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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND
BUSINESS LICENSING JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON RESILIENCY AND
WATERFRONTS, COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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HELD AT: Remote Hearing

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CHAIRPERSON

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COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS LICENSING JOINTLY WITH
RESILIENCY AND WATERFRONTS, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, HEALTH

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

Dianne Criswell, Commissioner
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Jainey Bavishi, Director
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Kyle Kimball, Vice President
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COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS LICENSING JOINTLY WITH
RESILIENCY AND WATERFRONTS, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, HEALTH

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Anthony Carrion
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Liz McMillan, member
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Cecil Corbin Mark

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COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS LICENSING JOINTLY WITH
RESILIENCY AND WATERFRONTS, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, HEALTH

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. Welcome to the joint committee hearings. Will Council members and Council staff please turn on their videos at this time? Please place all cell phones and electronic devices to vibrate. You may send your testimony at testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you. Chair, we are ready when you are.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I am unmuted. All right. Good morning, everybody. My name is Andrew Cohen and I am the Chair on the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing. Thank you to all who have joined us for this remote hearing this morning. We appreciate your time. Today's hearing is focused on ensuring that New Yorkers will have adequate access to cooling this summer. With New Yorkers already struggling to navigate the COVID-19 crisis, they should not also have to worry about being able to keep their families cool. Experts predict that this summer will be unusually hot and humid. With more New Yorkers working from home, it is essential that the power stays on. Prior to this COVID-19 crisis, power use typically peaked in Manhattan

during weekdays. Instead, as the majority of us work from home, the outer boroughs will likely see an uptick in demand due to air conditioner use. Coupled with the hot weather conditions, this means air conditioners will be used more frequently and for longer periods of time, potentially causing a demand on the grid in the outer boroughs that we may not have seen before. This is particularly of concern in light of the blackouts of last summer which I still fresh in our minds. Every borough was affected by power outages in the summer of 2019. Last July, Midtown Manhattan was sent dark one Saturday evening, forcing restaurants on Broadway shows to close and sending the subway system into chaos. A few days later, during a heat wave, parts of Brooklyn had their power intentionally cut by Con Ed leaving many without air conditioners during the hottest weekend of the year. That was not acceptable. In response, the City Council held an oversight hearing last fall and Con Ed appeared before this committee to answer questions about the blackouts. Unfortunately, their answers left many of us uneasy that the company was taking the necessary steps to address ongoing outages. Con Ed doesn't seem to be investing in the

needed upgrades and redesign of its aging infrastructure. It shapes the conducting more frequent, preventative testing of its equipment or investing in sufficient thermal monitoring devices that could prevent equipment and underground cables from overheating. The 1.5 billion dollars that Con Ed claimed to have spent on system upgrades last year was what experts testified, simply routine system maintenance that all utilities must do. Despite that, it has paid out dividends to stock holders almost every year for the last 45 years and continues to raise rates for New Yorkers. In fact, New Yorkers pay some of the highest prices for their electricity. 43 percent more than the national average, to be exact. Today, we are joined by representatives from Con Ed and I thank them for being here to shed light-- no pun intended-- on our concerns. I'd like to hear from them on exactly what steps Con Ed is taking to ensure that the power stays on, especially for vulnerable New Yorkers, many of whom reside in the areas affected by last year's outages. Many of these neighborhoods are the same ones that are being hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to hear about what Con Ed plans to do about

customers who have lost their jobs and are unable to pay their power bills. While we appreciate that Con Ed has currently had a moratorium on power shutoffs for nonpayment, it is unclear what the company's plans are once that is lifted. We will also be hearing from the administration and I would like to think of the Commissioner of the Office of Emergency Management Dianne Criswell, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Resiliency, Jainey Bavishi, and Assistant Commissioner Carolyn Olson from DOHMH for joining us. I look forward to hearing from all of you about how the city plans to address the cooling needs of residents while navigating the COVID-19 crisis and the need for social distancing measures. According to recent data, over 80 percent of heat-related deaths in New York City have occurred in homes without air conditioning. Access to sufficient cooling, therefore, is needed to be addressed and managed as the vital health issue that it is. This is especially true now as many of those most vulnerable to COVID-19, namely the elderly and those with underlying health conditions, are likewise prone to heat-related illness and deaths. Public health experts are warning that COVID-19 could therefore

make heat waves much deadlier and disproportionately affect these vulnerable groups. As well as low income residents who are less likely to have or use air conditioning units. In normal times, every summer, the city typically offers cooling centers throughout various neighborhoods. New Yorkers would normally have access to pools and beaches. This summer will be different. The Mayor has announced that pools and beaches will be closed and, at the moment, there is no clear plan on how we will have access to cooling centers while maintaining social distancing. I also look forward to the administration's feedback on two pieces of legislation we are hearing today. First we have Chair Brannan's bill that seeks to codify reporting on the vulnerability and heat -related deaths. As we know, there are concerns in the past that these figures have been artificially low due to various definitions of what constitutes a hot day. I will be turning it over to him shortly to speak more on this bill. Second, [inaudible 00:06:07] bill Emergency Management and the Department of health and Mental Hygiene to develop a comprehensive cooling plan for the summer by June 30th, 2020. Before I turn it over

to Chair Brannan, I would like to thank all of the city Council staff who helped make this virtual hearing possible. There are a lot of people in the background helping to run these hearings. I would especially like to thank Committee staff Baltis Murrig [sp?], counsel to the committee, and Leah Suprick [sp?], policy analyst, as well as my staff, leg director Patty Entrader [sp?] and my chief of staff Arianna Colado [sp?] for their hard work in making this possible. Also, before I turn it over, I would also like to now acknowledge that I think today is the birthday of Council member Chin. So happy birthday. And, lastly, I'm going to say we have been joined by-- let's see [inaudible 00:07:05]-- we have Council members Chin, Diaz, Louis, Menchaca, Powers, Rose, Salamanca, Ampry-Samuel, Holden, Koo, Lander, and Yeger. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to Chair Justin Brannan.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair Cohen. Good morning. Today, I join Chairs Cohen, Levine, and Constantinides in welcoming you to this joint oversight hearing to discuss Con Edison's summer preparations and the city's cooling needs. My name is Justin Brannan. I have the privilege of

Chairing the Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts and I would like to extend my thanks to my co-chairs for holding this hearing and everyone behind the scenes making this happen. As Chair Cohen said, this summer will be unprecedented. We are about to enter another long, hot, humid summer and we are in the midst of a global pandemic that is forcing us to stay in our homes. We must take immediate action to ensure everyone has access to a safe home this summer, one that seal all residents from both COVID-19 and extreme summer heat in New York City. Because of climate change, temperatures have been rising more rapidly over the past century and New York City is expected to experience more frequent and longer lasting heat waves. The New York City panel on climate change predicts that, for the 2020s, the decade we are now in, the city will experience two to four heat waves per year with each one lasting four to six days. But 2050, the frequency of heat waves is expected to triple. Because of the urban heat island effect, which makes urban areas much hotter than surrounding non-urban areas, average steady temperature can be significantly hotter. More than five degrees hotter during the day and 22 degrees

hotter at night. New Yorkers depend on a reliable source of electricity. With people now working from home during the COVID pandemic, the demand for air conditioning over the summer will only increase, especially in the outer boroughs. When the electrical system fails, this puts everyone in the city at significant risk for heat related illnesses, including dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke. Last summer, the city experienced a number of serious power outages as a result of intense rain and sweltering heat. As more residents relied on their air-conditioners, pressure on the grid increased, resulting in a loss of power. My district, with a lot of overhead power lines, experiences at least one power outage every summer. But, unlike last summer when the West side of Manhattan blacked out made national news, no one ever hears about the outer boroughs losing power every single summer. How will these lines handle the increased pressure on the grid when so many residents are at home or working from home and running their air-conditioners? How is Con Ed prepared for the additional stress on the grid this summer, particularly in the outer boroughs? Last week, Con

Ed stated that New Yorkers will pay higher electric bills this summer, with typical monthly bills increasing 10 percent from last year to about 110 dollars per month from June until September. By the end of June, one in five city workers will likely be unemployed. That is a 22 percent unemployment rate this quarter. Numbers not seen since the Great Depression. How will New Yorkers be able to afford this a rate increase? Con Ed has stated that it will not turn off customers' power for not paying bills or charge late fees during the pandemic, about what happens when the pandemic ends and all these bills come due? People who can't afford the higher bills now will not magically be able to afford the few months from now. Public health experts warned that the COVID-19 pandemic could make heat waves much deadlier and disproportionately affect the elderly and residents of lower income, the less likely to have air-conditioning units. Or, if they have an air conditioner, less likely to use them because they can't afford their electric bill to keep it running. Pools are closed. Beaches are not open for swimming. Traditional sites for cooling center like senior centers and libraries are closed. The administration

is looking at possibly using schools' cooling centers and I commend them on thinking about alternative sites now. But not all schools have air-conditioning and it is unclear how proper social distancing will be maintained in these cooling centers. I also want to commend the administration on stating it will spend 55 million dollars to purchase air-conditioners for low income seniors and help subsidize some of their utility bills. We must, however, make sure that everyone who needs access to cooling gets it. We also need to know if the grid can handle this additional stress. Today we will hear my bill of pre-considered introduction which will require the department of health to annually report on neighborhood vulnerability and the number of heat - related deaths. The Department of Health reports on heat related deaths, but it's much less inclusive and leaves out many people whose deaths were caused by conditions exacerbated by heat exposure. My bill would require the Department of Health to report not just on the number of heat related deaths, but also on the social vulnerability and environmental factors that may contribute to those deaths. Deaths caused by heat, just like

deaths caused by COVID, disproportionately affect minority and low income communities. From 2000 until 2012, almost half of the heat related deaths in New York City were among African-Americans. But not enough is being done to address this. My bill would enable the city to allocate necessary resources like cooling devices, to the most impacted and underserved areas. I look forward to hearing from the administration about how they will distribute air conditioner units, how schools may be used as cooling centers, and what other steps the city is taking to ensure that all New Yorkers, especially our most vulnerable, will be able to stay cool, safe, and healthy this summer. I also look forward to hearing from Con Ed about what they are doing to ensure that the city is prepared this summer and the grid will be able to handle the additional demand, as well as the additional demand forward by the city's plan to distribute air conditioners to low income communities. Before we began, I want to thank my committee staff. Committee counsel Jessica Steinberg-Alvin, senior policy analyst Patrick Mulbahil [sp?], senior financial analyst John Seltzer, and my senior advisor Johnathan Yeddin [sp?]

and all the council staff from consumer affairs, health, environmental protection committees for their super, super hard work in putting this together. I'll now turn it back to Chair Cohen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Chair Brannan. I think I'm turning it directly over to Chair Levine for an opening. I do want to acknowledge that we've been joined by Council members Koslowitz and Barron. Chair Levine?

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Chair Cohen and Chair Brannan and, of course, Chair Constantinides. I am Mark Levine, Chair of the city Council's Health Committee and I want to thank all of you for joining us on this remote hearing. The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on long-standing inequities in our city, including racial, health, and economic disparities. Low income communities of color, as well as older and medically vulnerable New Yorkers have all been hit disproportionately hard by the pandemic. And, if we don't take action, these inequalities could be exacerbated by the long, hot, New York City hot summer ahead. As my colleagues have mentioned, the New Yorkers most impacted by heat related illnesses and deaths overlapped with those

impacted by COVID-19. And the community's most medically vulnerable to COVID-19 and heat related illnesses are also those communities who are struggling financially because of the effects of the pandemic. We need a multi-strong strategy in place now before the worst of the heat arrives to attack all of these challenges. First, if we want New Yorkers, especially those who are vulnerable, to continue to the social distance by staying at home as much as possible-- and we definitely do want this-- then we need to address the fact that as many as half of low income families have no air conditioning in their apartments. To that end, it is good news that Mayor de Blasio announced that the city is creating a 55 million dollar program to provide 74,000 air-conditioners to older New Yorkers without such units. And approximately 22,000 of these air-conditioning units will be distributed to NYCHA residents. New Yorkers with no air conditioning at home 60 years of age and older have income below 60 percent of the state medium income will be eligible for these AC units. But we need to understand what portion of the total need for these ACs does this cover? And if it is not sufficient, how can we do even more?

Furthermore, we want to ensure that no one goes without the cooling because they cannot afford their electricity bills. So, I look forward to learning more about Con Ed's plans to ensure that we are protecting and supporting vulnerable communities. Especially those who experienced blackouts during the summer of 2019, some of whom, like the neighborhood of Flatbush, have also now seen high rates of COVID cases and deaths. On May 15, the administration announced that it was petitioning the public service commission for 72 million to help pay the utility bills of 450,000 vulnerable New Yorkers so they can afford to run their ACs and keep cool. I am looking forward to getting an update on this today. Will this funding be enough? Will it cover all those who are vulnerable? These are questions we need to discuss today. Finally, I'm looking forward to an update from the administration on access to the cooling centers. As my colleagues have mentioned, we need to find safe ways for New Yorkers to get out of their homes to cool off during the hot weather. This will require, likely, use of alternative cooling center locations. Those that allow for more space for social distancing. And, as we stand up new

cooling centers, let's be mindful of concern that HVAC systems may, in fact, facilitate coronavirus transmission. I look forward to our discussion today and to ensuring that the hot summer ahead does not further exacerbate the horrible inequality of this pandemic. I want to thank the amazing health committee staff who have worked so hard on this and so many other issues during these difficult months, including Zai Emmanuel Hilu [sp?], Sara Liss, and Emily Balkan, and my own staff, Amy Flatter and Winthrop Roosevelt. Thank you, again. And, now, I'm going to turn it back to you, Chair Cohen.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Mark. I am going to turn it over to Council member Salamanca who also has a statement regarding his legislation.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right. Good morning. Can you hear me, Chair Cohen?

