 essentially and not have to look for people who are  
14 already trained and that is where our trainee class  
15 came from so our trainee class is available to people  
16 within New York City that have no medical training at  
17 all so we, we can bring them into the system, train  
18 them ourselves, certify them on... ourselves, we're  
19 able to do that and then they continue to be hired so  
20 we are now not only making our own paramedics but  
21 we're making our own EMTs and that is all within the,  
22 the constraints that we have at the academy and, and  
23 I think you know we're going to continue to, to push  
24 these incentives and push the, the opportunities for  
25

2 our EMTs and our paramedics, it is important to us,  
3 it is something that I've been passionate about for  
4 as long as I've been involved in training which is  
5 since 1996, 1996 I became an instructor that was  
6 right around the time we were merging and since then  
7 I've held almost every position at the EMS academy  
8 with the exception of captain and I was detailed  
9 there for two days a week while I was a captain so  
10 even though I wasn't assigned there I was still there  
11 so training is something that I'm exceptionally  
12 passionate about and no matter what restraints or  
13 constraints we face we're going to continue to forge  
14 forward and try to create opportunities for our EMTs  
15 and our paramedics and, and I think they do a  
16 tremendous job and, and they deserve... they deserve  
17 that commitment from us and they have that commitment  
18 from us.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you Chief for  
20 your dedication, appreciate your passion very much  
21 and I know that your workers love what they do,  
22 that's the reason that we're fighting for this... for  
23 these bills to go forward and will continue to fight  
24 in your behalf and the behalf of the several thousand  
25

2 who work with you and for you so thank you for your  
3 testimony, thank you Mr. Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, we are  
5 joined by Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez and we were  
6 also joined very briefly like an enigma by Council  
7 Member Cabrera, next on the questions list is Council  
8 Member Deutsch.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you, good  
10 afternoon, thank you Chair. So, firstly I just want  
11 to... I want to thank the FDNY and the EMS workers for  
12 everything they do on behalf of the residents in the  
13 city of New York and, and I have multiple trainings  
14 from the FDNY in my district on how to... how to  
15 conduct... how to do CPR and the Heimlich maneuver and  
16 it came in useful where I was sitting at a table just  
17 a few months ago and I was able to, to actually save  
18 someone sitting at a... at a table on a Friday night  
19 dinner so firstly I just want to ask, you said that  
20 the busiest year for medical calls was in 2019, why  
21 is that compared to the previous years, what do you  
22 think that... [cross-talk]

23 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: More people called  
24 9-1-1 this, this year than any other year and it's  
25 the trend that we see every year, every, every time

2 we look at our call volume it has... it has increased  
3 and, and it may... it may be for lots of reasons, I  
4 mean it could be the expansion of our city, we have  
5 new neighborhoods going up every day and with those  
6 new neighborhoods bring new people, with those new  
7 people a need for 9-1-1 service. We have people who  
8 are... have difficulty accessing the healthcare system,  
9 they call 9-1-1 and they know for a fact that  
10 somebody who is... got the highest level of training is  
11 going to respond to their call for help, why the call  
12 volume goes up every year I, I can only assume that  
13 people need our help more and every time they call  
14 we're going to show up and we're going to do the very  
15 best that we can and congratulations to you because  
16 to save a life is something that most people don't  
17 get to experience but it's something that our people  
18 experience all the time, all the time, every day,  
19 right, there, there are people who are alive today  
20 because these folks show up to work every day and  
21 that is not something that could be disputed, it's  
22 truly amazing so, so you got a little taste of what  
23 it is to, you know save a life in an emergency now if  
24 you could imagine doing that thousands of times a  
25 day, you know a million and a half times a year that,

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2 that is the commitment that our people bring and you  
3 know as long as that call volume continues to go up  
4 we're going to continue to show up..

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Right... [cross-  
6 talk]

7 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...and give them all  
8 the help, help that they... [cross-talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And that was one  
10 call... [cross-talk]

11 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...need... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...less for you.

13 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yeah.

15 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I appreciate that,  
16 yeah, yeah.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, you do  
18 anticipate that based on what you just said that the  
19 call volume will increase every year each year after  
20 that?

21 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I mean I think it's  
22 fair to assume that at this point, I don't know if  
23 any health... any changes in the health care system as  
24 we move forward impacts that but as it stands in the...  
25 in the structure that we now operate in its easy to

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2 assume that our call volume will continue to... [cross-  
3 talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Increase...

5 [cross-talk]

6 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...be at high levels

7 or increase... [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: It just makes

9 sense.

10 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: You did mention  
12 that the members place themselves in situations that  
13 are dangerous or may become dangerous, how many  
14 injuries are there with EMS workers in let's say in  
15 2019 compared to 2018?

16 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I'm sorry just to  
17 clarify your question, injuries... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Injuries...

19 [cross-talk]

20 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...as far as... [cross-  
21 talk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...related... in...  
23 related to them responding to calls, maybe getting  
24 assaulted.

25

2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: So, you're talking..  
3 you're talking about assaults, so in... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Assaults and any  
5 other injury against any EMS worker that jeopardizes  
6 their response at... that jeopardizes themselves and  
7 puts their public safety... when they... in jeopardy when  
8 they respond to a call.

9 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Sure, so I don't  
10 readily have the numbers of total injuries because  
11 people are, are... you know a first responder can get  
12 hurt in a lot of different ways, one is through  
13 interactions with people like assaults, right, or, or  
14 physical contact with, with somebody who is... you know  
15 has medical issues or is just angry or... they also can  
16 get hurt doing the physical job, you know lifting  
17 stretchers, you know driving ambulances, there's a  
18 lot of different ways that people can get hurt doing  
19 this type of job so I don't have those numbers  
20 readily available for you as a... as a total, I can say  
21 that in 2018 we had an EMS, 125 recorded assaults.  
22 Outside of the, the other numbers I, I can just...

23 [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, 125... [cross-  
25 talk]

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2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...I, I will have to...

3 [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: 125, what  
5 period?

6 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: 125, that's 2018...

7 [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: On 2018... [cross-  
9 talk]

10 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...just 2018. So, the...  
11 as far as the other injuries they experience, you  
12 know lifting, stretching, moving patients, getting  
13 hurt in car accidents, things like that I don't... I  
14 don't have those numbers readily available, but we  
15 can look... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: If you can...  
17 yeah, if you bring... if you could get me those  
18 numbers. Now when an EMS worker responds to calls  
19 how... how they... how do they prevent from either  
20 injuring themselves by having some type of equipment  
21 that will prevent them... maybe a back strap or  
22 something or how would they prevent an assault, how  
23 do they protect themselves, do they have anything  
24 right now including training how to better protect  
25



2 themselves when they respond to, to a call that  
3 endangers themselves?

4 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Sure, so the... if I  
5 understand you correctly, you're asking a couple of  
6 different things so one is regarding... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Regarding  
8 injuries... [cross-talk]

9 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...assaults... [cross-  
10 talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...and, and  
12 injuries... [cross-talk]

13 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...and, and... [cross-  
14 talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...correct...

16 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...their injuries as  
17 well. So, there, there are lots of different  
18 mechanisms in place to try to prevent injuries many  
19 are in our policies and procedures. For example, just  
20 as... something as simple as wearing your seat belt  
21 every time that, that vehicle is in motion is a  
22 safety component, right, like so if you're driving or  
23 if you're sitting in the back of an ambulance wearing  
24 a seat belt is something that can prevent you from  
25 being hurt and it... they'll probably chuckle because

2 I, I say hello, wear your seat belt, goodbye, wear  
3 your seat belt so they're probably used to that but  
4 seat belts are something that... are one of the most  
5 important things. We have... we have different things  
6 like in the vehicle let's say as a result actually of  
7 the tragic loss that the world experienced when we  
8 lost our EMT Yadira Arroyo we very soon after that  
9 instituted something called avista break, an avista  
10 break is a device that's inside the ambulance that  
11 allows for the ambulance to be... to be running but not  
12 allow it to go into drive. So, let's say for example  
13 you're, you're driving an ambulance, you have to  
14 stop, you get out of the ambulance so now you're... the  
15 driver is not in the ambulance but the ambulance is  
16 still running, another person could no longer get  
17 into that ambulance and put it in drive, they would  
18 have to put in a special code to unlock it so that it  
19 goes into drive. We are in the process right now of  
20 installing them, we have 38 ambulances that have them  
21 right now, 73 of our newly ordered ambulances have  
22 it, 96 of the next order is coming with it installed  
23 and we just got funding from DCAS to install this  
24 device on all of our ambulances so that work is going  
25 to start very soon and I think that is... you know that

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2 is a, a critical piece of equipment and a way for us  
3 to, to, to thank the supreme sacrifice that Yadira  
4 Arroyo made.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And how about  
6 assaults?

7 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah, as far as  
8 assaults go we have trained all of our people in de-  
9 escalation training and that is a verbal de-  
10 escalation training, all of our people have gone  
11 through that and it really just deals with how to...  
12 how to deescalate a situation. Remember that when EMS  
13 is showing up any first responder is showing up to,  
14 to answer the call for help it is never somebody's  
15 best day, it is always somebody's worst day and  
16 emotions are always high and those particular  
17 situations create those environments where it is  
18 likely that tempers flare or people get excited and  
19 our folks are, are trained on how to... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: I understand...  
21 [cross-talk]

22 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...how to verbally...  
23 [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ... but so why  
25 does... [cross-talk]

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2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...deescalate those...

3 [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...why do... why do  
5 NYPD officers carry weapons and tasers and mace if  
6 you could just... [cross-talk]

7 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yes... [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...offer de-  
9 escalation training?

10 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: So, we... so, so...

11 [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Like, you know I  
13 understand... [cross-talk]

14 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...if I could just...

15 [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...I understand  
17 the... [cross-talk]

18 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...training... I  
20 understand the training you give to E... to, to the EM...  
21 to EMS workers... [cross-talk]

22 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...but do you  
24 think that's, that's efficient enough?