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right. Good morning. I am Council member Rafael Salamanca from the 17th Council district in the South Bronx. I would like to thank Chair Levin, Cohen, Constantinides, and Brannan for allowing me to speak on my bill pretty considered 6198. As we approach

the third month of stay-at-home orders, New Yorkers are continuing to show their Brazilian nature in the face of those terrible virus. Following the directives of local and state government, a large majority of our constituents have taken the necessary precautions to ensure the well-being of their loved ones and themselves. As much as we continue to follow social distancing measures, the reality is that there remains much uncertainty about what the future holds. Complicating this uncertainty is the typical seasonal shoes we face on a yearly basis. With the calendars shifting towards June, New Yorkers are already bracing themselves for the sweltering dog days of summer. While many returned to their home air conditioning units to be that he, the truth is countless New Yorkers, including many in mind district, do not have the same luxury. For many of my constituents, escaping the peak day time heat is made easier by being at their place of employment, senior center, or even a cooling center. With COVID response efforts eliminating almost all gatherings of any sort, there will be far fewer options to stay cool this summer. Our temperatures rising each year, it is more imperative than ever to ensure New York

City has a wide range plan to keep New Yorkers safe from the extreme heat. This is why I am introducing preconsidered 6198 which would require the Office of Emergency Management, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and other relevant agencies to create a comprehensive plan due at the end of June. And by the 1st of March of subsequent years, on how the city will respond to a related emergencies during the COVID era and beyond. As part of the plan, OEM and DOHMH will detail how it will inform New Yorkers on the dangers of heat exposure, how to stay cool during the heat related emergencies, and how to access cooling options. The plan will also take in that focus on how to aid the most honorable populations who face a greater health risk than the general population during heat emergencies. Furthermore, recognizing the stress placed on our electrical grid during the typical summer season that has resulted in widespread blackouts. The plan will also include measures on how large office buildings can reduce their energy consumption during such emergencies. While I strongly support the actions of Mayor de Blasio to provide air-conditioners and financial rallies to vulnerable New Yorkers to protect

themselves from the heat, I believe there needs to be of thorough plan in place now and in the future to ensure all New Yorkers, regardless of their income, have the resources to stay safe during the heat emergency. Chairs, thank you for holding this important hearing and allowing me to speak on my bill. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Council member Salamanca. I think we have also been joined by Council member Ulrich. I am going to turn it over to committee counsel to swear in our first panel. I want to let Con Ed know we have given them 15 minutes on the clock. We would appreciate it if they could be as concise as possible. The members are going to ask a lot of questions, so, anything you don't get it in your opening, I am sure you will have an opportunity to tell us. So, if you could be as brief as possible, we appreciate that. And, with that, I'm going to turn it over to our committee counsel.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I am Jessica Steinberg-Albin, counsel to the resiliency and waterfronts committee of the New York City Council. I want to remind everyone that you will be on mute until you are called on to testify when you

will be un-muted by the host. I will be calling on panelists to testify. Please listen for your name to be called. I will be periodically announcing who the next panelists will be. We will tell call on representatives of Con Ed to testify. Matthew Sniffen, Vice President of Con Ed, Kyle Kimball, Vice President of Government, Regional, and Community Affairs for Con Ed, and Patrick McHugh, Vice President Engineering and Planning, will be testifying on behalf of Con Ed. Before we begin, I will administer the oath. Please raise your hands. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before the committees and to respond honestly to Council member questions? Mr. Sniffen?

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: Yes. I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Kimball?

KYLE KIMBALL: Yes. I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. McHugh?

PATRICK MCHUGH: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I will now turn it over to questions from Chair Cohen, followed by Chair Brannan, Chair Levine. Mr. Sniffen, Mr. Kimball, and Mr. McHugh, please stay

unmuted, if possible, during this question and answer period. Thank you. Chair Cohen, please begin.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I think we are actually allowing them to make an opening statement, I believe.

KYLE KIMBALL: Great. I'll go ahead.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh.

KYLE KIMBALL: Is that all right?

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: It's fine. Yes.

KYLE KIMBALL: Okay. Good morning.

Good morning. My name is Kyle Kimball. I am the vice president of government relations at Con Edison and I am here with my colleagues, Patrick McHugh, vice president of distribution, engineering, and planning, and Matt Sniffen, vice president for emergency management. Thank you for taking the time across these four committees to hear about our summer 2020 preparations at this critically important time. We plan to give you a very high level overview of our preparations for this summer and you have graciously granted us no more than 15 minutes to get through this, so we will move along quickly. I will happily provide you more detailed during the Q&A. As we enter the summer of 2020, all of us are faced with a

summer unlike anything we have ever experienced personally and professionally. And keeping our customers safe, as well as our employees, has been and remains our top priority. In addition to our normal save for the concerns, we recognize that this summer, as it heats up, that the reliable delivered energy is an important component of our collective public health efforts. So we will spend the next few minutes discussing with you that we have undertaken to prepare for this summer to give you a sense of the lessons we have learned from last summer, how those learnings have been shaped by the current pandemic, and the investments we have made to ensure that we remain one of the most reliable energy providers in the world. First, while our forecasters to see overall lower demand for electricity this summer, the demand will most certainly shift away from the traditional commercial centers to residential areas, several speakers have noted. Second, we have made significant investments into the energy grid, based on our learnings and analysis from last summer took, one, minimize the chance of outages, minimize the number of people affected by an outage, minimize the amount of time people are without power in the case

of an outage, and read tooling our communication plans to ensure that our appeals to use less energy and information during an outage are more effectively reach our customers and stakeholders. We have particularly focused on investments in the Flatbush network, investments to improve the back capacity to deliver electricity to over two dozen NYCHA developments that were at their capacity limits. And this is particularly important as supporting the city's heat mitigation plan and its current proposal to provide bill credit to customers in rolled in for a low and moderate income programs. Third, we are very close weekly communication with the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management preparing for this summer, enhancing communication protocols and giving them detailed analysis for our electric load forecast and summer preparations. Fourth, we will continue to work with our customers through the summer to join us as shoes of financial hardship. Since March 13, we have proactively suspended the termination of service for nonpayment. We are awaiting late fees and providing flexible payment agreements for those who need help. So, before I turn it over to Patrick who will walk through our summer preparations overview in

more detail, it is worth noting that climate change and the more intense storms and heater vents, coupled with the pandemic, and it is imperative that our adaptation as a city includes both investment and smart technologies, but also investments and efficiency and alternatives to traditional approaches to enhance our resiliency. So, with that, I will turn it over to Patrick McHugh who can walk through a more detailed-- about our preparations. And also we did send along a presentation. I know that we're not presenting it on the screen, but, hopefully, the council staff and Council members have that presentation. Go ahead, Patrick.

PATRICK MCHUGH: Okay. Just checking.
People can hear me?

KYLE KIMBALL: Yep.

PATRICK MCHUGH: Okay. So, if you have the presentation, I am on slide four. As we prepare for summer 2020, we have been putting in considerable effort into developing a very detailed forecast of the peak usage for the upcoming summer. Each year, we worked to design and upgrade the system to be ready for the forecasted peak energy usage. Pre-COVID, the summer peak forecast was estimated to

decrease by a few megawatts from last year, however, the overall impact of COVID as reduced the overall energy consumption in the city. Based on the current trends, we have seen over all week to add reduction of approximately 16 percent and a weekend reduction of eight and a half percent. Our current system peak forecast for the summer is now 12,000 megawatts, down from 13,270 megawatts last year, and 10 percent reduction. All boroughs have seen a reduction in usage when compared to similar times and temperatures last year to this year. Some areas have seen more significant than others. As mentioned earlier, we are seeing the possibilities of a few areas that may increase in load and we are taking quick action to upgrade equipment in these areas to address these new forecasts that are coming out. We will continue to monitor the energy consumption behavior around the city--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: [inaudible 00:29:42]
minutes left.

PATRICK MCHUGH: this summer. And we will adjust our plans as necessary based on any new observations. Just checking I am still being heard?

UNIDENTIFIED: Yep.

PATRICK MCHUGH: Okay. So, for those with the presentation, just go to the last slide. Slide five. Last fall, we developed our summer prep plan to get ready for the summer for summer 2020. I am happy to report that we are going to meet and exceed that plan even with the impact that COVID has had on our operations. Throughout the entire impact of the pandemic, the brave women and men of Con Edison operations and fuel forces have worked side-by-side with many of the other essential employees in the city to keep the essential services of the city going. This effort has enabled us to complete all of our summer prep work that was planned last fall to have the system and as strong position going into the summer. We have invested 1.3 billion dollars in the powers system. This work was to improve the safety and reliability of the system, prepare the system for more distributed resources, and connect new customers to the grid. As Kyle mentioned, this investment included multiple upgrades in the Flatbush region of the grid where we had the unfortunate outage event in the overhead area of the grid last summer. We have upgraded cables in both the 27 and four KV systems in this area, installed six new switch is in the

overhead and underground to provide better reliabilities of the feeders. We have also completed relay upgrades on all feeders supplying the overhead grid in this area and developed a new control system to allow operators to surgically sectionalize the overhead grid if problems develop. In other areas around the city, we worked with NYCHA to address 29 NYCHA locations around the system to allow for additional energy consumption for people sheltering in place in these areas. We have also completed significant reliability upgrades across all five boroughs. To be ready for summer 2020, we have upgraded distribution feeders and transformers that were nearing their capacity. 31 locations have been addressed. I also want to highlight that we continue to deploy grid edge technology to continue to make the grid safer, smarter, more reliable, and more easily accessible to distributed resources. This technology includes smart meters, which allows two-way communications to the meter and real near time data usage information. Two-way communication to underground switches to make the network system more adaptable with two way power flows and quickly respond to system issues. And, third, manhole

sensors that detect abnormal conditions in manholes and communicate that information back to the work center. I want to know that we didn't temporarily abort the smart meter deployment during the COVID impact. We do plan to restart the redeployment in the weeks ahead on a phased approach. The new meters greatly enhance social distancing by no longer requiring meter readers to go into customer premises to get meter readings and also allowed turn on Zen turn off requests to be done remotely. Finally, to address some of the unknowns about the redistribution of customer energy usage patterns around the city from the COVID impact, we have secured an additional 12 large two megawatt generators to add to our fleet. We plan to preemptively locate these units and residential areas to help any new loading concerns that arise. So, with, I will turn it over to Matthew Sniffen.

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: Thanks, Patrick. I will be on slide six. So, good morning. My name is Matt Sniffen. I am vice president of emergency preparedness at Con Edison. Based on lessons learned from our experience last year, we updated our emergency response plans. To measure their

effectiveness, we do have numerous fields each year, many in collaboration with New York City Emergency Management. After last summer's incidents, we met with New York City Emergency Management and the Mayor's Office of Resilience. Their output was a request for a series of workshops aimed at each side getting a better understanding of our system and the city agency's needs. This year, we have jointly established the communication protocol during heat waves that will keep the agencies informed as an event is potentially unfolding. We will continue to communicate with NYCM as an activation happens, including embedded team members in each other's emergency operations. As temperatures rise, we activate our plans, and adjust our schedules for better coverage. Slide seven. As we get into continued season heat events, we have several options that we preemptively said in order to avoid a load shedding event like Flatbush last year. When we were having a network problem, we typically do a network focused appeal as the area of contingency does not influence other areas. That's all I have.

KYLE KIMBALL: Right. Yeah. So we can go ahead and go into questions because I know you have a lot of questions.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I really appreciate you being as succinct as that. Before we get the questions, I am going to turn it back to the committee counsel who will just outline how the Q&A will work.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Cohen. During the hearing, if Council members would like to ask a question of Con Ed, the administration, or specific panelized, please use the Zoom raised hand function and I will call on you in order. We will be limiting Council member questions to five minutes, which includes the time it takes to answer your questions. Please note, that for ease of this virtual hearing, we will not be allowing a second round of questions for each panelist outside of the Committee Chairs. All hearing participants should submit written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you. I will now turn it over to questions from Chair Cohen, followed by Chair Brannan, and Chair Levine. Mr. Sniffen, Mr. Kimball, and Mr. McHugh, if you could please stay

unmuted, if possible, during the question-and-answer period. Thank you. Chair Cohen, please begin.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you very much. I guess I appreciate your testimony. I am concerned a little bit about the change in the pattern of usage. As people are working more from home, it is entirely possible that the central business district will be significantly below its normal usage. Do you feel like you have the flexibility? You've done some modeling, it sounds like, back, I mean, there is no data. There is now, you know, track record to the, well, it was like this two years ago. How are you projecting usage?

PATRICK MCHUGH: So I would agree with your statement that has never been done, you know, so, we are actually running for model. We developed for different models to try to predict the energy consumption that will be done in any specific area of the city. We then, on a conservative basis, using the highest forecast from those four models. I won't go with all the different aspects of those four models but they attempt to forecast the load in different ways. But I would give you, as we look at

it going and doing, it is a typical weekend. If you have a Saturday or Sunday, most people are home and doing that. So, we would think that a lot of areas are going to look a lot like a Saturday or Sunday from a normal summer. You know, that is where we start as a basis. And you see those areas.

Manhattan goes down, you know, 30 percent on a weekend and you have the weekend areas and the outer boroughs are still below on an average summer. There is still below their peak weekday usage. They may be at 98 percent or 97 percent of their weekday usage on the weekends. So, it gives us some confidence that everybody being in home, we see those type of things. We need to have concerns with the staycation affect. Something we call the staycation affect is that usually in the summer. There is a certain percentage of the people who leave the city may have gone on vacation. And those people would be residing in the area. So, you have that as a plus and add to the load. On the negative side, you have people who are coming to the city. The tourists and other people visiting, as well as hotels and other commercial establishments down. So, somewhere, there's some pluses and minuses. We have identified some areas

that we've seen that we are forecasting in increased load. Those are residential areas. We have designed over a dozen jobs to upgrade feeders in those areas and we continue to monitor it. Every day, we need to take a sample aim of the energy pattern and we monitor it and compare it to last year and tried to identify differences. And we will continue to do that every week as we go further and further into the summer.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I guess, you know, we saw the New York Times report about, you know, a lot of wealthier New Yorkers leaving the city. So, you know, even if you have the overall power usage, you don't expect to be unusual, the district sham is going to be different. And so, like, you know, we are all very, very concerned about, you know, communities that are already-- that are going to have the highest concentrations of people that have already been, you know, really hard hit with COVID-- that we're going to be able to maintain power to those communities during the peak summer season.

PATRICK MCHUGH: So we sha-- I'm sorry.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I just want to-- I mean, you think that the system has flexibility to deliver the power where it is needed.

PATRICK MCHUGH: So we share your concern and we've been on this for weeks now, you know, reviewing this and getting ready for this as we go into the summer. So we believe that we have identified areas where we've run increased usage and seen if there's any kind of overloads and we have quickly moved to address those. So we feel comfortable in that. The other thing we did is say we are not going to know everything. We are not going to be able to predict this. This is a model of something that is not been done. And that is why we quickly moved to secure those 12 two megawatt generators. Two megawatt is pretty substantial energy usage in the network and we felt that those would give us flexibility to give us time to monitor what's happening on the system as we go into June. Later in June, we will probably get a better handle on where the load is appearing and we can deploy those generators. So, we have 12 additional. We have a fleet of 20. We have added 12. 12 we put preemptively out there ready to support on a heat

wave and we will continue to evaluate what else we may do as the summer progresses.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Would you testify as-- you may have missed it. What is the maximum, the typical peak usage for the city?

PATRICK MCHUGH: Typical peak usage for the system is the seer we are forecasting 12,000 megawatts. Typical summer is about 13,250. So, we are down about 10 percent from a typical summer peak forecast system wide. But, again, work concern, like everybody--

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: [interposing] Can I add no idea predict to be down? What factors? What produces that?