25

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2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I think... again I'm,  
3 I'm a trainer, I think every training... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: No, no it's... the  
5 training is good... [cross-talk]

6 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...put together with  
7 something... [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...training,  
9 training is... [cross-talk]

10 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...something that is  
11 critical, right... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...yeah, training  
13 is important but they're responding to calls, it  
14 could be an emotional disturbed person, you have...  
15 with, with bail reform, we've been seeing how many  
16 people have mental illness... [cross-talk]

17 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Right... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...are back out in  
19 the streets and they are responding those calls, you  
20 have homeless people where I have called EMS... [cross-  
21 talk]

22 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...and they have  
24 to now remove a homeless person from the streets so  
25 if de-escalation training is enough then I would say

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2 the NYPD should have that same training and put away  
3 the guns and put away the tasers and put away the  
4 mace...

5 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: So, I, I appreciate...  
6 [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, I understand  
8 training... [cross-talk]

9 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...I appreciate that...  
10 [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...is good but I  
12 think you're getting away from the subject and...  
13 [cross-talk]

14 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I, I appreciate  
15 that... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...you're giving  
17 me like a Jewish answer.

18 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah... no, I  
19 appreciate... I appreciate your perspective, I, I do.  
20 the de-escalation training that we, we gave our  
21 members were from NYPD, they also get de-escalation...  
22 [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: And that's  
24 great, I think that... I think that's great training  
25 but... [cross-talk]

2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...also get de-  
3 escalation training... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...but you do  
5 agree that when an EMS worker responds to a call,  
6 they put their public safety at risk because they  
7 don't know what kind of call they're responding to?

8 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Of course... [cross-  
9 talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yes, okay.

11 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Nobody is... [cross-  
12 talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, I have  
14 another... [cross-talk]

15 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...disputing that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...question, how  
17 many calls do EMS workers go with non-working  
18 elevators like... especially like in high rise  
19 buildings such as my district that they have to  
20 actually physically carry up the stretcher and come  
21 down with, with a... with a person on the stretcher  
22 without getting help because they cannot ask anyone  
23 else for help except for the two people there in the  
24 ambulance?

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2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: So, I don't... we  
3 don't track how many people go on jobs with broken  
4 elevators... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, maybe that  
6 should be also... I mean something that we... [cross-  
7 talk]

8 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I don't... I don't  
9 have those numbers but what I can tell you is it is  
10 very difficult to walk up very high in a building  
11 that doesn't have... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: I've done it  
13 during hurricane Sandy with water bottles, yeah.

14 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Yeah, it... [cross-  
15 talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, I know water  
17 bottles imagine the... [cross-talk]

18 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: It, it is... [cross-  
19 talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...bringing down  
21 a, a body... a person on the stretcher... [cross-talk]

22 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...it is difficult and  
23 that is one of the challenges that our people take  
24 on, how often that happens I couldn't tell you, I  
25 don't have a number but I can tell you that they can



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2 help... they can call for help, there is help for them  
3 if they need help, they generally... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: If someone is  
5 having a heart attack, right and they have to like to  
6 move quickly, right so they would have to physically  
7 just carry that person down on a stretcher?

8 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: It's not a stretcher  
9 they generally carry down though, we have a stair  
10 chair that allows us to move up and down the steps  
11 with a patient... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: I don't think  
13 that's much... [cross-talk]

14 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...but even... [cross-  
15 talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...of a  
17 difference, yeah... [cross-talk]

18 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...even if it were...  
19 even if that patient did require to be, you know  
20 supine rather than sitting there are other devices  
21 that we have that aren't stretchers to carry it up  
22 and down however patient care is a team sport, right,  
23 so if we have a crew that is in a building, a high  
24 rise anywhere where they... and it doesn't need... even  
25 need to be a, a building that doesn't have an

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2 elevator it could be a building that does have an  
3 elevator, if they need help there is help for them,  
4 they can call for help, they can get reinforcements  
5 from engine companies, to paramedics, to bosses,  
6 there, there's always somebody there that can help.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: What's the...  
8 what's the starting salary of an EMS worker?

9 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: What do you got, 30...  
10 [off mic dialogue]

11 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I think it's 30,  
12 yeah...

13 NAFEESAH NOONAN: 35,200 and... [cross-  
14 talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: 35,000, I  
16 remember the mayor announced a few years ago that he  
17 wants to bring in 100,000 good jobs at 50,000 dollars  
18 so how is 32,000?

19 NAFEESAH NOONAN: 35.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: 35, do you  
21 believe 35,000 is a livable wage?

22 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I mean we... you know  
23 we... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: It's a yes or  
25 no, is it a livable wage, 35,000?

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2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: We, we... [cross-talk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: No... [cross-talk]

4 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...don't... we don't

5 have... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Who said no?

7 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: We don't have the

8 ability to, to make that judgment, we believe...

9 [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Is it a budget

11 issue or is it's a principle issue?

12 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: We believe that our

13 EMS people should be paid accordingly, they should be

14 paid adequately and that is determined by... [cross-

15 talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, I, I

17 remember... [cross-talk]

18 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...OLR... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: ...I... as a member

20 of the City Council and as a... as a member of the BNT

21 I've never heard... I've never heard of a request being

22 made let's put additional funding in the budget

23 because we need to give EMS workers raise, raises and

24 the same thing with the NYPD, I mean I am one person

25 who's going to be testifying at arbitration because

2 43,500, 43,500 dollars starting salary is not fair  
3 market pay and we need to make sure that those people  
4 that we rely on each and every day to save lives... and  
5 I felt it myself like you said and I know what, what  
6 that... what that meant to that individual who was  
7 choking at the table and for these people, the men  
8 and women of, of EMS and the FDNY and also the NYPD I  
9 said we need to step up, you know they're saving  
10 lives every single day and we need to step up so I  
11 know you work for the mayor, I know you work for the  
12 administration, there's only so much you can say but  
13 we need to really step up as a council and make sure  
14 that it's about time that we have pay parity, that  
15 they get the raise that they deserve and we cannot  
16 back down, thank you.

17 [applause]

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Next we'll hear  
19 from Council Member Brannan.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you Chair.  
21 I'm just getting... I'm picking up a lot of cognitive  
22 dissonance here when... you know the other day the  
23 Mayor had a press conference about this coronavirus,  
24 I think he referred to, you know saying that New York  
25 City has the best emergency response team in the

1 nation but then, you know we like to think that we're  
2 the greatest city in the world but other cities are  
3 eating our lunch, I mean I hear stories a lot about  
4 losing EMTs and paramedics to Boston and Philly and I  
5 can't say I blame them when with what they're getting  
6 paid, the fact that they're eating three meals a day  
7 behind a steering wheel and you know I think all of  
8 us see cops, fire fighters, EMTs I mean they all have  
9 different titles, different responsibilities but  
10 ultimately they're all first responders. They... their  
11 job is to run in when others run out, I think we all  
12 agree there but I think they should all be paid on  
13 the same scale. I think what's going on now is that  
14 we're basically pitting first responders against each  
15 other and you also have a... you know the... we talk  
16 about the tale of two cities, you got a tale of two  
17 FDNY's where the fire side is almost exclusively one  
18 race and gender and the EMS side is predominately  
19 women of color, it's just... it's not a good look and I  
20 understand as my colleagues have said I mean your,  
21 your hands are tied but I think this is something  
22 that we could all agree on needs to be fixed for  
23 myriad reasons but I think it... it's got to be done  
24 in... as a partnership, you know in a way that we all  
25

2 agree that this needs to be fixed and we all have to  
3 dedicate ourselves to fixing it. Certainly my  
4 colleagues in the council are, are ready to get it  
5 done, I understand a lot of it, you know has to be  
6 done at the bargaining table whatever it may be but  
7 you know when you have just about every New York City  
8 newspaper coming out and support of this it's, it's  
9 very rare that that happens, that they're all in  
10 agreement that somethings got to get done here. I  
11 wanted to ask two things, when it comes to attrition,  
12 when it comes to morale how much do you think it has  
13 to do with the pay parody issue with morale is low,  
14 what else is it... why else would it be say for that  
15 they're not getting paid what they should?

16 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I think, you know it  
17 is a difficult job, being, being an EMS is a  
18 difficult job and I don't dispute that their pay is  
19 one of the reasons that lead to their morale being  
20 low. Again, it has not been a secret that we, we  
21 think they should be paid appropriately for the job  
22 that they do, they save lives for a living but that  
23 is not within my control. The stuff that is in my  
24 control we have put a lot of work in to, to try to  
25 increase morale, we have put... you know we have made a

2 point of going out to listen to their concerns, to  
3 work with their... the... work with all of our members to  
4 try to make their job a little easier to try to  
5 increase their morale. We've increased our  
6 communication with the unions, we have worked very,  
7 very hard with them, you know one, one of the things  
8 that... when we first came into this... we're, we're  
9 almost, almost a year into these positions and one of  
10 the things that we found to be so critical was that  
11 the members understand that we're here to listen to  
12 them, that we truly do want to make their environment  
13 a better environment and one of the ways we were able  
14 to do that is to immediately go out and do these town  
15 hall events so we went out to, to the town halls we  
16 did probably about, I don't know, ten, ten or so  
17 across the city, chief Suriel and I bought some  
18 barbecue food and went and barbecued for them and  
19 then we spent a few hours there answering their  
20 questions, hearing their concerns, trying to  
21 understand what would make their lives better..

22 [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: More money.

24 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: That, that is one,  
25 that is one of those things, yes. That is one of

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2 those things but there are other things that I have  
3 control over, I do not have control over... [cross-  
4 talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: But have you  
6 gone to the Mayor and said this is a problem we need  
7 to fix this?

8 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: You know in, in a  
9 civil service environment we have a structured...  
10 [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: But who... I, I  
12 understand... [cross-talk]

13 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...it would be  
14 inappropriate... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, have you  
16 gone to the people above you?

17 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...go to the Mayor...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: But have you  
19 gone to the people directly above you and said this  
20 is a real... I'm hearing from the rank and file this is  
21 the most important thing we need to fix... [cross-talk]

22 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Absolutely,  
23 absolutely... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: And what do they  
25 say?



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2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: We, we, we have had  
3 many conversations... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: But what do  
5 they... okay, what do they say?

6 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: There's nobody in a  
7 fire department that doesn't support the idea that  
8 EMS should get their pay... the pay that they... you know  
9 that is due to them for the job that... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, then who is  
11 holding this up?

12 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: This, this is a  
13 collective bargaining issue, this is not something  
14 that we impact, I mean clearly from, from our  
15 testimony there is... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: But if you have...  
17 [cross-talk]

18 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...there is support...  
19 [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: ...if, if there's  
21 two people sitting at a table and they both clearly  
22 want to get this done what's the hold up?

23 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: The, the contracts  
24 are negotiated with OLR, OLR and the unions and they  
25 will... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: No, OLR is just  
3 standing in the way here.

4 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...you know... we, we...  
5 they're going to contract soon so they, they haven't  
6 started negotiating yet... [cross-talk]

7 STEPHEN RUSH: Right, in February but to  
8 be fair, you know negotiations are complex in the  
9 city of New York... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Of course...  
11 [cross-talk]

12 STEPHEN RUSH: ...and as Lillian said  
13 there's approximately 140 different unions... [cross-  
14 talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Just a... [cross-  
16 talk]

17 STEPHEN RUSH: ...and... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: ...a quick  
19 interjection, in the... in the Mayor's proposed budget  
20 this year can you just tell us why though there  
21 wasn't... if we're all sort of in agreement that this  
22 is a problem why did the Mayor's budget not put in a  
23 request or any initiative for additional funding for  
24 EMS pay?

25

2 STEPHEN RUSH: What the city budget is  
3 for under labor reserve is a matter that's done by  
4 the Office of Management and Budget in, in  
5 consultation with the Mayor and consultation with  
6 OLR, dealing with also available funding for the city  
7 so, you know there are city... there are challenges the  
8 city faces you know from the state budget that was  
9 just, just announced so there's always going to be  
10 those kind of issues out there and as I said or was  
11 beginning to say there are many different unions,  
12 each union feels their members deserve more money and  
13 we're not disputing that but we're just saying that  
14 it's complex and the compensation issues that arise  
15 from these create additional funding needs that the  
16 city would have to address... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: But in the past  
18 for example, you know when the grass was getting too  
19 high in the parks and that was an acknowledged  
20 problem the Mayor's budget included initiatives to  
21 increase head count or, or pay perhaps of that  
22 particular job title, I mean this is something that  
23 has happened before in the Mayor's budget... [cross-  
24 talk]

2 STEPHEN RUSH: Well the Mayor's budget...  
3 the Mayor... this Mayor since 2014 has increased the  
4 EMS head count by 1,000 positions, he spent over 62  
5 million dollars as part of that in addition to the  
6 capital spending that Lillian mentioned so there's a  
7 significant investment by the city in EMS. In terms  
8 of compensation those are bargained across the table  
9 and generally speaking, I've been doing... involved in  
10 negotiations for 30 plus years most of them are  
11 resolved perhaps not to everyone's satisfaction but  
12 generally are resolved at the end of the day and  
13 we're hopeful in this round they'll be resolved in a...  
14 in a better fashion for EMS but again its complex,  
15 there's no easy answer to say we'll pay, pay them the  
16 same as this, it creates other issues for the city to  
17 be fair to OLR and OMB who are not here.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yeah, I, I don't  
19 think any of us are disputing that this is complex  
20 but I think the fact that we all seem to be in  
21 agreement its got to get done, where there's a will  
22 there's a way, we got to get it... we have to get it  
23 done. What, what are your thoughts on the idea of  
24 taking EMS out of FDNY creating its own department?

25 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: We... [cross-talk]

2 STEPHEN RUSH: We would not want to do  
3 that, we think EMS is integral to fire, we think... we  
4 believe... I come from the fire side of the department  
5 but when EMS came into the department I worked with  
6 them alongside and have enjoyed a good relationship  
7 with them, we believe it's benefited both sides and  
8 perhaps its exposed some issues that are out there  
9 now but we certainly think the level of training, the  
10 commitment from the Fire Department from what we're  
11 able to accomplish, extra stations, extra personnel.  
12 When EMS was part of HHC they were running 504 tours,  
13 we're running about 850 tours now that we put out in  
14 the street every day so the city has recognized... and  
15 especially through the advocacy of the fire  
16 department the value of EMS to New Yorkers and we're  
17 doing our part what we can do to help that... move that  
18 along.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: No, I just think  
20 we need to put our money where our mouths are, I  
21 think saying we value them is... we... of course we value  
22 them... [cross-talk]

23 STEPHEN RUSH: But it's... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: When I call 9-1-  
25 1, I don't care who comes I just need the first guy

2 to come but saying we value them and actually showing  
3 that we value them is two different things. Thank  
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and now  
6 we'll hear from Council Member Rodriguez.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. So,  
8 I'm here even though I'm not a member of this  
9 Committee but just as a Council Member because I was  
10 a teacher for 13 years so I started my salary at  
11 27,000 dollars in '93 and even when I left my salary  
12 went from 27 to 67,000 dollars in 2009 and we also  
13 lived those years where many workers work without  
14 contracts for seven, nine, ten years so I... again I  
15 have lived that experience, I also have seen  
16 experience with the men and women of the EMS and I  
17 know that, you know a few years ago my mother almost  
18 died at the Diamond Houses, it was... you know the men  
19 and women, the EMS who first arrived there who first  
20 were able to provide her the support that she needed  
21 until she was taken to New York Presbyterian Hospital  
22 so no doubt that the work that they do is so  
23 important and I don't think that we as a city is  
24 paying them based on what the job, the services that  
25 they provide. If they are one family with police

2 officer and fire fighter why, why are waiting so long  
3 to have an equal salary, they save lives. As the men  
4 and women that work in the fire department that we  
5 have a lot of respect for them and the police  
6 officer, my brother used to be on the 42<sup>nd</sup>, we always  
7 need to provide the men and women, you know to  
8 support their need and also the quality... the level of  
9 education. I know that I have one of my colleagues  
10 who is also an EMS in Normandy, he had his BA in  
11 biology, you know he has his level of education and  
12 there's many other members of EMS that you know that  
13 they started, you know going to nursing school, going  
14 to medical school, going into bio so they are not  
15 coming without any level of education and I think  
16 that, you know we need to put everything in context  
17 right now to get it done and, and, and of course I  
18 just added my voice of support to call for the city  
19 of New York or our friend Mayor De Blasio, two more  
20 years... less than two years, you are doing a great  
21 job, you know negotiating the contract, let's get  
22 this contract done, let's be sure that they get equal  
23 pay, they do the same job, they save the same life as  
24 the fire fighter, as a police officer and there  
25 should not be asking, you know we are not... and those

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2 of who are supporting we are not begging, we are not  
3 asking for favors, we're demanding respect, you know  
4 today is one of them, tomorrow it can be my daughter  
5 or son or anybody else, you know who decides to make  
6 the contribution in society by being the first  
7 responder, you know when they see life threatening in  
8 the streets, in the apartments that my mother went  
9 through. So, you know like that's my message, you  
10 know to all of us and my question is then do you  
11 feel, do you agree that it should be equal pay to the  
12 men and women of EMS as the fire fighters and the  
13 police officers?

14 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I mean I, I feel...  
15 you know first responders... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Say yes or no,  
17 do you feel that... [cross-talk]

18 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...again... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: ...EMS should  
20 have the same salary as fire fighters and police  
21 officers?

22 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: First responders  
23 should be paid appropriately for the work they do,  
24 yes.

25



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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Do you feel  
3 that they should have the same salary not 14 years  
4 making 48,000 dollars?

5 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I, I believe they  
6 should be paid appropriately for the work they do.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But we don't...  
8 [cross-talk]

9 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: What, what that is,  
10 is going to be up to OLR and up to the unions.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But do you  
12 agree, you as a person who is working with them and  
13 you who are helping in negotiating the contract  
14 because if decision makers they got the higher level  
15 but you hope to be part of this conversation, do you  
16 feel that they should have equal pay?

17 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I would like to see  
18 their pay increase, yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Equal pay?

20 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: I'm not going to  
21 determine what they should get, I'd just like..

22 [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Okay, but you,  
24 you are not... [cross-talk]

25

2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...I'd just like to  
3 see their pay... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: ...you are not  
5 there advocating... [cross-talk]

6 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...increase... [cross-  
7 talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: ...for them to  
9 be paid as equal, same salary to entry, same salary  
10 on promotion, same salary when they work their ten  
11 year as fire fighters and police officers?

12 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: That has to... that  
13 has to be determined, I, I want to see their pay  
14 increase based on the job... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: I know...  
16 [cross-talk]

17 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...that they do...  
18 [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: we're now back  
20 and forth, we are advocating and I'm here supporting  
21 the Chair, supporting the members of the committee  
22 and they should know that they have their back up, if  
23 today there's a service done in New York City do you...  
24 how much do you think that the men and women of the  
25 EMS make, I'm pretty sure that most New Yorkers

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2 regardless of the color of their skin, regardless of  
3 their social economic background they don't believe  
4 this they would think that's a shame, the salary that  
5 they have right now so let's be together and our fair  
6 Mayor De Blasio let's bring it to the table, two more  
7 years, let's negotiate the contract equal work, equal  
8 pay.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you Council  
10 Member, you were a teacher, you sound like a football  
11 coach. I just have a very final and, and less  
12 exciting questions. Can you just go through the  
13 numbers for the EMS training class, of the 180 member  
14 training class what is the breakdown for EMTs and  
15 paramedics, are they included in the same number or..  
16 you say you have capacity for three 180 person  
17 classes..

18 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Well there... those  
19 are all EMTs.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: What's the... [cross-  
21 talk]

22 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Or potential..  
23 [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: ...capacity... [cross-  
25 talk]

2 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: ...EMTs based on which  
3 class it is.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: What's the capacity  
5 for paramedics?

6 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Right now, we're  
7 trying 90, 90 is the most we've been able to fit into  
8 our training facility.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And you're saying  
10 both of those are at capacity with the current  
11 facilities?