PATRICK MCHUGH: So, a lot of the significant office buildings. You know, you've got Berkeley Center, Madison Square Garden, Broadway. Other type of facilities. Malls. Strip malls. Those type of things. Businesses consumption compared to residential consumption, business consumption is typically much higher than typical residential consumption, especially on the hotter days. That is what is helping to drive that. But no way, shape, or form does that say in residential

areas there is concern. I think there is concern both in the residential building if you add additional capacity and demand in the building. You may have internal problems, as well the street in the local area by the power will local problems develop? And that's an area we are trying to stay focused on.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I'd like to know how do you decided if you, quote unquote, have to shed? How do you decide where you're going to do that?

PATRICK MCHUGH: So, in an even last year in Brooklyn, we had a grid that was a 4k overhead grid in that area. That was supplied with 15 supply feeders. We design it to lose any two. And then, when we lose two feeders, the load then picks up on the remaining 13. So, if you have 15, you lost two, 13 are now carrying that load and it's designed to do that. In the even last year, which is a good example, we went up to a six feeder contingency. Has six of the 15 feeders out of service with another station having some problems, as well. So, basically, seven. So, seven of the 15 feeders feeding the area were out of service, meaning the remaining load, remaining energy, was being carried

on those eight. Those eight were now overloaded in, if we did take quick action, the most probable engineering analysis was that all he would have failed. They would continue to cascade. In that event, they cascaded. Between the first and second feeder outage was many, many hours. From the second to the third, you were talking may be an hour. The third to the fourth, maybe 45 minutes. The fifth-- you know, so, you get to cascade the condition-- you know, the designs of our system is unlike any, really, around the United States. When you lose a feeder, customers don't lose power in the grid network that we have. The other feeders pick up. So, it is a very reliable and makes us the most reliable in the United States. But what you do get into his cascading conditions. If you lose eight couple of feeders, you have not lost eight customers and you are impacting the larger area of the grid. And the operators are trained to make a decision. Is that going to cascade to take out all the equipment?, In that case, last summer, if we would've waited, we would have had to fix all 15 feeders before we could restore people supposed to we just have 266. Because, when we shut them down, we had a good

feeders and we were able to start picking people up rather quickly and had about half the people picked up and have the customers are stored, but, I believe it was midnight that night. I hope that helps.

KYLE KIMBALL: And to your question, Council member, first of all load shedding is a last resort and, but to answer your question more directly, I think that was a good answer specifically, but you shed where the problem is to avoid a longer-- you don't just pick an area of town and say, hey, we need some power from here because these other people needed over here. It is that there is a problem here. We need to shed here so that we don't have a longer outage here.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I was going to follow up because that was exactly what I wanted to know. I appreciate that. Thank you. Just briefly, talking about a post-COVID-- if there is such a thing as post-COVID-- in terms of customer shut offs, how many customers a year do you shut off for nonpayment?

KYLE KIMBALL: It's a couple of hundred, I believe.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Just a couple of hundred.

KYLE KIMBALL: We can get back to you with a specific number. I saw something floating around. But I think it is a couple hundred a year. I'm not entirely sure. But we are not really shunning anyone off now, as you mentioned.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I understand that, but I think as Chair Brannan made, at some point, we're going to go back to business here and I would like to know, you know, what your plans are to deal with customers that are behind in their electric bill.

KYLE KIMBALL: So, we are doing a couple of things. And I would say there is not necessarily post-COVID, but summer and post summer. During the summer, we are not going to do shut offs. We are waiving all fees. People who want to go on payment plans, we are busy and very flexible with that. And that is really getting us through the summer months. In addition, we are supportive of the cities petition in front of-- the Mayor's Office petition in front of the public service commission to provide bill credits for the summer to folks who are

enrolled in a low and moderate income programs. So, we were doing a number of things to sort of ease the financial burden so that, one, people feel like they have access to their air-conditioners this summer and are not necessarily making those economic choices. But then, also, working with folks who can pay their bill, but they just need a different arrangement to pay it. Or that kind of thing. So, we are being very flexible there. And I think then there is the post summer era that is something that I can't tell you what the plan is there other than everything we are doing now is going to continue through the summer months and then we will work closely with the city and the public service commission to figure out what to do for customers who are facing financial hardship in the fall. The other PS is there is a federal program called LIHAP, low income heating assistance program, I believe. It's money that comes from the federal government, distributed through the state to our low income customers through the city. So there is number of different programs in place to help ease the financial burden.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I appreciate that.
Thank you. I am curious also about the rate

increase. Can you tell us how much of Con Ed's electricity is-- what energy is used to produce it? Where is the oil, natural gas? I guess some percentage of renewables.

KYLE KIMBALL: I'm sorry. Cut out a little bit. What was the question?

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: How our electricity is produced. Whether through oil, natural gas, coal? I don't think we use coal, but would the fuels used? And renewables? The percentage. We get our-- how our electricity is manufactured?

KYLE KIMBALL: I don't know the exact percentages, but-- and maybe Susanne DesRoches, who is going to testify. The city is going to testify a leader can talk about their planning mix, but, essentially, the vast majority of the electricity in the city is produced through natural gas or nuclear. Those are the two largest. And then a much smaller percentage through renewables, but hopefully more as time passes and those renewable assets get installed, like offshore wind farm off the coast of Long Island and that sort of thing. I would say 02 very little is through call and, if it is through cold, it is not power that is produced in New York State. It's power

that is produced elsewhere. Maybe power coming in through Pennsylvania or Points West through the PJM network. But that's the vast majority of how it is broken down. Nuclear, natural gas are the vast majority of it and then some components of renewables.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: [inaudible
00:50:18]

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: And I would add the hydros, as well.

KYLE KIMBALL: I'm sorry. Hydro, as well. Yes. Yes. Thank you.

PATRICK MCHUGH: And it--

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: And it-- Go ahead. Please.

PATRICK MCHUGH: I would just, you know, remind that we don't own the power plant. Right? We get the power from the New York ISO, just to make sure everybody is on the same playing field on that.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I guess, though, that, with natural gas prices so low, I am curious to know why the cost of electricity is rising so significantly.

KYLE KIMBALL: So, if you look at--
And we can provide this information to the Council later. So, if you look at a historical look at the bill, the average residential customer that uses around 300 kilowatt hours, they have-- the bills really haven't changed much since 2010. So, that is for the average residential customer. But, within that bill, there is three different components of the bill. There is the supply cost, which you are referencing-- So, that is just a pure pass-through. We dive the electricity on your behalf through the NYISO and then you are a charge that amount. And that is just-- we're just passing through the costs.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: And have those costs gone down as natural gas--

KYLE KIMBALL: Those costs have gone down because of the price of natural gas. Delivery cost, which is the amount of money that: medicine mused to invest in the system were to pay fixed costs has gone up. So, that is when you see rate increases or when they go for rate cases. That is us asking for specific investments to make in the system, like the investments that we made this summer. Those are from rate cases in the past. And that is gone up.

And then the third component of the bill of the three is taxes. And that's us-- we pay about 1.9 billion dollars a year in taxes to the city. And so, it's, basically, third and a third and a third. Right now, the biggest component-- in 2019, the biggest component of someone's bill is actually taxes. And then the second component of the bill is the delivery charge. And then the third is the supply costs. And so, that is essentially what happens. A lot of the costs there is either delivery cost because we need to invest more in the system or taxes are being raised. In this most recent rate case where we asked for 810 million-- it's a three-year case. We asked for 810 million on the electric side. Half of the rate case increase we asked for was just to pay taxes to the city. So, about 400 million was going to the city for taxes. The other 400 million is left over between investments we want to make in the system or the other component that we have to pay within our delivery cost are called what is called public interference. So, whenever the city wants to move a water main or bound, for example, East Coast resiliency there with the wall around lower Manhattan. If we have to move, you know, a gas line,

the steam line, and electric line, a feeder, we would normally not have moved it, but we have to because the city has asked us to, we have to. It is part of our franchise. And so that actually has costs. So, of the 400 million that is left after taxes from a rate increase, big component of that, probably about half of it, is public interference paying for public works projects that the city has asked us to do. And then, the rest is what is left over as investment into the system.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Okay. I appreciate that. I'm going to turn it over to Chair Brannan, but there's just two more quick points I would like to make. I just want to echo something that he is said, you know, in the Northwest Bronx I have a significant part of my district that is served by overhead wires and it is not always as reliable as we would like. I do want to give a shout out from Eric Soto and Evelyn Oliver. They are pretty responsive to our office and I want to say thank you to that. I am going to turn it over to Chair Brannan, but I'll come back. Thank you.

KYLE KIMBALL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair Cohen. Thank you. Kyle, you will forgive me, but it sounds like a hell of a time for a rate increase. We have almost 1 million New Yorkers are out of work. What are we basing the 10 percent increase on?

KYLE KIMBALL: So, the increase is the things I just mentioned. So, we have to make some investments in the system for resiliency, reliability, and Patrick can talk about those points that we make investments ended the system. But then, about half of the rate increase was taxes. So, the 810 million that we asked for, I think about close to 400 million is just to pay taxes to the city. And then the other piece is for public interference cost. What that means is that the city has asked us to do it and those [inaudible 00:55:43] socialized. And then the rest is investment into the system.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are any of those, the investments you're making, are these emergency investments or are these investments that you were planning to make anyway?

PATRICK MCHUGH: I wouldn't call them emergency investments. Those are investments fact, a, we were either planning for--

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right.

PATRICK MCHUGH: increased liability in an area or adding a new substation. I go to the Bronx. East 179th Street. We are building a new substation on the East 179th Street. So, a large majority is planned to work that we are doing took at the system ready for the years to come.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right. But, so these aren't investments-- these are investments that would be happening even if we weren't in the middle of a pandemic?

PATRICK MCHUGH: Those are investments, yes, that were-- Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, was there and he thought given to causing those investments? You know, your customers are going to have to pay for it at a time like this.

KYLE KIMBALL: We have thought about a lot of different ways to ease the financial burden. We find that, you know, the investments that are giving us comfort around this summer and hopefully giving you comfort around this summer our choices that we made a couple of years ago to invest in the system. And so, that is the way the rate case

process works is we are making investment choices on behalf of our customers to keep it reliable. And so, we have to keep that going in the face of, you know, if you looked at our climate change vulnerabilities study. We have to make investments in the system because we are increasingly vulnerable to the elements.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm not--

KYLE KIMBALL: [inaudible 00:57:24]

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm not suggesting that we could-- you know, we don't have the luxury of putting climate change on hold or putting the climate crisis on hold. I'm just worried about the here and now and the idea of a rate increase when, you know-- I understand you've got bills to pay. I don't know that the customers would feel that Con Ed deserves a rate increase right now. What is the approximate monthly dollar amount that residential customers would be expected to pay?

KYLE KIMBALL: The average residential customer, the typical bill is around 84 dollars.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, 84 dollars above what they were--

KYLE KIMBALL: No. No. No. All in.
That's the typical bill for 84 dollars. Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, but right. So
how much more is that with the rate increase? What
would it be?

KYLE KIMBALL: It is a couple of
percentage points more. I think it is may be three
dollars more. I can get back to you on the exact
numbers.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. The air
conditioner plan that the city rolled out, which is
something I support-- you know, I'm interested in
the cost of it, obviously, but how much discussion
did you have with the administration to prepare for
this plan? Was there a lot of conversations around
how this would be implemented? Is the grid could
handle it? That kind of stuff?

KYLE KIMBALL: Yes. We have had great
coordination-- excuse me. Sorry. I'm reading
Council member Koo's bill. I can see his bill on his
screen. Yes. We are forced very closely with the
city on their AC program ideas and as well as
NYSERTA, as well as the Public Service Commission.
And part of that coordination has been preparing

for-- actually doing exercise with the city to prepare for any crisis we might face. Or, in the meantime, on this AC program, thinking around where these air conditioners might go and how those impacts-- how those might impact the grid. And I think the conclusion of that is we are not particularly concerned with 60 or so thousand air conditioners going around the system or being dispersed around the system. What we have been working with the city and trying to work with the city's understanding that there was concentrations. So, 16,000 air conditioners is not necessarily a problem for the overall network, but on a block by block basis, if you add a lot of capacity at the last transformer or, you know, on a block by block basis, we have been, you know, thinking about looking out what those impacts could be. But, yes. We have been in close coordination with them on the program.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is it correct that between January 1st and April 1st of this year, Con Ed has seen 2 billion dollars in profit?

KYLE KIMBALL: So, that is Con Edison-- That is CEI. So, the utility that we are working about is Con Edison Corporation of New York. But

there is a larger parent company Con Edison Inc. that has a number of different investments across the United States. So, for example, I think we're the world's second largest-- sorry. The second largest renewable developer in North America, for example. So, the profits that you are talking about are at the parent company level across the portfolio of assets that the company owns. That is not necessarily the profit level at the regulated utility. That profit level is regulated by the Public Service Commission.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah. I'm just having trouble squaring a 10 percent increase at a time like this when the parent company or whatever it is was brought in 2 billion dollars.

PATRICK MCHUGH: So, Kyle, I would just add that [inaudible 01:01:22] referring to, the latest has been on the supply costs. So, last information going into the summer, our rate increase was put into effect at the end of last year. Going into this summer, we have had a supply increase costs of nearly double digit supply increase cost from last year. So, just want to make sure those--

KYLE KIMBALL: And just to be clear, as I said, there are three components of the bill.

There is supply, which is the power itself that we go out and procure on behalf of the customer and then there is delivery. So, that is supply cost, that is not a place that Con Edison makes profit. That is the peer cost of the energy that is passed through to the customer. And every summer, the New York SIO, independent system operator, and the Public Service Commission and the utilities. Basically, there is a formula that is put together to decide what the costs are going to be for the energy over the summer. So, the supply cost that you were talking about, anything, Council member Brannan, that is not Con Edison profit. That is going directly to the people who make the energy. We don't make any of the electricity. It is not something that we can control.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, what assistance is Con Edison going to provide for customers who can't afford their bills?

KYLE KIMBALL: So, we are doing payment plans to the extent that folks can. We are waiving the fees and doing all this stuff through summer months and we, obviously, have suspended shut off or service terminations for the ability to non-pay and,

hopefully, in conjunction with the city, we will be providing, you know, 30 to 40 dollar bill credits to low income customers per month to offset the cost of energy during the summer.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Now, do you have a moratorium on cutoffs?

KYLE KIMBALL: We do.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how long? Is there an end date?

KYLE KIMBALL: There is not a specific end date, but we have said through the summer months. So the implied in that is, you know, sometime in September.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I certainly hope customers are not going to experience outages, but, if they do, will they get a refund?