12 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: That's correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Why, why are the  
14 percentages and number of ambulance tours then  
15 decreasing if we're at our training capacity?

16 LILLIAN BONSIGNORE: Why are the tours...  
17 [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yeah, the Mayor's  
19 management report says despite the department's  
20 aggressive efforts to hire additional EMTs and  
21 paramedics the peak number of ambulances in service  
22 per day dropped 2.5 percent from 472 in FY 2018 to  
23 460 in 2019, the five-year average was 444.

24 STEPHEN RUSH: Yeah, so there's two  
25 things going on at the same time, one an extra good

2 thing was the Mayor added 1,000 more lines to the  
3 budget over the last five years, the other depending  
4 on your viewpoint is that a promotional opportunity  
5 to go to the fire fighter results in a, a large loss  
6 of numbers and I think Lillian mentioned 1,200 or so..  
7 [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, we increased  
9 head count... [cross-talk]

10 STEPHEN RUSH: So at the same time we  
11 were increasing head count we were also losing people  
12 on the fire side so it's, it's made it much more  
13 difficult so we, we have a lot of vacancies and as a  
14 result, result of those vacancies you can't always  
15 cover that with overtime so there.. as a result you  
16 have less tours.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So.. [cross-talk]

18 STEPHEN RUSH: Once we catch up in the  
19 head count which is going to take a couple of years..  
20 [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I, I respect that..  
22 [cross-talk]

23 STEPHEN RUSH: ...that should even out..  
24 [cross-talk]

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: ...we, we added the  
3 head count and that's great but the end benefit to  
4 the public is EMT staff, the ambulance tours that are  
5 in the street, if the head count increase isn't  
6 working is it possible to stick the resources that  
7 went, financial resources that went to increasing the  
8 head count to something different, you know sort of  
9 like the, the stick around count or... [cross-talk]

10 STEPHEN RUSH: We... well... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: ...a raise for  
12 example.

13 STEPHEN RUSH: Well we, we have... we've...  
14 we're addressing that separately as we, we talked  
15 about the Fort Totten capacity expansion, we expect  
16 hopefully in the next 12 months to expand the EMT  
17 class size to 240 and we also expect, we're hoping in  
18 the next 12 months to expand paramedic class size to  
19 120 I believe. So, we are at this... we're doing what  
20 we can to address the needs to grow EMS at the same  
21 time we're struggling with filling positions.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Now... well on the  
23 paramedic side I, I think that does add to our stick  
24 around count but is there anything to, to... reason...  
25 any reason we should accept the fact that adding the

2 number of EMTs per class is going to add to that  
3 stick around count as well or are we just assuming  
4 that we're going to need those extra 60 people to  
5 backfill the people that already left?

6 STEPHEN RUSH: Well I think one thing the  
7 department has to take a serious look at is the  
8 notice of examination for fire fighter and I think  
9 that's under review now and what is the terms of  
10 service that they have to remain in EMS because that  
11 is a challenge that we face especially of the  
12 training academy, EMS operations from the turn of  
13 personnel who may come in and out to become fire  
14 fighters.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: What, what are some  
16 of the... I mean you're, you're, you're begin... you're  
17 going to begin negotiations for the next contract  
18 with the EMT unions and supervisor union, what are  
19 some of the concessions the city is looking for,  
20 obviously the union is going to ask for a raise and  
21 you're going to offer them less and you're going to  
22 suggest that they make some concessions and give  
23 backs in order to arrive somewhere in the middle, I  
24 think since this is a matter of, of public safety we

2 would like to know what some of those concessions  
3 that you'd seek are.

4 STEPHEN RUSH: From... concessions from the  
5 union?

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yeah.

7 STEPHEN RUSH: When we're going into this  
8 round of bargaining which is obviously set through  
9 OLR and negotiations with all the unions including  
10 DC37, the teachers union, there is a pattern that  
11 they've established that they'd like to pay across  
12 the board however when they go into this we try to  
13 work with the union to come up with perhaps creative  
14 ways to finance additional compensation for the  
15 membership so what those are, those changes come out  
16 to be comes out of negotiation but we're not... there's  
17 no... to my knowledge there is no concessions... [cross-  
18 talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I understand..  
20 [cross-talk]

21 STEPHEN RUSH: ...being required by us at  
22 this point but as you want to advance salaries to a  
23 higher level that may be part of the negotiation.

24 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is part of the  
25 negotiation the cost of training new members?



2 STEPHEN RUSH: That could be a factor in  
3 this, yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Another words if  
5 we... if we maybe don't need the 240 new slots in each  
6 academy class is that a cost savings for the  
7 department that could otherwise justify giving the  
8 union the raises that they seek and, and the raises  
9 that the Council is frankly hopeful for?

10 STEPHEN RUSH: There's lots of things  
11 that we could look at and we have looked at, we look  
12 at it with not just EMS but the fire fighter's union,  
13 with, you know the fire officers union, we try to see  
14 if there are ways that we as a department can offer  
15 OLR and O... OMB ideas that we think can be  
16 productivity related.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I think that's all  
18 I have for you, I think that's all we have so I'd  
19 like to thank the four of you folks for being here  
20 today and with that we'll call our next panel in, in  
21 about 60 seconds while we all clear out.

22 [off mic dialogue]

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The next panel just  
24 to que everyone up we're going to have Oren Barzilay;

2 Vincent Variale; Joseph Pataky; AJ HERNANDEZ

3 Hernandez and Anthony Almojera.

4 [off mic dialogue]

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Can we get an extra  
6 seat on the panel, is that possible? So, because we  
7 have a very long depth chart of testifiers we're  
8 going to ask everyone to try to keep it under three  
9 minutes although if you give me a wink and a nod  
10 I'll, I'll let you go a little longer. By the way the  
11 best reaction today was when Council Member Brannan  
12 mentioned eating three meals a day behind the  
13 steering wheel and the woman underneath the threshold  
14 over there gave me like the most incredible look  
15 like, like I summed up... I summed up the, the, the  
16 misery of her life... well Council Member Brannan did  
17 in one second, so I guess in no particular order I'll  
18 start with Oren because your name is on top here.

19 OREN BARZILAY: Good afternoon Chairman  
20 Borelli and distinguished members of the Fire and  
21 Emergency Management Committee. My name is Oren  
22 Barzilay, I am the President of Local 2507 of  
23 District Council 37 representing the uniformed EMTs,  
24 paramedics and fire inspectors. On behalf of over  
25 4,000 members of the EMS Bureau of the New York City

2 Fire Department I want to thank you for introducing  
3 Resolution 1062 and Intro 1731. I also want to thank  
4 Council Member Miller, the Civil Service and Labor  
5 Committee, black and the women's caucus, you have  
6 been a champion for our members and we thank you for  
7 taking this important step to help force the city to  
8 look at the real attrition rate of our members by  
9 including those who leave to go to the fire side of  
10 the department and to call for pay equity for first  
11 responders. The FDNY has two bureaus, one is almost  
12 exclusively white and male, and one is predominately  
13 of color with the largest number of women of any  
14 first responders in the city. Both sides provide  
15 lifesaving emergency services, you can guess which  
16 side is paid more, given more resources, respect and  
17 recognition. Pay equity is not just a lofty goal that  
18 the city should aspire to, it is a fundamental right  
19 the absence of which causes great adversity and  
20 hardship significantly diminishing the quality of  
21 life of those who are subjected to disparate and  
22 unfair pay practices. Our members risk their lives  
23 every day just like our brothers and sisters of the  
24 fire side, many who are here today to show support.  
25 We, we should be paid and recognized as the first

2 responders we are. By way of example, three days ago  
3 the Mayor issued an advisory that laid out the city's  
4 preparedness for the deadly coronavirus that has  
5 spread to 16 countries including the United States.  
6 He boasted we have the best emergency response team  
7 in the nation, guess who's members are going to be  
8 the frontlines of this life threatening fight  
9 providing the medical support, expertise and skill to  
10 protect over eight million New Yorkers from the  
11 deadly... from this deadly attack, it's these EMTs and  
12 paramedics that are facing life threats each and  
13 every day. Of course they will not add additional pay  
14 offered to our members for the exposure to this  
15 deadly disease, there will be no additional pay  
16 offered to our members for the additional training  
17 and preparedness needed for this and while our  
18 members are most vulnerable to exposure of this and  
19 other viruses, not only are they underpaid but  
20 they're only given 12 paid sick days per year unlike  
21 their colleagues on the fire side of the same  
22 department that, that have unlimited sick pay. There  
23 is no rational explanation for this and the implicit  
24 bias of under railing... undervaluing our members  
25 because of who they are has to stop. I want to thank

2 this committee again as well as the many fire  
3 organizations and EMS organizations from other cities  
4 who have come out today to show their support. Thank  
5 you. I have other comments that I would like to  
6 respond to some of the questions you had later on.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I'll, I'll let you  
8 do it after everyone goes.

9 OREN BARZILAY: Yep.

10 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Vincent?