KYLE KIMBALL: We do have programs for, you know, food spoilage and, you know, any costs that businesses incur from power outages.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. But there is nothing special in place?

KYLE KIMBALL: Nothing special in place around outages. No.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: All right. You are talking before about renewable energy which, one of the reasons we are all fans of renewable energy because it is cost-saving, cost reducing of cost-efficient. How does that square with the rate increase? Just there is a lot of sort of cognitive dissonance here I'm trying to figure out.

KYLE KIMBALL: So, renewable energy, the idea of it being less expensive or more efficient is, obviously, after it is installed and in place.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But isn't it cheaper for you?

KYLE KIMBALL: We are-- No. I mean, not necessarily. I mean, we are supportive of renewable energy, but, in terms of the electrons themselves, we are-- in terms of moving electrons from point A to point B, we are indifferent. As a policy level, we are not indifferent, but as a matter of electricity, we are indifferent.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And as far as the rate increase, I mean, is there an equitable approach to not, you know-- folks that are already struggling to pay their bills? I mean, do we have to raise the rates on them?

KYLE KIMBALL: Well, I think, you are a low or moderate income person who is going to receive a, you know, 30 to 40 dollar bill credit, you know, this summer, that is more than offsetting any rate increases that you're going to see from us.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: All right. So, tell me, broadly, I guess, in as simple layman terms as you can so even I can understand, what is being done differently now to prepare for this summer versus summers in the past? Understanding that, you know, the fact that Broadway is dark and Madison Square Gardens is closed, you know, understanding that the power not being used there doesn't help me out in Biker Heights or, you know, out in Southeast Queens. So what's being done for this moment that we're in right now?

KYLE KIMBALL: Sure. I can start it and then Patrick and Matt can come in. I think, first, what's different is that we are-- I think this summer we are much more coordination with the city and emergency management in preparations in terms of our communication. I find that the Mayor's Office is very on top of our planning and the load forecast this summer. I think, second, we have made

very directed investments in the areas, I think, and took the learnings of last summer and, particularly in the Flatbush network and, maybe, investments to improve that system, but also minimize the number of people that would be affected by an outage in that. So, by making the circuit smaller. I think, third-- And Patrick can go into more detail on this-- is specifically focusing on NYCHA. So, in February, we started with NYCHA and did a study of all their development and our concern was that there were not necessarily problems in NYCHA developments with the grid, but rather they were at capacity. So, to the extent they needed more capacity to add cooling, for example, we were going to need upgrades to the amount of electricity-- deliver electricity to in NYCHA development. So, we studied all of the NYCHA developments and looked at specific places where we could make upgrades to improve NYCHA capacity to deliver-- to add electricity load within its developments. So, that is another big difference. I think, and for, we have undertaken effort to completely retool our communications and our ability to communicate with elected and stakeholders during an outage. So, hopefully, we will be better about

that this summer, as well. And then, of course, for us, what we are doing for supporting the city and its AC program, as well. Those all feel very different this year.

PATRICK MCHUGH: And I would add to that, Kyle, right-- So, we have been looking and studying this. Usually by March or April we would've decided what the summer peak is going to be and we would have been kind of done with that. We are involved every week looking at the energy consumption and preparing that and going through it and fine detail with engineers and load forecasters around the city. We went and the four models. We are taking the worst. When we get that output, is it is an increase in load in an area-- as I said, over a dozen jobs we put out the field to upgrade cables to address that. We are working with the city as they deploy those air-conditioners to try to find hotspots or areas where they are accumulating a lot of them and trying to address the on a preemptive basis. So, we want that information. So, a lot of communication around that. And last thing I would say as we approached our making sure equipment and service in anything that is out of service, we gave it a very strong residential

feel this spring to make sure that we were focusing on the residential areas to make sure any equipment out of service, where giving that higher priority of getting it back in service as we get ready for the summer. Those are some of the things that are different this year. And I would add that the 12 generators-- One of our concerns going into this summer, you know, with an underground system, we could've spent a lot of effort saying, hey, this area, we think, is going to increase. And let's dig up the street and let's do all this work in a COVID environment where resources are down and people are down. The amount of resource that we have two into that work or we said, you know what? Something mobile, nimble, you know, we can get into a hotspot very quickly and support the city, so we quickly mobilized and were able to obtain those 12 large generators in the Northeast of the United States. We got our hands on those very quickly to get them into New York City and ready to go for the summer. So, that is another big step that we made. And I just want to stress the mobility of them because all these models-- any model has error and they give us some

flexibility in the error on where any of the load may increase. Then we can move those accordingly.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I just have a few more. I mean, I understand you guys don't have a crystal ball, but based on your experience in the field and what your engineers are telling me you, is there cause for concern this summer that this summer is going to be different from other summers? Is there cause for concern where, you know, more folks staying at home because of COVID that is going to give us an unprecedented summer or are you guys confident that, you know, we're going to be okay?

PATRICK MCHUGH: So I would lead that, Justin, when we get ready for every summer, we are getting ready for, you know, peak design. We don't underestimate any part of this. We do agree that this is going to be different and anything different is going to need a lot of attention, so it is going to be more difficult for us from an engineering perspective to really be in day and then day out digging in to understand what is happening. Where new pockets are developing. Because, year to year, things are pretty stable and the energy consumption, if it is new and large, will be new buildings and

stuff like that. And we already spend a lot of time, you know, doing those studies and being ready for that. So, this is going to have us, you know, really make sure we are totally engaged as each week goes by in the summer. Not just waiting to that peak day, to that hundred degree day. But we are going to have to be engaged every week as the temperature goes up to really study what is happening and where pockets are. You know, we never said it is going to be nothing. You know, things will happen and we want to be prepared that, if things happen, that we are, A, are ready and quickly respond and communicate well to all the stakeholders when that happens.

KYLE KIMBALL: The only other thing I would add to that is one thing that will be complicated for us this summer is our ability to respond to a particular outage. You know, our typical model is one of density, right? We get together in a-- if there is a big emergency, we get together and a closed space and it is called a circ and that is where we, basically, focus the entire company on a specific outage or a set of events. So, our ability to respond to those events both in the street and as a corporation are going to be tested by

our, you know, social distancing and COVID-19 measures to keep our workers safe in the street. So, that is something we've never had to deal with, right? So, keeping everyone safe in the street, both the customers and our workers as they respond that outages in the context of COVID-19 in maintaining social distancing, having the proper PPE. Both all the new things that we are going to be experiencing this summer.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Yeah. I'm going to turn it back to the Chair Cohen, but, I think I speak for a lot of my colleagues and that you guys are typically fairly responsive and helpful when things go wrong, but I certainly think I speak for my colleagues in the sense that we don't want things to go wrong. Right? I mean, power goes out in my district reliably every summer. A lot of it is overhead power lines. Sometimes it is in the storm. Sometimes it's just too hot. You know, I can set my watch that power will go out in my district this summer. Guaranteed. In addition to the fact that now we are having more stress on the grade because of people staying home because of COVID. I guess, you know, our concern overall is that, again, you guys

are responsive and helpful and you will get out there and help us get the power back up and running, but we would like to get to a place where that doesn't have to happen. We can be proactive instead of reactive. And I think that is where a lot of the frustration comes from. You know, sort of saying, you know, well, as the power goes out, we will fix that, great. But, you know, what happened in Midtown last summer that made national headlines happens in the outer boroughs every summer and no one, you know, except for maybe the local newspaper, talks about it. So, you know, this is very much what we are dealing with and the outer boroughs. And the Rose sponsor of this is great, but I'd love to have a summer where I don't have to them be calling Con Ed freaking out because the power is out in my district. So, this is really our concern here. And, you know, sounds like you guys are pretty prepared or, at least, I don't feel like you are worried. I think we are certainly more worried than you are. It doesn't sound like you are worried. You know, I hope you are right. I hope I am wrong. You know, I don't want to be dealing with this this summer. None of those two. With everything else going on. So, I appreciate that, but

I'm going to give it back to Chair Cohen so other folks can ask questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Justin. I am going to turn it over to Chair Levine.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask you a few questions about our plan to distribute air conditioning units to low income families. Would that be appropriate for you, Commissioner Criswell? Is this being run by OEM?

KYLE KIMBALL: She might be muted.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. I don't know the Director Bavishi from Pauses of Resiliency. I think it is OEM, though.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: I'm sorry, Chair Levine. I missed your question.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: No problem at all. I wanted to ask about our plan to distribute the air-conditioning units to low income families. I wasn't sure if it is your office, Madame Director, or if it was Office of Emergency Management.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: We're happy to answer your direct question, but can-- should we do that in the next panel after our testimony?

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Ah. Forgive me. Okay. I'm being admonished by Chair Cohen. In the interest of keeping things moving on, then I am going to have policies and I will come back to you at the appropriate time

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Mark, you don't have any questions for Con Ed at this point?

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: No. We will keep things moving. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: No problem. All right. So, I'm going as the moderator to call on members who have questions. I believe we have several. I also wanted to mention that we have been joined by Council member Levin.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Cohen. I will now call on Council members in the order they have used the Zoom raise hand function. If you would like to ask a question then you have not yet used the Zoom raise hand function, please raise it now. Council members, you will be limited to five minutes for your question and its answer in total. The Sergeant-at-arms will keep a timer and I will let you know when your time is up. You should be again once I have called on you in the Sergeant has

announced that you may begin before delivering your testimony. First, we will hear from Council member Koo followed by Council member Lander. Council member Koo.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Hi. Good morning, everyone. Yeah. Thank you for all the Chairs doing a very good job and the Committee staff, too. I have a question for Con Edison. First, you said you don't say no [inaudible 01:18:37], but I believe many commercial tenants, they have turned off notice sent out by Con Edison. So, you're [inaudible 1:18:48] right?

KYLE KIMBALL: So, people might be getting turnoff notices for-- So, you're asking specifically about commercial?

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah. Because I have a commercial tenant turn off notice here.

KYLE KIMBALL: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Right in front of me. Yeah.

KYLE KIMBALL: I can check. I believe it applies to everyone.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Because a lot of businesses have been open for more than two or three months.

KYLE KIMBALL: Absolutely. Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: They haven't even made one penny. You know?

KYLE KIMBALL: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, how can they have money to pay their bill and, meanwhile, they received turn off notice?

KYLE KIMBALL: I believe the turn off notice-- So, we still are sending turnoff notices. So, I can tell you in the context of residential, someone might get a turn off notice because, as they get a turn off notice, it actually helps them apply for public benefits as a residential customer. So, we won't necessarily turn it off or follow through with that and people have our guarantee that we won't do that for residential. I believe the same is true for commercial that we are still sending shutoff notices, but our policy is still in place that we won't be doing shutoffs. Matt Sniffen, I don't know if you have more color on that for commercial tenants.

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: I believe you are correct. There is some benefit to them getting the turn off notice for them to apply for assistance, but we are not turning anyone off through the summer.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: No. But I'm talking about commercial tenants. The restaurants--

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: Same thing applies.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Same thing? One guy showed me two turn off notice from them.

KYLE KIMBALL: Yeah. We're still sending the notices. I know it is confusing, but we are still sending the notices, but we are not turning anyone off in residential or--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, they can ignore it? They can ignore the turn off notice?

KYLE KIMBALL: I wouldn't say ignoring, but I would say, yeah. Like I said, residential folks need it for benefits, but we are not turning commercial customers off, so they can do what they want with it.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: And also I am reading a bill from Con Edison. Besides your-- you have a lot of charges. You know, supply charges, delivery charges, and under the supply charge, there

is like four different charges. Under the delivery charges, you have like four different charges, too. It's like everything a la carte. You know? How many charges-- basic service charge and processing, the payment. I had to pay a dollar 28 for you guys to process my charge. I send you a check, you charge my credit a dollar 28. You know, if I have direct deposit, you charge me a dollar 28 for processing the charge and then you have merchant [inaudible 01:21:44] charge, other charge, sales tax. This is almost 40 percent of the bill. So, I wish other people can do business [inaudible 01:21:55] you so you tell all the charges of other people. So I think we have to look into these to see how you cut off these charges. You have too many charges.

KYLE KIMBALL: I'm happy to--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [inaudible
01:22:07]

KYLE KIMBALL: I'm happy to sit with you and walk through the bill any time. It can be confusing, I agree, but the best way--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [inaudible
01:22:16]

KYLE KIMBALL: to think of that--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah. Why do you have a delivery charge and a supply charge?

KYLE KIMBALL: So, the supply charge is the cost of the electricity itself.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Yeah. I understand that. Yeah.

KYLE KIMBALL: We don't make any electricity. We just send it to you on your behalf. And so, that is the supply charge. The delivery charge is money we are spending to improve the system, pay for the fixed cost of having an electricity operator and then, third, his taxes to the city. That's, essentially, the cost of delivery.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, besides customers pay for the sales tax, right? Every customer pays for sales tax for the charges and you guys pay for the sales tax, too, for the city? I mean, you--

KYLE KIMBALL: Yeah. We pay property taxes to the city.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I mean, no. What kind of tax you pay to the city as a company--

KYLE KIMBALL: 1.9 million dollars.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: besides property?

KYLE KIMBALL: 1.9 billion dollars to
the city.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: For what? For
profit?

KYLE KIMBALL: For [inaudible 01:23:23]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Okay. Thank you.
Bye-bye.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council
member Koo. Next, we will hear from Council member
Lander followed by Council member Ampry-Samuel.
Council member Lander.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you to the
Chairs and Kyle and Patrick and team. It's good to
see you. I want to ask a little more about how you
are thinking about your own emergency preparedness.
And, I guess, it is kind of to sub questions. Kyle,
I was intrigued by your point that one challenge you
might face if you have an emergency event this summer
is constrain ability to work together in the way that
you have traditionally done. Of course, for you
guys, that is especially risky because an event could
mean a power outage that affected our ability to

communicate together through Zoom and other communications technology. So, I guess I want to know kind of what tabletop or you guys have done to think about how you would do emergency response given the COVID challenges in the case of an outage. And then, my second question is just this whole COVID crisis, which, obviously, I and, you know, I think most of us did not see coming, has me thinking about risks and why the potential crisis events are in a whole new way. And so, I just wonder if you could walk us through how you guys do that. Like what do you guys see you this summer? But, I guess, also in general as like those scenarios that hold the most potential for causing some catastrophic impact and what kinds of preparedness and response planning have you engaged? And I agree that all of the investment work you are talking about in order to prevent those things from happening that is critical. I am sure with Justin on that, but, you know, we see how far beyond our control things are. So, I guess, if you could answer those two questions. One, generally, what are the risk scenarios and how are you guys trying to be ready to respond to them and to the particular challenges of doing that amidst this

summer when we can't just all get together and the response challenges that that causes.

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: Kyle, I'll take these. So, my organization is emergency preparedness, so--

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Great. Thank you.

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: [inaudible 01: 25:42] thinking about this and we are partnering with many of the city agencies. So, while Kyle said it would be difficult to, you know, get all organizations in one room, we have set up two scenarios, one where we would be totally remote much like we are doing today using Microsoft teams in our case. We hold meetings like this every day that we never did four months ago. Right? And then we have one with semi remote where we put groups of folks in different rooms in our headquarters. We are standing by the no more than 10 folks that are command staff would be together, say. And then, there supports would be in different rooms throughout the building. And we are drilling on that. So, we have set up that [inaudible 01:26:23] already. We actually had one fairly large storm already during the pandemic about 30,000 [inaudible 01:26:31] were out and we did it totally

remotely through our command setups. We did not have to muster. We did it remotely. Some of our engineering folks have been working from home and came in to support things like printing and things like that, but we were able to effectively manage the storm, actually, and got accolades from 30,000 customers, mostly in West Chester, to be honest, but that is typically where we have the bigger problems and storms. So we were able to manage that. We have really different scenarios right now. There is a variety of different risks on top of, you know, the pandemic itself is a risk to our employees. We've added a number of our employees affected, as you can imagine, but we are also looking at things like the fact that we had 1000 of our employees typically working remotely right now. So, we have effective communications issue right now has brought the risk to light, right, where normally we are working in our own building. The majority of our folks do not work from home, but our essential support teams are now working remotely and we are certainly dependent of the others on that, as well as electricity. Right? We need electricity in our homes, as well. So, we certainly appreciate our community during these

events, as well. So, but we are. We are drilling. We are working with the Mayor's Office of Resiliency, with OEM, to work on different scenarios and how we're going to [inaudible 01:27:51] events and we're building on our relationships, really, on a daily basis.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And just as a follow up, so I know that, obviously, at your headquarters, you know, in the event of a major blackout or something, I assume you have a backup power planned to be able to keep going and coordinated in order to address it, but, obviously, that is a big challenge, just as you say, that if you have got people everywhere spread out and they are in the area that might be hit, you can't give them a backup, I is. So, what sort of planning have you done to address that?

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: So, our buildings are ready to accept our employees back. So, I described that one storm we had. A number of our employees lost power and they came into the facility, maintained social distancing, and effectively worked on and our facility back, you're right, to have backup generators.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very much. Thank you, Chairs.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member Lander. Next, we will hear from Council member Ampry-Samuel followed by Council member Chin. Council member Ampry-Samuel.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Hi, everyone. So, first, I want to say thanks for the information that you provided related to the NYCHA and the conversations that you have had with the administration. But, of course, when we talking about NYCHA, it can't be referred to as like a total monolith because NYCHA developments in Chelsea is different than NYCHA developments in the Upper East Side. And for me, in particular-- I know Kyle already knows the question I'm going to ask-- is related to the NYCHA developments that are within the BQDM. And we already know that the reason why, you know, there are so many conversations around the Brooklyn Queens demand management response process was related to all of the complaints and different things like over usage of the grid and, you know, at

times we complained about the elevators going up and then finding out it was because of the turning down of the voltage in NYCHA developments. They already know all the concerns and conversations. So, can you just explain to me why it is happening with the BQDM and can you explain what is going on within the same conversation as to what is happening in East New York and in Brownsville with the high concentration of public housing? Again, different from other NYCHA developments. And within an already highly dense community and the fact that we already know that the rollout of the ACs, a lot of it started with a niece New York and I am hearing a lot of numbers coming out of Boulevard houses, which is part of the BQDM. So, can you just give us a sense of what is happening with that program? The process itself and the conversations that you are having with the city? So, it's about NYCHA, as well as the BQDM and what you're doing. What the conversation is, what the plans are? Because you already know the issues that we face the last year and the years before and when this all started back in 2014.

KYLE KIMBALL: Sure. Patrick, do you want to start?

PATRICK MCHUGH: Well, sure. The BQDM effort was really an effort around that region of Brooklyn Queens to help drive down load due to a substation issue. You know, that was we were trying to drive down customer usage in that area to address concern of supply into the area as opposed to local residential areas. And I think it was, you know, very, very successful data effort to help do that. I guess, in general, we talk about the NYCHA developments, wherever they are. We will continue to work with them to make sure that it is Street supply power into development and then there is internal development wiring. And we've got to continue to work with NYCHA together as a team to understand problems and issues and make sure that we are solving the correct problem when their issues going on. We need to look to make information more readily available. We have had reduced voltage situations where we had to reduce voltage as neighborhood gets into a contingency condition where an escalating position may be developing, but we continue to let people know about that. We continue to work with NYCHA to make sure we are identifying any issues at a time.

KYLE KIMBALL: [inaudible 01:32:26]

COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay.

Go--

KYLE KIMBALL: No. No. You go.

COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL:

[inaudible 01:32:28] So, we have had this conversation before, which is why there was a focus and the response effort around this particular region. And so, now the way are in the middle of COVID, now that we have this increased demand, now we have so many of those same families which already has been articulated by my colleagues. I'm just saying, specific to the BQDM, what are the plans? Because we are kind of back to where we were in 2013 and 2014 with all of the efforts that you put into this program and all the money that was spent on this program and all the partnerships with all of the different communities stakeholders and businesses. So, knowing that we are in the middle of this and knowing that now you have all these ACs on top of it, especially in that East New York area, so it sounds like it would be more than just, oh, we're going out conversations and talk about it with the administration. I'm asking you already know what

happened, so you can for-- so, what are we doing to address it because you already know what it was before.

KYLE KIMBALL: What I would add to Patrick's statement was the BQDM was incredibly helpful for us in terms of-- incredibly helpful to our customers in terms of offsetting expenses of a very expensive substation, but also demonstrating the principle that we do need people to use energy more efficiently. And so, to answer your question, we are taking a lot of-- BQDM is still very important to us. In this current rate case that was just approved, a big component of that rate case is--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

KYLE KIMBALL: So, the answer to your question in terms of what's next is going deeper and doing deeper levels of efficiency with residential customers and commercial customers and getting really-- just going deeper, right? And continuing to do that spreading the lessons that we took from BQDM and extrapolating those across the city to different parts of town. And then, lastly, on NYCHA, the piece is we have a dedicated person within Con Edison who focuses solely on NYCHA issues and

understands the developments. Works closely with Patrick on making sure we are making the right investments. But also we have done a lot of work with NYCHA on the voltage issue. So, as we talked about in the presentation in the beginning, one of the second to last resorts is voltage reduction. So, that is kind of just turning down the volume of the system in certain areas so that the wires have a chance to cool off a little bit. Most people don't see a difference in voltage, but those with older equipment, for example a NYCHA elevator, might see its settings affected. And so, what we have to do is work closely with NYCHA two, one, I'll let them know about voltage reductions and so having a dedicated communication channel during a voltage reduction, but, in advance of a voltage reduction, we have spent a lot of time with them helping them reset the settings on their elevators, but also making capacity upgrades that Patrick talked about so that voltage issues are not necessarily as much of an issue. But, if they are, helping them with the settings on their equipment so that they are less impacted. And so, having a dedicated focus on NYCHA, understanding those problems, trying to do with age development as

an individual case, as you mentioned, but then largely also taking the lessons from BQDM and really going deeper on energy efficiency. Because that is really important for us as a company.

COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much, Council member Ampry-Samuel. Next, we will hear from Council member Chin followed by Council member Holden. Council member Chin.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Thank you to the co-chairs and thank you to all the Con Ed representatives. I have a couple questions. One is actually following up about NYCHA because I have a lot of NYCHA development in my district and they are like one of the oldest ones in the city. They were severely affected by super storm Sandy and some of them actually have generators installed now on the rooftop. So, can you just slide give me some more specifics in terms of how are you working with some of the NYCHA development and in lower Manhattan Smith, Rutgers, LaGuardia and those developments. The second issue is that we also have a lot of senior

buildings, affordable housing section 8 buildings Mitchell Lama building. They are all very old and their infrastructures are very old. And so, if you could talk a little bit about how are you working with them to upgrade their equipment and any support that you are providing. And the third thing is to all these tenement buildings in Chinatown, the lower East side, a lot of them are over 100 years old. Every time there is a heat wave, everybody plugs into the air conditioner and the thing blows up. So, are you working also with HPD and with the landlord to really try to upgrade their electricity so that we don't see tragic fire or like service disruption, especially during the heat wave? Thank you.

PATRICK MCHUGH: So, I'll take the first part, Kyle, and then go over to you. I mean, we continue to work with NYCHA. As Kyle mentioned, we went-- this year, we-- going over a year ago, we've dedicated a lead person whose function was to meet with NYCHA and to study problems and review problems that they would want us to be making sure that we are digging into. And so, that was to help lead to those 29 development-- those 29 locations upgraded for this summer. We continue to work with them to do

that. On a separate basis, we prioritize all of our structures that feed these underground structures that feed NYCHA developments. So we prioritize those. They got more inspections. We do more engineering reviews on those. So we give it a, definitely, better more significant review and look at the NYCHA developments. I would say that what you mentioned there, though, is the developments themselves have a lot of internal wiring themselves, so we need to continue-- you know, that is beyond our scope. We continue to work with NYCHA to be working to upgrade the internal wiring to be able to be ready for, you know, the summer loads, the demand that is placed upon it. So, Kyle, I don't know if you have anything else to add.

KYLE KIMBALL: Yeah. I would say that-- I would echo what you said which is, you know, our scope is really working on the wires in the streets and to the extent like large developments like NYCHA, we have worked pretty closely on internal wiring. We do not, I think, as a matter of course, consult with specific buildings as a policy matter. You know, focusing on Mitchell Lama or tenement style buildings in terms of wholesale advice on upgrading their own

internal equipment or what we would call customer equipment. We, of course, work with them on as they request additional surveys, but we are really-- we kind of don't really focus on the internal wiring within buildings as part of our scope.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But can you do that? Because they are your customers and in order, you know, to utilize your expertise and working with the city to make sure that your customers get the services that they deserve? I mean, a lot of these buildings are very old and is Con Ed has the expertise and the resources to help, the day is what we expect you to do because, otherwise, there is going to be tragedy. Then we have seen it, you know, when it overloads. You know, there are fires and it's because of everybody plugging in. During the winter plugging in a heating system and in the summer everybody, you know, plugging in their air-conditioning. So, I think that is something that is corporate responsibility. I hope that you would really look into partnering with the city and really provide some support and resources and near expertise to really solve--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member Chin. Next we will hear from Council member Holden followed by Council member Menchaca. Council member Holden.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Do you me?

KYLE KIMBALL: Yep.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. Thanks so much. Thank you, Chairs, and thanks to all the Con Ed folks for the testimony. I just want to talk about smart meter installation. You said it is resuming. National grid installed Smart meters almost 10 years ago. What took Con Ed so long? And my second question related to that is what does this mean in the access to homes? Like the initial installation of the Smart meters?

KYLE KIMBALL: So, the first piece is that there is different types of smart meters. There is what is called AMR or AMI. And we are installing the latest technology called AMI which is, essentially, we are putting a meter inside a home that communicates back to Con Edison without us having to drive by. That also involved-- Or having

us to visit the home at all. And what that means is we had to create a mesh network in partnership with the city using streetlamps. We had to go through a number of different processes, but in we have, obviously, rolled out the installation to do that. But, so what national grid may have installed is a very different type of automatic meter reading that still involved the physical intervention. I would say second is that we only got approval for this from the PSC about, I guess, maybe five or six years ago. But what we are installing is the latest technology and it is a very different product than, really, any other utility house.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, have you started to install this?

KYLE KIMBALL: So, what we are doing-- Yes. The second partier question. So, we did suspend AMI installations during the COVID crisis. We are in figuring out as a company how to begin those installations because we want really need to get that back on track. So, what we are doing is we are probably going to resume AMI installations with those that we can do from the outside. So, there are a number of people that have meters on the outside of

their homes that we can replace those without any interaction with the customer. The second is we will do big meter banks. So, there are certain buildings that have, you know, the higher density buildings that have all the meters in the basement, so we will make appointments with customers, reconfirm the appointments that we already have, and then go in and replace those meter banks inside the higher density buildings. And then the last stage will be the one for residential customers or we have to ring the doorbell and go into someone's basement and, hopefully, that will be toward the latter part of the summer. With all of those interactions, we're going to have the proper PPE. We've been working on ways to let customers know that we are coming. You know, ring the doorbell, step back. We're going on masks, gloves, that kind of thing. Different PPE in place to ensure the customer feels safe there that interaction.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Believe it or not, it is a big issue in my district. We have a lot of seniors who are susceptible to these scams where people come to the door posing as Conrad meter readers and, obviously, burglarize the house. So,

when do you expect this whole process to be finished with the installation of these smart meters for the whole city?

KYLE KIMBALL: There is a component. I can come back to you. The timeline is moved a little bit, but we are about 60 or 70 percent done with the smart meters, so we are pretty close. But I would say we are hoping to be done with this, certainly, within 2021.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: All right. So, I just want to talk about that rate increase because I think now, to have an electrical rate increase Con Ed is proposing is kind of a kick in the head to New Yorkers. I don't think now is the time. I think this should be postponed, at least, until we are past the pandemic. Because, you know, I may just talk about my district for a second and then that is my last question. My electrical service is mostly overhead wires like some of the other Councilmembers had mentioned. We had outages every summer, especially. Especially during storms. Will the rate increase-- you know, because I asked this question every year of Con Ed. You know, we're going to pay a rate increase, can we expect fewer outages? And I

always get the answers yes, but we still say, looks like, the same amount. Is the investment in the overhead? You know, the transformers are usually the things that get hit by lightning or some other problem. Can we expect better service with the rate increase?

KYLE KIMBALL: So, we are consistently recognize-- I think it is important to address this narrative of--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

KYLE KIMBALL: of the outages. So we are consistently recognized by the data that's provided to the PSC that we are the most reliable utility in the United States and that is in part because we have designed an underground network that has two contingencies and then we have an overhead system that also has a number of contingencies built in. So, of we are considered to be the most reliable. And our customers have paid for that and are paying for that through their bills. Having said that, you are always going to have outages. There is no system in the world that does not have outages and that is because there are a lot of things that cause outages. Sometimes it's equipment failure.

Sometimes it is animals. Sometimes it is mylar balloons. Sometimes a car hits a pole. The things that we can control and the equipment that we invest and then we feel like that every year, that we make investments in the system, it is become the system that much more reliable. And we continued to invest and hope to improve upon that. Having said that, summer does bring challenges because people are using electricity a lot more, especially relative the winter. And so, investment has to be coupled with efficiency. So, we have to make sure the people are using their energy more efficiently and that is why we are hoping that people will install energy efficient air conditioners. For example those or smaller units. And, yes. Investment in the system does yield a more reliable system. Having said that, there is nothing that is foolproof and so, if there are outages, we also spent time making sure that the outages are as short as possible and that we are communicating with people as best as possible so they know what to anticipate.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much, Council member Holden. And now we will hear from Council member Menchaca.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Hi, everyone.
Hi, Kyle and team. I wanted to ask about the usage comment that you made about usage being lower in residential areas and commercial zones. What is the peak usage at NYCHA houses like in Redhook, for example, and at what point does the grid overload to the point where it shuts down?