11 VINCENT VARIALE: Good afternoon Chairman  
12 Borelli and distinguished members of the Fire and  
13 Emergency Management Committee. My name is Vincent  
14 Variale and I'm President of Local 3621 representing  
15 uniformed EMS officers. On behalf of the Lieutenants  
16 and Captains of the EMS Bureau of the FDNY I want to  
17 thank you for giving me a chance to speak today and  
18 for taking a big step forward for our pipe... fight for  
19 pay equity with the introduction of Resolution 1062  
20 and Intro 1731. I also want to thank the Committee on  
21 Civil Service and Labor and its Chair Daneek Miller  
22 as well as the black, Latino, Asian and women  
23 caucuses and other EMS and fire... FDNY or... I'm sorry,  
24 Fire Department agencies that are here, here with us  
25 today. As you know on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 in a

2 groundbreaking editorial in the New York Times  
3 editorial board endorsed our fight for pay equity.  
4 Given the race and gender differences between the  
5 mostly white and male fire side and the mostly non-  
6 white and largely female EMS side of the FDNY saying  
7 that New York's Emergency Medical Service members  
8 should be paid salaries and benefits far closer if  
9 not equal to the city's first responders, that's what  
10 we're owed, the tiny force of people providing New  
11 Yorkers with critical medical care in their hour of  
12 need. The Times further stated as a department role  
13 in emergency changes and.. becomes a significant  
14 provider of medical care the salary and the benefits  
15 of its EMS workforce must also evolve and that in  
16 addition to a rising workload paramedics, EMTs and  
17 EMS officers regularly encounter many hazards  
18 similar, similar faced by those on the police and  
19 fire. A 2013 university of Maryland study using data  
20 from the Department of Labor found that the injury  
21 rate of EMTs, paramedics and their officers is three  
22 times higher than that of the national average of the  
23 general population. In March James Booth, the former  
24 Chief of EMS said during his testimony before a City  
25 Council Committee that assaults on EMS by the public

2 had increased by nearly 50 percent between the years  
3 of 2015 and 2018 perhaps this explains why everyday  
4 men and women choose not to join or remain in the  
5 FDNY EMS that along with the low pay. They realize  
6 the low pay and the way that we are treated in this  
7 city despite the sacrifices we make and the hard work  
8 and risk we take or even if an applicant accepts a  
9 job with an EMS bureau they are often forced to start  
10 looking for a way out because they are put into  
11 financial hardship. This city should not be creating  
12 jobs that result in increase in poverty, how do you  
13 think this impacts the quality of services our  
14 members can provide? Would you even ever imagine that  
15 this is how the city of New York where ground zero on  
16 9/11 took place treats their first responders or at  
17 least those who are predominately of color and  
18 largely female? When EMS first responders are paid  
19 less than what it costs to live in the city, they  
20 serve it impacts the morale of the bureau, it also  
21 causes massive turnover. Ironically one of the  
22 reasons the administration says they can fix this  
23 problem... or they can't fix this problem is that it  
24 will cost too much. However the training and  
25 recruitment cost in bringing EMS first responders

2 into the department only to have them leave in a year  
3 or two is more expensive, what is the value of  
4 expertise, longevity and experience of EMS personnel  
5 responding to city's public when they need lifesaving  
6 services? The city ignores those members who leave  
7 EMS Bureau to go to the fire side of the department  
8 when it considers the attrition rate underscores why  
9 these problems persist. How long will the city ignore  
10 and corrupt the facts and when will this  
11 administration come to the table and be part of the  
12 solution? Today's legislation and resolution will be  
13 a step forward in ensuring, ensuring this happens  
14 sooner rather than later. I thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you very much  
16 and yeah that, that was the question I was trying to  
17 ask the Chief myself, what is... if they value it in  
18 terms of mentoring interns, what is the dollar value  
19 on it and they didn't want to answer so...

20 OREN BARZILAY: I totally agree.

21 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Joseph?

22 JOSEPH PATAKY: Good afternoon Chair  
23 Borelli and committee members. My name is Joseph  
24 Pataky and I'm the President of the EMS Superior  
25 Officers Association of the FDNY representing the



2 deputy chiefs and the division chiefs in the Bureau  
3 of EMS. Thank you for allowing me to speak today in  
4 support of Resolution 1062 calling for pay parity  
5 within the FDNY and Intro, Intro 1731 requiring  
6 accurate reporting of data to properly capture  
7 attrition of EMS members. I would also like to thank  
8 this committee for consistently showing up to support  
9 these issues on behalf of EMS first responders, it  
10 shows that you understand the value of all first  
11 responders, ensuring we are fairly compensated to  
12 protect this great city. I also want to thank Council  
13 Member Miller and the Civil Service and Labor  
14 Committee for their leadership. When you're  
15 undervalued it creates a vicious cycle that causes  
16 several unintended consequences. Obviously being  
17 underpaid is demoralizing to our members and causes  
18 them the additional stress of trying to make ends  
19 meet in one of the most expensive cities in the  
20 world. As my colleagues have discussed a long-term  
21 impact of underpayment is the increased turnover of  
22 personnel but what hasn't been measured is that  
23 underpayment also discourages qualified applicants  
24 from accepting a position as an EMS first responder  
25 in the first place. Just three days ago a headline in

2 the New York Post read Bruce Springsteen's son chose  
3 fire fighting over being an EMT in New York. Now we  
4 don't know what went into his decision, but we do  
5 know what the public hears. The Post quoted a veteran  
6 FDNY member who joked, even Springsteen knows nobody  
7 wants to go to EMS, it's probably a smart move. Is  
8 this the image and the reputation this administration  
9 wants to maintain about EMS first responders in the  
10 greatest city in the world? I again would like to  
11 thank this committee for taking the first steps of  
12 calling for pay parity and passing legislation to  
13 ensure we can properly capture the attrition crisis.  
14 I also want to thank the many organizations and the  
15 members from the entire FDNY who are here today in  
16 solidarity to support these efforts. As the saying  
17 goes a rising tide lifts all boats, by ensuring fair  
18 pay for EMS first responders we ensure better  
19 treatment for all first responders. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, Anthony?

21 ANTHONY ALMOJERA: Hello Chairman  
22 Borelli, the New York City Council and other  
23 distinguished guests. My name is Anthony Almojera,  
24 I'm the Vice President of Local 3621, the EMS  
25 Officers Union. For the past two decades we have been

2 coming here explaining the trials and tribulations of  
3 New York City's EMS system, the common thread in all  
4 those meetings have been retention and salary. For  
5 two decades we have told you the adverse impact on  
6 the citizens of New York this causes. In the last  
7 four years alone as of 2019, a full 68 percent of our  
8 workforce has left for other jobs. What the Chief  
9 didn't mention was all those that leave for NYPD,  
10 sanitation, etcetera not just to fire. It's just not  
11 them leaving to fire, they didn't leave because they  
12 did not like EMS, they left because they couldn't  
13 afford to stay. Upon speaking to a majority of them,  
14 they left because the salary in those two decades has  
15 not met any type of livable standard let alone one  
16 for New York City. The practice of medicine is one  
17 that only gets better with experience, what the Mayor  
18 and city has not done is create a civil service  
19 version of... I'm sorry, what the Mayor and city has  
20 done is create a civil service version of hunger  
21 games with EMS workers as the tribute. The average  
22 current EMS worker has four years or less of  
23 experience, we are street doctors, and nobody here  
24 would go to a hospital if we were told... if we told  
25 them every doctor in there has less than four years'

2 experience. As recent events such as the coronavirus  
3 has shown us it will be EMS on the frontline treating  
4 and containing it, we are the canaries of the medical  
5 system and far too often we fly into the blind  
6 because we know our sacrifice will help protect and  
7 save those lives of the people of this great city.  
8 The EMS workers deserve to know that this sacrifice  
9 they make that they and their families will be fully  
10 compensated, the thank you's are nice but a thank you  
11 and \$2.75 will get me on the subway. The citizens of  
12 New York and all those who visit deserve a fully  
13 invested, compensated and independent EMS workforce.  
14 Thank you for your time.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and  
16 finally in this panel, AJ HERNANDEZ Hernandez.

17 AJ HERNANDEZ: Good afternoon Chair and  
18 Committee members and thank you for the opportunity  
19 to speak to you. My name is AJ HERNANDEZ Hernandez.  
20 On March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 my niece Yadira Arroyo was  
21 tragically killed in the line of duty working as a  
22 first responder. Yadira was an EMT in the FDNY, she  
23 proudly served 14 years of her life to the FDNY yet  
24 as a mother of five she barely earned enough money to  
25 cover her family's cost of living. Being a single

2 parent with five children, boys was hard enough,  
3 trying to keep a roof over her head and food on the  
4 table was even harder so she did what every member of  
5 the EMS family do, work extra shifts. I admire her  
6 tenacity, her devotion, her braveness in the face of  
7 life-threatening situations and you all bared witness  
8 to the unselfishness of her action when she put her  
9 life on the line to save others. She died a hero,  
10 this is what heroes do, this is what the FDNY, the  
11 NYPD and they're still unrecognized, EMTs do yet her  
12 family was not entitled to death benefits as her fire  
13 side colleagues would have been. She loved her job  
14 but she like her colleagues were not given the pay,  
15 the resources or support she deserved, the words keep  
16 resonating over and over, I love what I do but I need  
17 to put food on my table. The long hours having to do  
18 an extra shift so that I can make enough money to  
19 support my family is also keeping me away from them,  
20 I work long hours to make ends meet. This is exactly  
21 why my niece Yadira after completing her assigned  
22 tour of duty did. How much time does the city need to  
23 right these injustices? This year will mark the third  
24 year of her passing, it took Yadira's union plotting  
25 the state to pass a law to force the city to

2 automatically extend death benefits to EMS responders  
3 compared to what they do for other first responders.

4 Being an EMT doesn't take away from the dangers of  
5 rescuing people in a fire or aiding a gunshot wound,  
6 it doesn't diminish the dangers that they encounter  
7 on a day to day basis but when will these first  
8 responders be paid the wages they deserve for the  
9 risk they take? It is heartbreaking to learn that the  
10 excuses for not giving pay parity for EMS first  
11 responders compared to fire first responders is of  
12 their job is different which exposes us to a much  
13 bigger argument, yes, there is no argument that their  
14 job is different. It means that they must possess an  
15 expertise that will surpass common knowledge in times  
16 of adversity. In the medical field when your work is  
17 different you get compensated for the difference, for  
18 standing out, for having the skills while continuing  
19 to be a valuable and respected member of the team.

20 Now I question, is the loss of my niece's life  
21 different from the loss of a fire fighter's life? My  
22 niece saved lives, how is that different from what a  
23 fire fighter does? The Fire Department is one  
24 department with many responders within it, all of  
25 them deserve the care, respect, and fair treatment.

2 It is long overdue, pay equity is an earned  
3 fundamental right, please do not let these  
4 intricacies be forced that the... that deviate you from  
5 doing what is right. These angels on wheels like  
6 Valkyries from the heavens have proven themselves  
7 over and over again, they're an integral part of our  
8 society that is built on the strongest and the  
9 bravest, let's stand together and become a force not  
10 to be reckoned with. I wanted to thank the Committee  
11 for introducing the resolution to call for pay equity  
12 and legislation to get accurate data to show the  
13 impact of unpaying... underpaying these brave first  
14 responders that make up the EMS Bureau of the FDNY  
15 and I thank you.