PATRICK MCHUGH: Okay. So, I don't have statistics in front of me of what a specific location is and what it peaks as. A typical residential load, depending on is that group of people are working, not working, there are different load curves on when those peaks occur. And, many times a residential peak may not occur when the local area is peaking. You may have the building using it peak energy consumption, but the local area around it had peaked at 5 p.m., but yet is building now peaks later on during the day or at 10 or 11 o'clock at night. Many areas of Brooklyn and Queens peak at 10 or 11-- you know, nine, 10 o'clock at night when the sun is down. And that is one of the descriptions when we talk about solar. [Inaudible 01:50:38] solve that problem. Well, solar, during a lot of the areas in

Queens and Brooklyn when the system is peaking, the sun is already down. So, and it doesn't really hit a system design, say, in areas is forecast to see a certain amount of megawatts. When it goes over that limit, it doesn't shut down. The equipment is designed for multiple contingencies to show--

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Can I pause you really quick? And I'll say thanks for kind of review on the technology piece. If you could, get back to us on what Redhook looks like. I know Redhook has vulnerable equipment and infrastructure and so the houses become really important thing to review.

KYLE KIMBALL: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So, we can get back on more specific-- especially NYCHA across the city would be great. I'm looking for Redhook. And what lessons did we learn from 2019 that Con Ed implemented to prevent further blackouts?

PATRICK MCHUGH: So, I would, if you take the two issues-- one is we thoroughly investigated both events. The Midtown West stand flushing the event. Midtown West we identified the root cause of that problem, which ended up and which was a result

of really miswiring. So, really miswiring resulted in losing those stations and we identified that. We isolated those relays around the system command verifying around every single installation that that relay is present. So, that was though one lesson learned. The second is Flushing. In Flushing, there was a number-- not Flushing, but Flatbush. We had a number of events that led to a cascading condition. So, part of it was cable failures and we worked to upgrade cable failures in that area of Flatbush, as well as across the city. We work to do that every summer. We also worked to install more sectional I used switches to allow us to, his problems to Val of, to quickly sectional lies that issue to allow us to respond better. We added new technology there to make the operations-- to make the operators more effective in trying to respond to events.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: That's great. Thanks for that list. I think what, and read the and in Sunset Park, I think we are having a lot of conversations about solar and with the NYCHA Sandy project, I think a lot of people are interested in talking with all of you about summer in Redhook, as well. So, maybe we can follow up on that later. And

I think the final question I have is what are the financial relief plans you are offering to commercial customers who do use higher usage? And I'm thinking about restaurants, in particular.

KYLE KIMBALL: so, right now, Bill relief programs are focused on low and moderate income residential customers. Right now, we have not necessarily designed or considering a program for commercial tenants.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: You are not looking at it?

KYLE KIMBALL: Right now we are basically focused on-- Yeah. Right now, we are focused on residential Bill relief, air conditioners. But right now for commercial tenants, we are not suspending terminations right now.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Is that something that you all--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: will start looking at?

KYLE KIMBALL: I think it is something we could certainly talk about and I think will be

talked about. Right now our focus is on residential customers.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much, Council member Menchaca. I will now turn it back to the Chairs for additional questions, if they have any. Chair Cohen?

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I do just have a couple. Because I think there is been some lack of clarity on the difference between maintenance and capital, could you talk about how you define those two concepts in maintaining the grid and what the breakdown is on what you spend?

PATRICK MCHUGH: I'll take that. So, maintenance-- how we define maintenance is where we go out there I go out to our location and we will take the piece of equipment and we well inspect and make minor modifications to it. It could be a network switch that needs either some lubrication, parts changed, or something like that. That would be a maintenance type effort. And if it's our efforts where we take a component on the system and we replace it. We wrote plays a switch. We replace a section of cable. Those would be capital investment between the two. We spend, on the capital

investments, the upgrades-- we spend about 1.3 billion. I believe the maintenance is in the area. I believe it is around 500 million. About rough numbers.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I don't know if it was you or Kyle, talked about sort of city mandated moving infrastructure. That is that capital is that maintenance? What column does that fall into?

PATRICK MCHUGH: It would be in both. If we are required to move the asset and put in new assets, that would be a capital investment. If it is something that we may need to adjust support or do something where the assets days, that would be a maintenance type effort.

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: The bigger portion of the case is capital.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Capital. Just also, I want to-- I think that my colleague, Council member Menchaca it on a very important part. I think that, the-- you know, obviously small business has been devastated by COVID and I admit we are still-- you know, everybody got protections in place at the moment. The courts are not really taking any actions, but that is going to, at some point and it

would be a shame if the difference between keeping a neighborhood business and not keeping a neighborhood business was an outstanding Con Ed bill, turned off for COVID related charges. So I think it's really important that you understand that, you know, it's one-- you know, just like you are one big network, this city is a network and small businesses play a vital role in keeping it going, so we are going to need a thoughtful response on Con Ed on how to deal with this going forward. With that, I think Council member Brannan has some questions, too.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair. Really quick, what-- as far as preparation, what is the difference in preparation, say, for-- you know, experts are predicting that this is going to be an incredibly active hurricane season. I must summer I know we had some heavy rains which, apparently, caused outages in Queens. What measures is Con Ed taking to ensure that we don't have outages as it relates to hurricanes and weather versus with increased demand from people staying the home because of the pandemic? Is that something that you guys think about differently or is it all one in the same?

PATRICK MCHUGH: So, I think we think about it differently. So, I mean, we have done a lot to prepare for, you know, those storms or those weather events. The weather events primarily impact the overhead system. I will look to Matt in a second, but generally we have worked to secure more resources ahead of time. Worked on the process of securing more resources. Worked on the communication during those events and we spent, you know, a lot of effort and time. And it is preparing for two different type of things. A heat event, for the most part, is driven by underground feeder liability and an overhead event is really driven by tree contact. So, Matt, do you want to add a little more to that?

MATT SNIFFEN: Yeah. So, key components, you know, we do have outages during storms, whether it be a lightning storm or tropical event like a hurricane. We will have outages. But the investment we have made sense really super storm Sandy have decreased the effects by 20 to 25 percent. Right? We make investments that will further sexualize our equipment, so tree coming down that is knocking out 1000 customers with knockout approximately 500. And we have been able to localize

that problem even further through remote control switches. So, we have invested a lot and remote control capability over the last few years and it is increased even since those storms of 2017 where Riley and Quinn-- so, we continue to make investments in our overhead system and make it more resilient. Put up more resistant wire, larger polls. And we've been doing that throughout our system really send super storm Sandy. So, but the other part of it is assets. Restore. We have emergency contracts with over 500 contract resources. Because of the nature of overhead storms, there are typically a lot of utilities looking for those assets and we have our right of first refusal with over 500 of those resources right now which would aid our existing overhead workforce and the contractors we have on the property every day with an additional up to 500 people that we will be bringing in the respond to the storm. Ours storm process is drilled annually. It has been drilled during the pandemic, as well. And I mentioned prior we did have a storm where we did things differently where, instead of having a large staging area, we used hotels for staging areas. One person to a room and did all of our on boarding of

those crews remotely through Microsoft teams. So, it evolves. We are having another drill in the next couple weeks on a large scale storm that we will do through a tabletop exercise through Microsoft teams.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: And how well social distancing impact to your response to outages?

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: So, in a few ways. We have already separated at our main response crews, our overhead crews. I'll refer to them in that way. Instead of all working in one yard, they work in multiple locations. They might pull out on one of our substations. They take two vehicles out. We have rented vehicles so they don't have to ride together. They may take out their own vehicles. So, we are safeguarding our own crews that way. Right? So we don't want one employee getting sick and taking somebody else out. So, that is a very important piece. We expect the same from our contractors. And that is built into the cost when we bring in contractors. I mentioned before about on boarding. We bring crews in. We give them safety messages. You know, we talked to them about how we work. Give them suppliers, right? That is all done now remotely. And then we meet up with them and help

them get material. Always maintaining the social distancing or with masks where we can't. So, we are very, very conscious of that every day, not just during storms.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay. Last question from me. In terms of priorities when it comes to smart meters, we hear a lot of stories from constituents who have summer Con Ed bills that are three to 400 dollars and some things seems to be off with their energy usage. Is there any focus being given to, you know, as far as equity is concerned with figuring out folks that might have something wonky going on with their electricity bills? To ensure that they are being billed properly? Fairly?

KYLE KIMBALL: Yeah. We have had a number of people who have, once they have a smart meter, they feel like there's something, as you said, wonky and we've take a look at all of them. We will send someone out. Often times, as has been the case, is the what was wonky was actually there meter before that has been replaced, but we are happy to come out and we need to come out and we do look at all inquiries if there seems to be some issue with the bill that seems off.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: It is primarily complaint driven, right? Like there is nothing on your end that you can pick up on before a customer complains about it?

KYLE KIMBALL: That I don't know. I think maybe on the margins, probably, you know, may be no. They think there is some flagging if there is, you know, large energy use is or some-- there is some flagging there, but probably those of us who are more sensitive to money issues, you know, a 100 dollars difference perhaps or, you know, 50 dollars difference. That might need to be complaint driven. But I can look into what our process is. I don't know if you know anything, Patrick.

PATRICK MCHUGH: No. Just that when we deploy the meters, we do it in areas because the meters use each other meters to communicate. So, you can't suddenly go, you know, to a block where there is no other meters installed in it. You need to kind of install them in mass and then they can kind of communicate well together. So, that is a little bit how the process is marched around the city to put them in. But once the complaint occurs or there is an issue, we want to make sure we resolve and make

sure people are only getting billed where they are using. And we are committed to make sure that is what they are being billed for.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I think Council member Levine has a question for Con Ed.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And very briefly. I am just going to ask two questions quickly so we can move on. Given that we are about to deploy 22,000 city funded air conditioning units in public housing, I wonder if Con Ed or anyone has done an assessment on the electrical capacity to handle that in our development. The worst thing would be for us to deploy that equipment and not be able-- for it not to function because of antiquated infrastructure. And, secondly, on the question of meters, I am presuming that, because of social distancing concerns, you are not sending in person inspectors out at all or not frequently in recent months. And I am wondering if that might mean that some people are stuck with monthly bills which are pretty far off from their actual usage.

And I will pass it back to you Con Ed for responses on both of those. Thank you.

PATRICK MCHUGH: So, the answer to the second one for students we did stop meter reading which will-- so we are not going into premises where that required us to go in. So people are getting estimated billing. So that will be, you know, could be a concern when things are trued up at a future date. So, that's that part of it. The first part of it was the question on the air conditioners around NYCHA. So, we've been working with the city trying to stay in touch with where they're going. You know, us to run a study, we are looking to see how many are going in which buildings and how those are being done. So we want to run those studies. When you run a study, you need information. We are looking to get the information of this complex, how many air conditioners are going to be installed? We don't have that granularity at this point. It's going to be a study that is both done internally and externally on the grid. So, we, of course, would look at the grid perspective on that, but both internally, NYCHA would have to look at what problems that may create internally. We've asked, as we've

done this, is to keep the air conditioners-- we were pushing to stay to a 6000 to 8000 BTU high efficiency air conditioner. That is, typically, about a point six kilowatt if it is a high efficiency air conditioner which is, you know, about the size of, you know, a hair dryer. So, if you get a small, efficient unit, you know, it really doesn't have a lot of impact until you put a whole bunch of them in one location. And we really want to work with the city on where a bunch of them will go in one location and then work to adjust as we can when we see that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Look, obviously, the nature of this is everyone runs them at the same time, right? They all run them on a hot day. So--

PATRICK MCHUGH: That is the [inaudible
02:08:22]

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: That's the problem. We'll ask the next administration momentarily about timing, but I sure hope we are deploying these soon in a matter of weeks, I mean, because it is going to get hot in June. So, what is the timing on the study? You're telling us that you can't proceed because you are waiting for information from the administration. Is that right?

PATRICK MCHUGH: So, I say we, right away, got out of the shoot and did 29 locations already that we upgraded those, so we're working with NYCHA. We upgraded 29 already. We want to make sure we are doing the right work, so we want the information. Us running out and doing something we think may be happening is not going to be good for anybody. So, we're looking for that information so we-- the studies are relatively quick. You know, within a day once I get it, a building can be done and analyzed. The work that may come out of it is the concern and what will be the response--

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right.

PATRICK MCHUGH: based on that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. We will ask the administration about some of these questions, but it would be great if you could deliver to us whatever kind of reporting you produce so that we can have confidence in all of us as Council members, that the developments in our district are going to be served by this important program. Can we count on you to share those reports with us?

PATRICK MCHUGH: We will share everything that we learn that--

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Thank you.

PATRICK MCHUGH: Anything we learn and any locations we identify we would be willing to share that information.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thinking. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Back to you.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: No problem. Council member Brannan has one more question. I should be on the-- Council member Brannan just has one more question.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to get on the record and, if you already said it, I apologize, but I don't think you did. Last year, Con Ed preemptively cut power in the outer boroughs because of stress on the grid. Do we think this is going to happen again and how well customers and elected officials be notified before the fact? And last question, how do we decide which areas get cut?

MATTHEW SNIFFEN: Patrick, I will take the communication piece because my group and emergency preparedness is working on that. We established a-- jointly established a communication protocol. This amino goods notification of every single feeder

outage. When we go into a second contingency where we might start to escalate and start getting some of our preemptive steps we have a conversation at that level to start explaining what type of contingency we are in and what steps are planned and when.

Previously, that did not happen until at least a third contingency, if not greater, so we are having a lot more conversations planned, as well as every single feeder notification they get now automatically. So, when I get it, they get it. You know, there is no human intervention and the conversations will be through my organization and the city's emergency management and the Mayor's Office of Resiliency.