16 [applause]

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, just to  
18 give Oren time to offer a different set of answers  
19 than the ones we heard before by the administration  
20 please.

21 OREN BARZILAY: Yes, there's a few things  
22 the department stated that they added over 1,000  
23 people to our lines, they didn't add 1,000 people  
24 they replaced 1,000 people. They're losing more than  
25 they're able to rehire and I'm glad that they

2 admitted that they're leaving for various reasons  
3 because all those reasons add to one reason, it's the  
4 money, you know this is... this is a public safety  
5 issue. The Bronx for instance is the busies borough,  
6 we have people, units and supervisors from Queens,  
7 Manhattan report to the Bronx... respond to the Bronx  
8 every day because we can't have... we don't have enough  
9 manpower. So, not only we don't have the skills  
10 because of lack of experience we don't even have the  
11 manpower so we're taking resources from Queens,  
12 Manhattan to, to assist the Bronx yet leaving other  
13 areas unattended and its due to your committee, last  
14 year when we had a hearing across the street that the  
15 city is going to budget five new stations in the  
16 Bronx and I thank you for that. This problem with the  
17 promotion began because they created that promotion,  
18 we didn't always have a promotion just like they  
19 created it they can close it. They say it's not true  
20 that EMS protocols don't impact patient outcomes, its  
21 choice and selections of protocols depends on the  
22 experience as the University of Pennsylvania  
23 confirms, more experience equals better patient  
24 outcome. They say they increased from 500 to 800  
25 tours, that's not adding our people, that's bringing



2 in more private vendors, we haven't grown in years.  
3 The FDNY did its own study about patient outcome,  
4 when there's an EMS officer on scene cardiac arrest  
5 outcome is, is much better than without an EMS  
6 officer on scene. Sorry Vinnie. Last week I attended  
7 a state EMS conference up in Albany, the state issued  
8 a report on EMS, it's devastating what the pay has  
9 done to our industry, it's killing all, the entire  
10 EMS sector. Our city will set the standards for the  
11 future of this industry and I thank you for your  
12 time.

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Oren I have  
14 question, what was the final base pay for EMT Arroyo?

15 OREN BARZILAY: It was in... 50...

16 AJ HERNANDEZ: Her last year with  
17 overtime, she was a 14-year veteran with overtime she  
18 made 69,000 dollars.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: What was... what was  
20 her base pay?

21 OREN BARZILAY: Her base pay was 50.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, it's safe... it's  
23 safe to say that a first responders was killed in the  
24 line of duty making a base pay that's equal to or

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2 even or less than some starting salaries of other  
3 city workers?

4 OREN BARZILAY: Absolutely, yes.

5 AJ HERNANDEZ: The, the starting salaries  
6 of other agencies is 45,000, we have to stay here for  
7 14 years just to reach 49,000.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Do you have any  
9 question Justin? Thank you, guys.

10 OREN BARZILAY: Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: The next panel will  
12 be Khalid Taylor; Crystel Cadett; Jose Prosper and  
13 Michael McNeil, MacNeil. Can you just all state your  
14 name really quick so I know who we're missing?

15 CRYSTEL CADETT: Crystel Cadett.

16 JOSE PROSPER: Jose Prosper.

17 MICHAEL MACNEIL: Michael MacNeil.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there anyone  
19 from the Vulcan Society that was wishing to speak who  
20 filled out a form?

21 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: They had to leave.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I'm sorry.

23 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: They had to leave.

24 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Oh, okay, okay.

25 [off mic dialogue]

2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay. So, Crystel  
3 we'll, we'll start with you if that's okay?

4 CRYSTEL CADETT: Good afternoon Chair and  
5 Committee members and thank you for the opportunity  
6 to speak to you. My name is Crystel Cadett and I have  
7 been a paramedic for, for the past eight years in the  
8 FDNY. I love my job and I put my heart and soul into  
9 it however it is a stressful job that is only made  
10 worse by being underpaid and undervalued. There have  
11 been many instances where I have missed out on family  
12 functions over the years in order to work overtime  
13 and ensure I make ends meet. I have a disabled parent  
14 at home, and I can't always care for him personally  
15 because I have to make sure I financially support the  
16 household. Even my former marriage was strained due,  
17 due to my lack of presence at home. I was hurt and  
18 confused when I heard the Mayor say that we are... we  
19 are paid so poorly because our work is different, I  
20 work shoulder to shoulder with my brothers and  
21 sisters who are police officers and fire fighters, we  
22 all work together as first responders to perform  
23 lifesaving services for New Yorkers. And yes the work  
24 is just as challenging; I'm spit on, attacked by  
25 patients, exposed to infectious pathogens and other

1  
2 life threatening diseases, I'm required to respond to  
3 the life and death situations on a daily basis, I  
4 have to go into unsafe buildings, homes where there's  
5 domestic violence and yes, as a paramedic I have to  
6 go into on... into burning buildings. In fact, I have  
7 gone into a burning building to save the life of a  
8 fire fighter who was injured and needed medical  
9 assistance. So, please don't say our work is not as  
10 hazardous or challenging. As EMS first responders we  
11 risk our lives for our fellow New Yorkers and our  
12 fellow first responders, yet we're not treated as  
13 equals when it comes to pay, respect or recognition.  
14 Perhaps the city worries that paying us fair wages  
15 will be too costly but improving the morality and  
16 efficiency of EMS workforce will save money. At what  
17 price tag do you put on ensuring those providing  
18 lifesaving services will have the proper resources to  
19 do the best job they can. I look forward to the day I  
20 can do my job saving lives without having to worry  
21 about how I'm going to afford to stay alive myself.  
22 Thank you for introducing the resolution that calls  
23 for pay parity for first responders in the FDNY and  
24 thank you for introducing legislation that would help

2 us better track the impacts of underpayment on the  
3 bureau.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, Jose?

5 JOSE PROSPER: Dear Chair Borelli and  
6 Committee members. My name is Jose Prosper, I am a  
7 fire fighter and I am the President of the FDNY  
8 Hispanic Society. Thank you for allowing me to speak  
9 today in support of Resolution 1062 calling for pay  
10 parity within the FDNY and Intro 1731 requiring  
11 accurate reporting of data to properly capture  
12 attrition of EMS members. Thank you to this committee  
13 and thank you to the Committee on Civil Service and  
14 Labor for being a leader in fighting for pay equity  
15 and thank you for introducing legislation to capture  
16 that that will properly reflect how serious the  
17 problem with attrition is, is for EMS Bureau in the  
18 FDNY. I would like to put a personal face to what my  
19 colleagues have testified today. I started in this  
20 department as an EMS first responder, I love my work  
21 saving lives and providing medical services to New  
22 Yorkers, but I couldn't stay because I couldn't make  
23 ends meet working in EMS. In 2000 I was making 28,000  
24 dollars of... after over 20... of over two years on the  
25 job so I left, I went to the fire side of the

2 department. When I started on the fire side even  
3 though I had no experience firefighting I was given  
4 an almost 30 percent bump in pay. I see friends and  
5 family, my daughter is an EMS, struggling to have a  
6 passion... to have a passion to provide care for EMS  
7 first responders and yes, they can't support  
8 themselves in the position. The need for pay parody  
9 is really.. it's a real thing, I cannot express how  
10 hurtful it is to take on the risk EMS first  
11 responders take on and have to face the stress every  
12 day on the job only to come home and face the stress  
13 of poverty. The city of New York should not be, be  
14 creating jobs that cause poverty to brave men and  
15 women who save lives every day. It is very  
16 discouraging to realize that 22 years later the  
17 problem is... still has not been taken serious by the  
18 city. I thank this Committee for understanding how  
19 serious this problem is and for taking the first  
20 steps in calling for an end of unfair wages to EMS  
21 first responders.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and  
23 Michael finally.

24 MICHAEL MACNEIL: Good afternoon Chair  
25 Borelli and the distinguished members of the Fire and

2 Emergency Management Committee. My name is Michael  
3 MacNeil, I'm the President of the Boston EMS Division  
4 of the Boston Police and Patrolman's Association. I  
5 represent the uniformed EMTs and paramedics in the  
6 city of Boston, we are a third service EMS agency.  
7 I'm here to speak in support of the long overdue  
8 legislation and resolution to ensure pay equity for  
9 FDNY EMS. Police officers, fire fighters and EMTs may  
10 all have different titles and responsibilities but  
11 make no mistake about it we are all first responders  
12 and as first responders we all share challenging  
13 jobs, we risk our lives to protect the public and we  
14 also depend on each other to protect the citizens who  
15 rely on us for life saving services. As such we are  
16 equally deserving of equal respect and equal  
17 compensation for our sacrifices. Our members work  
18 shoulder to shoulder in the most challenging and  
19 austere environments, underpaying any of us endangers  
20 all of us. Boston and New York are two cities that  
21 have a lot in common, both cities are filled with  
22 prideful residents proud of their city, rich in  
23 history and flourishing economies. However, the  
24 population of Boston is just under 700,000, the  
25 population of New York City is over eight million.

2 You would think that the pay and the benefits of  
3 working for a city like New York would be attractive  
4 yet we, we constantly get inquiries from New York  
5 City's EMTs and paramedics who can't make ends meet  
6 and they want to come to Boston to work that's  
7 because we pay our EMTs 30,000 dollars or more when  
8 they walk... 30, 30,000 dollars a year more when they  
9 walk in the door. We look to our brothers and sisters  
10 in EMS here in New York City as heroes, heroes who  
11 bravely risked their lives on 9/11 and every day  
12 since. We commend this Committee for its willingness  
13 to call for pay equity and the recognition and  
14 compensation they deserve. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Mike can, can you  
16 go through just to the best you can the starting pay  
17 and the pay steps of an EMT in Boston?

18 MICHAEL MACNEIL: So, our, our EMTs after  
19 their, their training period, the six-month training  
20 period make 62,000 dollars a year and after their  
21 last step... their last max step is at 25 years they'll  
22 make 89,000 dollars a year. Paramedics will go up  
23 from there.

24

25



2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And just what is  
3 the comparable salary of a police officer in... [cross-  
4 talk]

5 MICHAEL MACNEIL: It's parody, we have  
6 parody in Boston, they're a little higher about two  
7 percent higher.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Alright, do you  
9 have any questions Justin, can you say go Sox for us?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Go sox.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thanks. Thank you.  
12 Next panel and the final panel so far will be Dave  
13 Lin; Michael Greco; Kathleen Knuth; I'm sorry, if I,  
14 I can't pronounce your... I can't read your name is it  
15 Dalvanie, Oh Dalvanie, I'm sorry and David Cook. So,  
16 I know Dave, you are?

17 KATHLEEN KNUTH: I'm, I'm Kathleen Knuth.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Kathleen.

19 KATHLEEN KNUTH: I think we might need an  
20 extra chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Yep. So, I'll stick  
22 with that same order and go... start with Dave.

23 DAVID LIN: Hey, good afternoon everyone.  
24 So, good afternoon Chair... oh, there it is... oh, it  
25 finally works, alright. So, good afternoon everyone.

2 So, my... good afternoon Chair, Chairman Borelli and  
3 distinguished members of the Fire Department and  
4 Emergency Management Committee. My name is David Lin,  
5 I'm the President of the FDNY Phoenix Society  
6 representing Asian Americans in the Fire Department.  
7 I'm here on behalf of my organization to support pay  
8 equality for EMS members for our department. As  
9 President of FD... of the FDNY Phoenix I can say that  
10 our membership consists of members of all bureaus and  
11 ranks. Our first responders are the best the job has  
12 to offer this includes our EMS brothers and sisters.  
13 All of us in the FDNY work shoulder... work shoulder to  
14 shoulder as first responders, we respond to the same  
15 emergency calls, we go to the same unsafe situations,  
16 we deal with the same active shooters, bomb threats  
17 and hazardous environments. Of course, each one of us  
18 perform different duties even within the bureau but  
19 we work as a team to provide the best possible  
20 emergency service available. We could not function as  
21 a department without both sides, the fire fighters  
22 and EMS first responders, first they deserve our  
23 respect, our support and pay... and a pay to  
24 commensurate with their hard work. EMS first  
25 responder's salary should be... should be reflective of

2 those members equal to patient care and the  
3 community... commitment to their job, don't you want  
4 the best possible care when you're... when you call 9-  
5 1-1? And the thing is, the word EMS worker, I mean  
6 they're not workers, they're EMS responders so I mean  
7 just labeling the name worker kind of segregates  
8 everyone else... segregate them from everybody else,  
9 you wouldn't call it a fire fighter worker, you  
10 wouldn't call it a police worker and thank you again.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Next, Michael?

12 MICHAEL GRECO: Once again thank you  
13 Chair Borelli, distinguished members of the Fire and  
14 Emergency Management Committee and all others in  
15 attendance. I also want to give a special thank you  
16 to Council Member Miller and the Civil Service and  
17 Labor Committee as well as the women's caucuses and  
18 the black, Latino and Asian caucuses. I did prepare a  
19 testimony which I'm prepared to hand in, I look at  
20 the time and I know three minutes and like Oren  
21 before there is so much to rebut so I'm going to hand  
22 in the testimony, I'm going to read it as quick as I  
23 can and I would like just a couple of minutes to  
24 rebut some of the things offered today. so, I offer  
25 this testimony in support of both the legislation,

2 Intro 1731 and Resolution, Resolution 1062. For far  
3 too long members have... numbers have been used against  
4 EMS first responders to improperly report attrition  
5 rates. The city has hidden behind these numbers as a  
6 justification to not pay us our worth. Our EMTs and  
7 paramedics are leaving at alarming rates to better  
8 paying jobs all over the DCAS spectrum. Every four  
9 years we lose 25 percent of our members to the fire  
10 side through a botched process which the department  
11 then adds insult to injury by referring to this as a  
12 promotion that means one in four of our members are  
13 gone every single year, this has a devastating impact  
14 on morale but it also is incredibly expensive. The  
15 city claims it can't afford to pay us a fair wage yet  
16 it is willing to waste millions of dollars every year  
17 on training and personnel matriculation for EMTs and  
18 paramedics who will only leave their positions in a  
19 matter of months or years and the city then ignores  
20 this loss in their numbers to justify perpetuation of  
21 a pattern of underpayment to EMS first responders.  
22 This cycle must stop. I want to thank this Committee  
23 for saying enough is enough by introducing this  
24 legislation. I also want to give a special thanks to  
25 Councilman... member Daneek Miller and the Labor and

2 Civil Service Committee, I know they play a vital  
3 role in this. Correct reporting annually on DCAS  
4 titles changes will be a tremendous step forward. I  
5 applaud the resolve of any and all Council Members in  
6 support of this resolution calling for pay parity,  
7 the city provides the best police and fire service to  
8 the citizens and visitors to this great city however  
9 the city undermines it's EMS workforce, it's own  
10 reputation and the public it is charged to protect  
11 daily by not addressing the pay inequalities in our  
12 department. My members are hardworking, well trained  
13 and provide the best pre-hospital care in the busiest  
14 system in the world. In the medical field experience  
15 has a direct relation to patient outcome, if you pay  
16 EMS first responders under the poverty line you will  
17 not keep experienced people. If this city took all  
18 the money it's spent in recruitment, personnel and  
19 training every year and all the hidden costs of  
20 reduced services, understaffing and public benefits  
21 that are a result of underpaying a workforce and  
22 instead of flushing it down the toilet invested it in  
23 the men and women who serve as EMS first responders  
24 we would and we could take a huge step forward in  
25 ending this cycle of pay equality. I must comment on

1 the answer given by the Department to Council Member  
2 Adam's question about using the term promotion. About  
3 using term promotion... to refer to the transfer from  
4 EMS to the fire side, they pretend they have to refer  
5 to this as a promotional test but when other  
6 transfers happen like throughout the city's workforce  
7 nobody calls it a promotion. When an administrative  
8 manager takes, takes what is technically a promotion  
9 exam to be a staff analyst or vice versa, a staff  
10 analyst takes what is technically a DCAS promotion  
11 exam to be an administrative manager they don't call  
12 it a promotion, it may seem like a small thing but  
13 referring to the transfer as a promotion just  
14 perpetuates a perception that is about lesser  
15 treatment and let's not mistake this is about lesser  
16 treatment. The definition of promotion is the act of  
17 raising someone to a higher position or rank with  
18 salary included. I dare you to find the promotion  
19 from fire fighter to EMS, they don't have it, they  
20 don't have the ability... one department, well what if  
21 you wanted to be a fire fighter and say you know what  
22 I don't want to do this anymore, you have to go back  
23 into open competitive, it is an insult and it's  
24 hidden and what they do, the main point of this is  
25

2 diversity. This is all done as a subterfuge to allow  
3 their numbers and their diversity numbers to  
4 increase. If you keep our pay low, if you keep us  
5 working at scraps and fighting amongst each other,  
6 Lieutenants, Captains, if that's what you do, we're  
7 scrambling so hard that we all shoot to the other  
8 side, we have a 51 percent non-white workforce, we  
9 have a 40 percent female workforce and their numbers  
10 are paltry compared to this. So, if you keep us  
11 fighting at the bowel they will steal our diversity  
12 and get to show how well and how retained they are  
13 now, it's because of the lawsuit that happened that  
14 forced them to diversify that is all what this is  
15 about. So, let me go back to my testimony at the end.  
16 Once again, I want to thank and applaud you all for  
17 the support of EMS first responders and the vision to  
18 start to correct these injustices.

19 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, Kathleen  
20 please.

21 KATHLEEN KNUTH: Hello.

22 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Hi.

23 KATHLEEN KNUTH: Good afternoon Chair  
24 Borelli and all the Committee members here. I want to  
25 thank you for the opportunity to speak here. my name

2 is Kathleen Knuth, I'm the President of the FDNY  
3 Women's Benevolent Association. We are a fraternal  
4 organization whose mission is centered around  
5 encouraging, promoting and advancing women working in  
6 fire, EMS and civilian roles within the FDNY. Thank  
7 you for the chance to come here today and show our  
8 support for pay parity within the FDNY and for our  
9 colleagues in the Bureau of EMS. We are one  
10 department, we're fire and EMS, first responders work  
11 together shoulder to shoulder to protect the lives of  
12 New Yorkers. All of our work is equally important and  
13 challenging and our colleagues providing emergency  
14 medical services should be paid fairly and be  
15 compensated for the risks they take every day. I,  
16 like all members of the FDNY rely on our brothers and  
17 sisters and the Bureau of EMS to provide medical  
18 assistance that saves lives. New Yorkers deserve to  
19 have the most talented, engaged and dedicated  
20 providers assisting them in their time of need. A  
21 workforce concerned with income security and pay  
22 disparity is linked to poorer job satisfaction,  
23 poorer health, engagement and performance. Conversely  
24 higher commensurate wages are associated with  
25 increases in job satisfaction, motivation,



2 productivity and candidate quality as well as  
3 reductions in turnover, conflicts with superiors,  
4 disciplinary problems, absenteeism and customer  
5 service complaints. The Women's Benevolent  
6 Association is committed to supporting initiatives  
7 that improve the wages, working conditions, morale  
8 and career development for all our members. Thank you  
9 for introducing a resolution that calls for pay  
10 parity for first responders within the FDNY and thank  
11 you for introducing legislation that will help us  
12 better track the impacts of underpayment on the  
13 Bureau. That's it.

14 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Dalvanie.