KYLE KIMBALL: And just answer the second part of the question in terms of what area-- I think Patrick gave a very detailed analysis of what happened last summer, but the upshot is as if there is a problem in a specific area, mostly underground area, load shedding, which is very much a last resort, which hasn't been done in a very, very long time prior to last summer is done to correct a problem in that specific area. So, for example, they wouldn't load shed Bay Ridge to correct a problem and

Williamsburg. If there was a problem in Williamsburg, they could potentially shed load in Williamsburg in that specific part of the network. But, again, that is a last resort and it comes after all different kinds of appeals to customers to use less energy. And, again, hasn't been done in a very long time. And I think, in the case of Flatbush last year, there was a lot of consternation and concern with this Council and others that we weren't able to tell people what was going on. And so, what Matt just talked about in the first part is going to make it a little bit easier for us to communicate with the city emergency management earlier in terms of what is going on. But we didn't make a decision to shed load in Flatbush until, I believe, was the six contingency. And what Matt just talked about is we would start notifying the city that there was a third contingency. So, three steps. But mind you that the time of lapse between those contingencies starts happening faster and faster. So, the decision last year to shed the load happened and a couple of minutes, which would not have been something that we would have been able to effectively communicate with any electives about what was going on because it

happened very quickly. Certainly not something that we had planned to do for that day, but because we got into a situation and the cascading situation that Patrick talked about, it can't happen very quickly at a certain point. And so, you know, and happens within tens of minutes, not 60s of minutes. But we, at the same time, the communication protocols kick in before that with emergency management and shortly thereafter we are going to improve our-- we are committed to improving our communication, you know, as quickly as possible. Hopefully before an event, but certainly very quickly afterwards.

COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Council member Brannan. I want to thank Con Ed for participating this morning. I just briefly-- I think that you are going to follow up on the shut off date of customers. I'm interested in that both commercial and residential. I think that that's important. You know, annualized how many customers get shut off. And, again, just want to stress I think it is important that Con Ed come up with some kind of policy is related to commercial customers who

are behind in their bills as we tried to revive the New York City economy that Con Ed, just like everybody else in the city, is dependent on. So, I appreciate your time. I'm just going to double check because I am getting some direction from the committee. And then I'm going to turn it back over to committee counsel to call the next panel. Thank you, Con Ed.

KYLE KIMBALL: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Cohen. We will now call representatives of the administration to testify. First Commissioner Criswell followed by Director Bavishi, assistant Commissioner Olson, Deputy Director Susanne DesRoches, and Deputy Director Kizi Charles Guzman will be able to answer questions. Before we begin, I will administer the oath. Commissioner Criswell, Director Bavishi, Assistant Commissioner Olson, excuse me. Deputy Director DesRoches, and Deputy Direction Charles Guzman. I will call on each of you individually for a response. Please raise your right hands. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before today's

committees and to respond honestly to Council member questions? Commissioner Criswell?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Director Bavishi?

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Assistant

Commissioner Olson?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OLSON: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Director

DesRoches?

DEPUTY DIRECTOR DESROCHES: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Deputy Director

Charles Guzman?

DEPUTY DIRECTOR CHARLES-GUZMAN: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

Commissioner, Criswell, you may begin to testify when ready.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Thank you. Good morning, Chairpersons Cohen, Brannan, Constantinides, and Levine, and members of the committees on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing, Waterfronts and Resiliency, Environmental Protection, and Health. I am Dianne Criswell and I am happy to be here today in my role as Commissioner of New York City Emergency

Management. Joined by members of the administration, including Jainiey Bavishi, Director of the Mayor's Office of Resiliency, Carolyn Olson, Assistant Commissioner in the Bureau of Environmental Surveillance and Policy at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and Susanne DesRoches, Deputy Director Energy and Infrastructure, Mayor's Office of Sustainability. It has in an unprecedented time in New York City, indeed, around the world. City government has worked tirelessly with our partners at all levels. While we have made significant progress against COVID-19, much work remains and we keep working to ensure the safety and security of New Yorkers. We've realized early on in our response to COVID-19 that this was going to be a marathon and not a Sprint and we established the cascading impacts team. This team has spent months looking over the horizon that response challenges in a COVID-19 world and adapting existing plans to account for new needs such as social distancing, facility closures, and economic downturn. To that end, we have adapted the interagency heat emergency plan to prioritize the health and safety of all New Yorkers. This adapted plans builds on assumptions that social distancing

guidelines, in some form, will still be in place during the summer months. The populations most at risk for heat -related illness, those with chronic conditions such as renal or heart disease, obesity or diabetes, severe mental illness, or substance abuse has not changed. Unfortunately, these are largely the same populations at the greatest risk for complications from COVID-19. We have three pillars to our adapted heat emergency plan. These are more strategies to keep the most vulnerable cool and healthy without leaving their to visit a cooling center, new strategies to help cool population without air-conditioning who are at lower risk of COVID-19, but can safely travel outside the home, and adapted strategies to mitigate potential power outages or load issues. Existing federal programs that help low income, vulnerable New Yorkers get cooling assistance reach less than 1000 city residents every year. This summer, the city created a 55 million dollar program to provide 74,000 air-conditioners to New Yorkers who are 60 years of age or older, have an income below 60 percent of the state median income, and to not have air-conditioning at home. To reach this goal, multiple New York City

agencies are conducting direct outreach to New Yorkers who meet the criteria, particularly to those who are already receiving city benefits. Due to air-conditioning usage, energy bills are generally higher in the summer and many people with air-conditioners choose not to use them because of cost concerns. The city petitioned the public service commission for the summer utility bill assistance for 450,000 low income New Yorkers so they can afford to run their air-conditioners and keep call indoors this summer. It's the Public Service Commission will not cover this, the city will look to utilize federal funding or city funding to help bridge this gap. Additionally, the city is looking to expand the Home Energy and Assistance Program or HEAP. This program, typically allocated to assist with winter heating costs, is a federal program that helps low income households pay for heating or cooling their homes. Through the CARES Act, the federal government allocated an additional 900 million dollars in HEAP funding nationwide. The city, through the Department of Social Services, is advocating that the state expand the use of its HEAP funds to start providing summer utility assistance in addition to providing more air-

conditioners to New York City residents. We have also adapted our heat emergency plan for traditional cooling options for those who can leave their homes. Assuming that senior centers, traditionally used that cooling centers, have not reopened, we have identified existing facilities that allow for social distancing and can be used as cooling centers in communities that are highly vulnerable for heat illness, communities of color, and immigrant communities. For example, we are working with the Department of Education to explore targeting schools with air conditioned classrooms that would allow for vulnerable New Yorkers to stay cool and isolated. We are also looking at transportation options to assist people in getting to these cooling facilities. During the heat of event, people who normally rely on pools or beaches will flock to other water-based amenities like hydrant spray caps and spray showers and parks. The Parks Department in the Department of Environmental Protection will provide spray caps and spray showers in the parks and schedule hydrant openings to ensure access to outdoor cooling across the city, while minimizing strain on the water system and also while maintaining necessary social

distancing according to current COVID-19 prevention guidance. DEP will also create a reusable water bottle distribution program and the social media campaign beginning in June to promote reusable bottles and remind New Yorkers to stay hydrated. Similar to the issues presented with congregate cooling a COVID-19 world, the city is modifying how it will respond to power disruptions this summer. Even before COVID-19, following last summer's blackouts, the city increased its coordination with our utility providers. This included monthly workshops, updates to our communication procedures, and a deeper understanding of the power grid. With COVID-19, we have doubled down on our engagement with our utility providers. Our teams are on multiple weekly calls with various planning efforts, including communications procedures and response protocols and we are in the process of holding preseason trainings and breakings for all city agencies. New York City emergency management and Con Edison have lowered threshold for notifications for agencies to prepare for these outages. In addition to these actions, in conjunction with utility providers, the city plans on prestaging and rapidly mobilizing the emergency

generators as needed and, as well. As noted earlier, the same populations most at risk for heat illness are the most at risk for COVID-19 complications. As such, we have identified facilities that house these vulnerable populations, including isolation hotels sites, I don't care facilities, nursing homes, and NYCHA buildings. The city has done on national powers surveys at the hotel's currently being used for COVID-19 and is prepared to employ and install emergency generators in the event of a prolonged power outage to re-energize these buildings and reduce the need for evacuation of vulnerable residents. Recognizing that a significant number of air-conditioners will be installed in NYCHA buildings, the city and NYCHA worked closely with Con Edison to identify buildings that may require additional electrical capacity and required electrical work is happening now. The hotels sites are currently being assessed and we will stage generators nearby if needed. Nursing homes are state regulated and are required to have backup power capabilities. We will communicate to all nursing homes information regarding preventative maintenance, fuel Lane, and testing of their backup generators to

ensure that they are prepared for summer. Adult care facilities are also regulated by the state, but they are not required to have backup generation and the majority do not. The city's centrally placed generators will be ready for quick rollout in emergency situations. We have advocated that the state mandate these facilities to be required to have either backup generation or quick connect that will make emergency generator installation easier in the future and we will continue to advocate for this. We are also reviewing pre-considered introduction T 20206198 which would enact legislation requiring New York City emergency management and the health department to provide the city's cooling plan to the city Council each year. Each year looks slightly different. Obviously, never more so than this year. We do a significant amount of public outreach and communication each year along the lines of the legislation and look forward to working with the Counsel on this proposal. The administration is also reviewing pre-considered introduction T 20206197 which would require the Health Department to report on the vulnerability and the reported deaths. The Health Department is a national leader in conducting

heat health research and providing data through its environment and health data portal and looks forward to working with the Counsel on this proposal. As Mayor de Blasio has stated, this is going to be a different summer than any summer we have seen before. We have to be ready. We have been getting ready and we will be ready. We are engaging with our partners at all levels of government to adapt our heat emergency plan to meet the moment. While much remains uncertain about the moment we are in and what future moments will look like, as this summer goes on, our mission remains steady and focused. We are planning for and ready to respond to the challenges the summer months will present and will continue to support our city residents. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions. And I won't turn it over now to Director Jainey Bavishi.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Commissioner. My name is [inaudible 02:27:29]. I'll be moderating the remainder of this hearing. I'm the counsel to the Consumer Affairs Committee. Director Bavishi, if you'd like to begin your testimony, you may begin now.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: Thank you. Good afternoon. I am Jainey Bavishi, director of the Mayor's Office of Resiliency. I would like to thank Chair Cohen of the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing, Chair Brannan of the Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts, Chair Levine of the Committee on Health, and Chair Constantinides on the Committee of Environmental Protection for the opportunity to testify here today. I would also like to acknowledge my colleague, Commissioner Kurzweil from the New York City Office of Emergency Management and Assistant Commissioner Carolyn Olson from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, as well as my own colleagues from my team in the Mayor's Office, Deputy Director Susanne DesRoches, and Deputy Director Kizi Charles-Guzman. Climate change is a severe and growing threat. Rising temperatures driven by global warming threaten the health and safety of New Yorkers and particularly older adults. Those without access to air-conditioning and those with a variety of health conditions. As you know, New York City is vulnerable to a phenomenon known as the urban heat island effect which can make urban areas up to 22 degrees hotter than surrounding areas.

In an average year, extreme heat kills approximately 130 New Yorkers, making it our most deadly climate hazard. To address the threat of extreme heat, in 2017, Mayor de Blasio launched Cool Neighborhoods NYC, an innovative, strategic citywide effort to tackle extreme heat and its cascading impacts, with many agency and nonprofit partners over the long term. These efforts reflect our commitment to managing future risks and provide the foundation for current adaptive response to extreme heat this summer. The hundred 6 million dollar investment and comprehensive approach outlining Cool Neighborhoods NYC expanded the administration's aggressive climate resiliency agenda to make neighborhoods cooler through significant tree planting in city streets and parks and painting reflective coatings on millions of square feet of rooftops in our most heat vulnerable neighborhoods. Together with the Health Department, we have also worked to protect the most vulnerable New Yorkers inside their homes by providing heat risk education and increasing social support networks are Be A Buddy pilot program and enlisting home care agencies and community health organizations as partners and building community resiliency. These

investments and strategies are targeted at the city's most heat vulnerable communities. The Health Department and Columbia University developed a pioneering vulnerability index that maps both physical and social vulnerability to precisely identify the neighborhoods at the highest risk. And this is the basis for the Mayor's Office of Resiliency's Cool Neighborhoods NYC strategy. With the COVID-19 pandemic impacting every part of our lives, this summer is shaping up to be unlike any other in history. As the summer time he sees and approaches, the COVID-19 crisis and not climate crisis are poised to interact in ways that could cause additional laws of life and, particularly, in many low income Black and Brown communities that have already been devastated by the virus. With stay at home and social distancing orders in place and more limited access to a call public spaces due to safety concerns, our administration has taken extra steps to ensure that New Yorkers can stay cool this summer. It is simply a matter of life and death. Is Commissioner Kurzweil mentioned, two weeks ago we were proud to announce the new 55 million dollar program to provide an additional 74,000 energy Star

air conditioners to low income seniors administered through our capable partners. We are particularly glad that this effort is designed with equity at its core by focusing on public housing residents and those who are most economically and physically vulnerable to heat related illness and death. Our efforts to protect at risk New Yorkers from heat this summer are unprecedented. But there is even more that should be done, particularly at the state level. Expanding cooling assistance through the New York State HEAP program or home energy assistance program and providing summer utility bill assistance through the Public Surface Commission are two critical steps that should be undertaken without delay. Extreme heat is a significant threat to our most vulnerable communities and COVID-19 is demonstrating how multiple risks can compound this threat unequally in the city. We are glad to support significant progress on long-standing priorities that address New York City's most deadly climate threat now and in the future. In conclusion, I would like to thank the Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts, the Committee on Environmental Protection, the Committee on Health, and the Committee on Consumer Affairs and

Business Licensing for allowing me to testify here today. My colleagues and I are now happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Director Bavishi. I'll latch right over to questions from Chair Cohen, followed by Chair Brannan and Chair Levine. In that order. Panelists, please stay on muted if possible during this question-and-answer period. As a reminder, this Council members other than the Chairs would like to ask a question of the administration or a specific panelist, please use the Zoom raise hand function and I will call on you in that order. We will be limiting Council questions to five-minute, which includes the time taken to answer questions. Thank you. Chair Cohen?

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. You know, it's funny, Commissioner, I don't think we have ever met, so it is nice to meet you virtually and, Director, I also I'm not sure that we have ever met either. So, I guess the overlap of the committees is introducing me to new members of the administration I don't know, so I appreciate that. I am just going to focus a little bit on the coordination between the city of New York

and Con Ed. I would think that the relationship between both OEM and resiliency is integral to the work. Can you talk about that relationship? How it works? How you communicate?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Yes. I will start and then I will turn it over to my colleagues, as well. And, again, after the events of last year, both in Manhattan, as well in the Flatbush network, we worked closely with Con Edison to increase and improve our coordination efforts. So, we have developed new protocols. We have lowered the threshold for communication. We participate regularly in both their exercises that they sponsor, as well as the exercises that emergency management facilitates. And we have been involved in more than once weekly meetings now has we go into the summer months to make sure that we continue coordination and we are sharing the information necessary as we prepare for this new COVID-19 related response that we are going to see ourselves in. I think one of the biggest lessons I learned last two was really having a better understanding of how quickly things can escalate and understanding what those triggers might be. And so, one of the things that we have done on

the emergency management side, in coordination with resiliency, as well as the Mayor's Office of Sustainability, is to generate a communications protocol. So, we are asking the right questions and we can escalate our response, as well, more quickly than, perhaps, we did before. Additionally, we have always been part of their circle when they activate that. And we send representatives there, as well as we have representatives that come here when we activate our emergency operations center. We are also going to start having a representative involved when Con Edison activates their situation room, which we did not to last year. While that may be virtually done this year, we are also going to be participating in a number of exercises early June to make sure that we understand how we are going to be able to coordinate in this new virtual world as we are still experiencing some social distancing guidelines. I will turn it over to the Jainey or Susanne DesRoches for any additional comments they might have.