15 DALVANIE POWELL: Good afternoon. Good  
16 afternoon Chair Borelli and Committee members. Thank  
17 you for giving me the opportunity to testify today in  
18 support of Resolution 162 calling for pay parity  
19 within the FDNY and Intro 1731 in... requiring proper  
20 reporting of data to properly capture attrition of  
21 EMS members which is one of the bi-products of  
22 underpayment. My name is Dalvanie Powell and I'm the  
23 President of the United Probation Officer's  
24 Association, we represent over 800 probation officers  
25 working for the city of New York. The issue of pay

2 parody matters to me and my members because the  
3 city's practice of underpaying titles that are  
4 predominately non-white and or female is, is refusing  
5 to learn from past mistakes to remedy this policy  
6 impacts all city workers. Our city workers should be  
7 compensated fairly and respective of the  
8 demographics. Unfortunately, the reality is that if  
9 you work in a title that is mostly non-white or  
10 mostly female, you're undervalued, underworked and  
11 underpaid. Our members are predominately female and  
12 non-white, we have a fraction of what others who  
13 perform similar duties... we, we are... we earn a  
14 fraction of what others who perform similar duties  
15 for the city. Our members have suffered severe and  
16 chronic suppression of salaries, we face unrealistic  
17 and unfair barriers to promotion and pay increases,  
18 we are undervalued and compared to other more white  
19 and male titles. In other words, the claim... the  
20 claims our EMS brothers and sisters are making about  
21 pay inequity is not only real but corroborated by  
22 experience of our members, it's a new century and it  
23 has to stop. This is... this is not a complicated  
24 issue, we are highly educated, highly trained  
25 officers, officers who are a majority black, women

2 whose salaries are not in parody with other law  
3 enforcement and our work conditions, conditions are  
4 bad. We're ordered to do evening tours in some of the  
5 most dangerous neighborhoods in some cases unarmed  
6 and not enough cars, our weekends have been taken  
7 away, working space is limited, we are treated with  
8 no regard and with... and with no respect. I wonder if  
9 other ethnic groups or if we were predominately men  
10 working in our position would their safety be  
11 compromised? Would they not be compensated for the  
12 work that they do? Like EMS we also face obstacles to  
13 remedy these inequities because of the city's  
14 refusing to turn over data that would, would be  
15 helpful to identify and boot our discriminatory pay  
16 practices. The city... the city should be working to  
17 get the data necessary to solve this problem  
18 unfortunately it has done the... done the opposite. We  
19 have had to fight for almost two years to force the  
20 city to turn over the data needed over and still they  
21 refused. Retro 1731 will help ensure the city cannot  
22 ignore the real impact of underpayment to EMS members  
23 namely, namely a high attrition rate. The bottom  
24 line, if you do not treat people who look like me and  
25 Miss Arroyo better who love the careers that we had

2 chosen or have chosen it would eventually destroy the  
3 essence as to why we became probation officers and  
4 others became EMS first responders, it is time we  
5 want... it is... in, in time nobody will want to work in  
6 these titles as there is no incentive to apply or to  
7 stay. I think the Fire and Emergency Management  
8 Committee for sponsoring this legislation, for your  
9 efforts to ensure the city of New York is an equal  
10 opportunity employer. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you and  
12 finally it's nice to see a constituent David Cook.

13 DAVID COOK: Good afternoon and thank you  
14 for allowing me to speak. I'm a paramedic from  
15 station 31 in Brooklyn, I have been on this wonderful  
16 job for 12 years. My reasons for doing this job was  
17 to make a difference and save lives, knowing that I  
18 can be someone who people actually call a hero,  
19 little did I... little did I truly understand being a  
20 hero here in New York City, doing this wonderful job  
21 unfortunately means being broke. We have between 30  
22 to 40 EMS stations around New York City and I have  
23 seen... basically seen all of them being forced to work  
24 two or three overtime shifts a week just to pay my  
25 bills I have very little left over, telling the kids

2 next pay period guys I promise has even become the  
3 norm. Over my 12 years here I watched all my close  
4 friends leave, I watched hundreds of wonderful, hard  
5 working men and women leave because we don't get paid  
6 enough. Even though they love this job and they love  
7 saving lives, they left. The number now being used is  
8 65 percent has three years or less on the job, they  
9 are young, brilliant minds with big hopes and dreams  
10 like I once had, they also scream their hope and joy  
11 that things will get better and there's no way it can  
12 stay the same. I feel so hurt knowing that I was once  
13 dumb and learned the hard way not all dreams and  
14 hopes become reality. As an African American male,  
15 the unjust of knowing we get paid less due to our  
16 high percentage of minorities and women breaks my  
17 heart. It breaks my heart knowing other agencies are  
18 paid different based on race and gender. Other  
19 agencies even have better systems for promotions  
20 because working here after the role of lieutenant  
21 it's who you know not what you know to get promoted,  
22 promoted to captain and chief. I watched some great  
23 brothers and sisters who are black, Asian, Hispanic  
24 and most importantly women get passed over and no one  
25 to have their back, no one to stand behind them, no

2 one to say enough is enough, no one to say you are  
3 not alone so today on behalf of myself, on behalf of  
4 every great EMT and paramedic who works for FDNY EMS  
5 and even those no longer here, we need someone to  
6 have our back and we ask it from you. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. Thank  
8 you, panel. Sorry Michael you wanted to answer some  
9 questions?

10 MICHAEL GRECO: Yeah, there was... there  
11 was... like I said there's a couple of rebuttals, they,  
12 they talked about the 13 percent of EMTs with less  
13 than one year and the couple of questions were asked  
14 of... well putting them with mentor programs, they  
15 don't tell you that we don't have a mentor program,  
16 it's... nobody's trained, nobody is put out there to  
17 say okay these are your roles and responsibilities,  
18 we don't have field training officers, we don't have  
19 people who get paid to learn how to bring along other  
20 people. So, the fact that they call it... they put it  
21 with a mentor, they put it next to a 12-year guy  
22 hopefully and say do me a favor make sure he doesn't  
23 kill someone, that is literally the mentorship. They  
24 didn't address the fact that once you become a senior  
25 EMT which is three months after your internship so

2 you go from an intern to a senior EMT that person who  
3 now has a total of three months in the academy, three  
4 months internship, a total of six months on the job  
5 is now training the next person coming out of the  
6 academy, this happens due to the fact that we have 75  
7 percent under five years, the number 65 under three,  
8 it's 75 percent under five years. So, this is where  
9 when Chief Bonsignore and these other Chiefs get up  
10 and talk about it, yes, 20, 30 years ago when people  
11 were staying there was a mentor, there's an ops guide  
12 for it too, it tells you which units are mentor  
13 units, a third of those units I don't even think are  
14 in service anymore. These are the things that need to  
15 be addressed and this is why the attrition numbers  
16 are so important. The 2018 reports of assault, 125,  
17 we've been going over those numbers, they say 125, we  
18 have 160 and we just started reporting these so it's,  
19 it's reported cases. For, for years they didn't count  
20 being spit on as an assault, our members now even to  
21 this day with this bail reform right now they know  
22 that people aren't going to be charged, they're not  
23 going to be prosecuted so why even bother going  
24 through the motions so it's an unreported thing.  
25 It's, it's stuff like this that should not be going

1 on. They talk about the... Chief sat up here and saying  
2 when seconds count, experience means I can diagnosis  
3 in a minute quicker so when seconds count why are we  
4 giving away minutes? It just... it, it doesn't make  
5 sense, the 1,400 people who went to fire, they never  
6 staffed to 1,400 plus, they, they've never done it  
7 which means look and talk about a 5,000 member EMS  
8 service it's never happened. They talk about minimum  
9 staffing levels, not Steve Rush, not OLR, not any  
10 Chief, not a Commissioner can give us the number of  
11 what minimum staffing level is, they don't know it,  
12 that's where these numbers are important, that's  
13 where these attrition numbers... the Lieutenants have a  
14 span to control problem, we don't have enough  
15 lieutenants, we don't have enough chiefs, we don't  
16 have a... we don't have enough of anything. So, when  
17 they sit here, I do appreciate the one thing Steve  
18 Rush said which we finally got him on record to say  
19 his opinion even though it doesn't mean anything, we  
20 do deserve the money. So, we thank him for that, I  
21 thank my brothers and sisters from the different  
22 agencies that came back and so my final thing is  
23 because you made him say it I'm going to say to my  
24 Boston brothers lets go Yankees.  
25



2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you Mike,  
3 they, they certainly made the mentoring program out  
4 to be, you know some salty old veteran and that's  
5 just not the case I guess... [cross-talk]

6 MICHAEL GRECO: In, in the nicest way to  
7 say this, this is the most disgusting thing that can  
8 happen in EMS to say that I am a mentor when here it  
9 is, here's keys, go, go, go and they get disciplined  
10 so if my mentor... if my student happens to do  
11 something wrong they hold us accountable for it but  
12 you didn't train us to fill out a sheet, it is... I'm  
13 glad you... that's not lost on you, that they, they  
14 make mentoring to be out like it's such a big thing,  
15 if it mattered and I talked to Steve Rush and this  
16 goes out to OLR, you want to talk about ways to  
17 finagle money considering 4,000 of my members are  
18 training every new person that comes in, a nice 20  
19 percent differential for field training officers  
20 would be fantastic.

21 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Do you know, I mean  
22 is there any other agency that offers differential  
23 for training officers that we could look at?

24

25

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2 MICHAEL GRECO: I, I do believe PD does a  
3 field training officer, I'm not sure if you guys...  
4 [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is that... is that a...  
6 [cross-talk]

7 MICHAEL GRECO: ...they're talking... so, I  
8 know for a... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is that a specific  
10 title or is that a, a, a police officer... another  
11 words are the police... is the police officer getting  
12 additional money for mentoring or is it just a  
13 function of being in that particular command, you're  
14 the person who does this?

15 MICHAEL GRECO: I, I don't want to speak  
16 intelligently about a subject that I don't know 100  
17 percent so I will say I do know they have the title  
18 field training officer, I'm not sure how the contract  
19 works out of them getting paid so, I, I, I don't know  
20 too much about... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay... [cross-talk]

22 MICHAEL GRECO: ...that.

23 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there anyone  
24 else in the audience who'd like to testify? Well  
25 then, I'm going to bang this and let's go home.

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MICHAEL GRECO: Thank you.

DALVANIE POWELL: Thank you.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date

February 6, 2020