SUSANNE DESROCHES: Great. Thank you, Commissioner Criswell. I'll just add that we are now doing a lot more coordination on the state level, as well. So, these weekly calls that we have set up,

they do include the Department of Public Service. There emergency operations point person so that we ensure that the regulator is part of those conversations with us as we head into the summer. We are also attending weekly meetings at the state level with the New York system-- Independent system operator, NYISO, who you heard Con Edison talked about. So that we can understand how the power generators are headed in this summer with the COVID respond at the generation facilities themselves.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Director, anything? Okay. I'm curious. What do you think in terms of the role of communicating with the public? I think that Con Ed was candid in that there were some challenges and also just the speed at which, as you both had reference to, things can go from okay to not so okay. But in terms of communicating with the public, ultimately, I know the city, you know-- Is that the city's responsibility? Is it our responsibility? How do you divvy up the door how are those roles defined?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Well, you bring up a really important point in the communication both with a tether, as well as then out to the public is

critical in making sure that our most honorable populations are going the time necessary to prepare. And even more so as we go into this year. I think it is a joint responsibility because, at the same time, we also want to make sure we are giving out a consistent message and then anything that Con Ed might say is something that the city is saying, as well. Our external affairs office works very closely with all of the Council members offices to make sure we are getting messages out there. We also have our Notify NYC where we try to get messages out to everybody as quickly as possible. This is also done in over 10 different languages. And it is really important and that, as we get information that is actionable, that the public can actually take steps to help protect themselves and put themselves in a better position. That we need to get that out in coordination with Con Edison as quickly as possible.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: So, maybe I'm just trying to drill down a little deeper. In terms of the coordination, how does that work? Is there a primary? In communicating with the public, is there a primary source? A secondary source?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: So, the primary source from the city's standpoint would be the Office of Emergency Management or New York City Emergency Management and coordination with the Mayor's Office of Communications. And so, we would use all of the mechanisms that we have available to get those emergency messages out in a timely manner to make sure we are giving them actionable information. So, New York City emergency management takes the lead role, coordinates very closely with the Mayor's Office of Communications, and then, you know, there is a lot of different mechanisms to get information out. And so, we really log on all of our different partners to help us amplify those messages as much as possible so we can reach as many people as possible.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Let me ask you this. You heard Con Ed testified this morning. They are predicting slightly lower usage this summer. Actually, it's kind of significantly less usage this summer. Do you agree with that assessment? Do you think that Con Ed-- you know, are we going to see blackouts this summer? You know, what do you predict is going to happen?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Paul, I can't predict what is going to happen, but I am cautiously optimistic with the predictions that Con Edison has stated. I think that the one thing that is important as we go forward is that we are going to have these weekly meetings with Con Edison. And the way I and my team are approaching this is looking at, you know, what has happened over the last week? How is that impacting with what their bottles are? And just been very proactive in looking at these four different models that they had talked about to see if there is anything that we need to be concerned about ahead of time. So, but, cautiously optimistic. I think it is going to be a very interesting year. We are all going into something that we have not encountered both for and I think this proactive look and predict of analytics of what we think is happening to the electric grid is going to be really important to our responds. I don't know, Suzanne, if you have anything additional about the impacts you think this summer will hold.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: She might be muted.

SUSANNE DESROCHES: Oh. There we go.

Okay. No. I think that that is right. I think this

increased level of communication both with Con Edison and at the state level will really help us know if there are specific networks in the system that may be having, you know, having a higher demand than we think today. But, you know, having that weekly coordination and working with the state is an important way for us to get ahead of any issues that they may see coming.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: I think the last thing that I will just add for you on this is that we will always plan for the worst. That is my role as an emergency manager and it is planning for those things that we don't want to have to respond to and making sure that we have the resources and the personnel in place to react as needed.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Okay. Commissioner, what is the threshold by which Con and will notify you that there is an issue? I mean, if there is, you know, a wire down and, you know, block loses power, like where is the threshold in which they are telling you something is going on?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: So, we have reduced the threshold as far as the feeder outages that Con Edison mentioned before and, depending on

the location of the outage, it could've been either two feeders out or three. And now it's-- even if there is a single feeder out, they are going to notify us. So we have much increased notification of when they are having difficulty so we can start to monitor and actually, you know, look at this cascading impact, as they talked about how quickly it might go to a two feeder range or a three feeder into a four feeder. That way we will know quickly how things might be progressing or deteriorating so that we can react appropriately.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: What about in communities like I represent where it has significant overhead wires? What level of communication do you have regarding outages and those kinds of communities?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Any time there is an outage as a result from a storm or a vehicle that might hit a pole or something like that, we get that notification immediately.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Okay. I suspect a lot of my colleagues have questions about the air-conditioning program and I am going to defer to them. I will say, you know, for myself-- and I suspect I

speaking for a lot of my colleagues, in terms of HEAP expansion and work with the utilities commission, you know, you can count on our support is there is something we can do to communicate and would be helpful, let us know.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Great. Thank you. I appreciate that.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Council member Brannan?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair Cohen. Thank you, Chair Cohen. Thank you guys so much. I guess, I'm not sure if for the Commissioner for Jaaney. As far as the air conditioner plan, are you confident with Con Ed being able to handle this?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: So, I will start and then I think where we are at right now is that, you know, we have provided Con Edison a list of general areas where we anticipate that we are going to be putting in air-conditioners. And as we begin to install, we will be providing the exact locations so that they can evaluate the assessment that it is going to have or the impact that it is going to have on those networks where they are at. As far as

whether their networks will be able to withstand that, Susanne, do you have any comments on that?

SUSANNE DESROCHES: So, given the information we have been able to provide them so far, they have told us that they don't see an issue with the number of air-conditioners and I'll load that those air-conditioners will add to those networks. Again, when we get to the point where we can look had a block basis, so, you know, when they can get down to that granular level of data, they will look to what they can do within, you know, those localized parts of the network. But currently they have told us that they have told us that they don't see an issue that the network level.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I mean, I guess I am trying to stick together on this. I mean, a lot of what I am hearing from Con Ed sounds very paradoxical. I mean, I don't-- you know, we are concerned and I think we are all concerned about more people staying inside, more people running their air-conditioners to stay cool. This plan that I was a champion and pushed for that you guys are doing, which I think is great. But then Con Ed is coming in telling us, actually, they expect power to be lower.

I don't see-- you know, where people going? How is that possible? I don't understand and I am worried that they are preparing for lower usage when everyone else is concerned for the opposite.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: I think your concerns are very valid. And the part that we are doing to make sure that we can monitor this is those weekly meetings so we can assess where they are at on a week by week basis. We will also be able to monitor where we have put these air-conditioners and look at those networks specifically to see if we are seeing increased load there or problems arising. And so, all of this information and this data that we have is going to be critical to be in communication with them and monitoring, again, proactively how is the network responding to the increased usage even as we approach the use somewhat warmer days, but not necessarily the hottest days, right? June is going to be a very telling mom that can help us get prepared and have a better idea of how we think it is going to respond before we get into the really hottest time of the summer in July and August. So, again, I am cautiously optimistic on their predictions. Trust but verify. That is why we are

going to work with them weekly to monitor this very closely and stay in communication and be proactive to take any actions that we might need to.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, look, I am certainly not an engineer and I think everybody on this zoom is admittedly smarter than I am about this stuff, but I know, anecdotally, you know, we had issues in our districts on a regular summer when people are on vacation. That is not happening this year and Con Ed is, basically, telling us these are the droids you are looking for. Everything is fine. And it is a concern because, you know, now on May 26 that we are talking about what we are talking about. Two months from now in the middle of July in the middle of the heat waves, you know, Con Ed telling the city that, you know, everything is going to be fine and if not, you know, us doing another oversight hearing in the fall talking about the disaster that was the summer of 2020 is not what any of us wants. Right? Like I don't want to be there. I just want to prepare so that we don't have to, you know, have that hearing again. You know, I want to prepare now before that happens. So, we rely on you guys to make sure that what they're saying is

legit and, you know, if you do have concerns, then I hope we would address those concerns now while we're looking-- you know, while we still have time. You know? Is there anyone who can speak to some of the costs of the air conditioner program?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Is there something specific on the cost that you are looking at?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, I just wanted to get a general breakdown. I mean, it is 55 million dollars for 74,000 air-conditioners to procure and install. Basic back of the envelope math comes out to 743 dollars a unit. Most people here then and there had to explode because they know they can go to PC Richards and buy an AC for 200 bucks. I understand we're not sending intern to PC Richards with an ATM card to buy air conditions, but, I guess, two things. What that cost comes out to, if, you know, right now, the simple math is 743 bucks per unit which seems a little crazy, even if it includes installation. But number two, is any or all of this reimbursable by FEMA and is that part of the math here?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: So, your back of the napkin math is accurate as kind of the estimate going into that. And, again, these are all estimates based on, again, supply, different vendors that we're going to be using, installation costs, overtime costs because we want to be working more than an eight hour day, as well as seven days a week. Right? So there's additional costs that will be coming from working with these different members to make sure that we can meet our deadline of having these installed by July 1st. As far as reimbursable by FEMA, you know, we are certainly going to try and submit for a reimbursement for anything that is eligible, whether it's through the FEMA funding or any of the CARES Act funding that is out there. Certainly, one of the things that we took into consideration on what might or might not be eligible and we will be reaching out to the federal government to see if we can get any of this reimbursed.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. But the amount of air conditioners and the money that we allocated here was not-- we're not sort of backing into something, right? We're going to petition to

try to get the reimbursement, but we didn't dictate the program based on what was available?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Correct. If I am understanding you correctly. We are going to go forward with this program not contingent on it being federally reimbursable. We are going to try to see if we can get any of this reimbursed through the federal government, but that wasn't a limiting factor. We want to be able to save lives this summer and be able to support New Yorkers. And so, the city has committed to moving forward to this program, but we will look for reimbursement as costs are eligible.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, all right. So, basically, we have set aside a certain amount of money, but there is a possibility or a potential that it will actually up costing less?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: There is always a possibility that it may cost less. Right? These were just the estimates as we were going into it and then, again, there is always the possibility about some of this will be reimbursable.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Okay. I want to talk about hurricane season a little bit. 2020 hurricane season, I think we have mentioned it

before during this hearing, predicted to be more active than usual. The first storm, tropical storm Arthur has already developed off the coast of Florida. That is before June 1, which is the official start of hurricane season. What preparations are in place if we get hit by a storm this summer, considering social distancing will still be in place? That's one. And then as far as any types of these situations where it is a cooling center for, you know, a shelter for hurricanes, how are we thinking outside of the box to figure out how you have got to-- what is usually a bunch of people in the school auditorium, which wouldn't be possible with social distancing?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Great questions. And something that we have been working on since the COVID-19 crisis hit us earlier in March. And we developed that cascading impacts team to look at a number of our plans and could potentially impact us in the immediate future, as well as going into the summer months. So, for example, a normal vacate order where we would put individuals in shelters, we adapted that plan in the very early days of this to make sure that we could accommodate shelters through hotel's if we needed to vacate a building. In that

line, we started to look very closely at sea because that was going to be our next most significant threat that we would phase the soonest and we have been actively looking at our coastal storm planning, as well. The city has 12 different plans that affect various parts of coastal storm planning from evacuations to shelters to healthcare evacuations. And we have a full that is looking at those and varies similarly to what we have done with our heat adaptation planning. We are also adapting those plans to make sure we can address and accommodate those things that you talked about as far as how do we accommodate individuals that need to evacuate, but still make sure that we can keep people safe through social distancing. The views are a lot of questions out there. We do not have all of the coastal storm plans adapted yet. We are happy to engage with you, again, later this summer or earlier this summer to talk through our coastal storm efforts, but it is definitely a piece that is actively being analyzed and updated right now.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: As far as cooling centers, are we going-- I assume we are going to have to increase them to allow for more space, right?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: So, I wouldn't say increase the number of cooling centers. We are definitely going to have a different approach for cooling centers this year. And unlike last year where we would have a large number of cooling centers that we would announce in, I think, last year it was somewhere around 500. Our focus this year is trying to protect those that are the most vulnerable. And so, we're going to have a very targeted approach to how we open cooling centers. Looking at our traditional cooling center sites right now, we only have about 80 that can be used and we're in the process of looking at how many people can be accommodated in each of those safely. We have to work very closely with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene because there are certain guidelines for when and when we cannot use cooling centers, but we are certainly putting plans in place that we can, perhaps, use them for those that are considered to be safe to leave their homes. We're also going to look at others very targeted areas to be able to add to the number of cooling centers in the areas that have been identified as the most vulnerable for heat. And so, we want to be very specific and very targeted

into the populations that we think will need them the most and make sure we can provide them the cooling that is needed. So, as far as the general population, then we are looking at other nontraditional ways that we can support cooling efforts. And that is through increased use of hydrants spray caps. The Parks Department is going to be using spray showers. And it's definitely making sure that we can still utilize those tools and a way that, again, keeps people safe, effectively socially distanced, making sure that we have the proper face coverings available for all personnel.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Okay. I'll give it back to Chair Cohen and give my calling some time to answer questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you. I think that Council member Levine has some questions.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Yes. Thank you so much, Chair Cohen. Good to see, Commissioner and Director. Have trying to understand how you have projected that we will have lowered demand to for cooling centers this summer. I mean, normally people can seek refuge in a café or a restaurant or a movie theater or a store or-- probably even more

commonly-- the home of a friend, neighbor, or family member that has air-conditioning. And a lot of those public establishments are not going to be open because of social distancing concerns. We don't want people converting households like that. So, this seems to me that demand is greater. And, by the way, traditional senior center infrastructures also is not going to be up and running. So, explain to me why you don't think we will have greater demand this summer.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Yeah. And let me just correct myself. It's not that I said that we're going to have a lower demand. There is definitely still going to be a demand there. But because our options are limited, we're going to make the best use of the available resources we have to target the most vulnerable populations. And so, the demand is definitely still going to be there. We just want to make sure we're taking care of those that are the most risk for heat, as well as for COVID-19, and provide them safe solutions to keep them cool during the hottest part of the day. We're working with, again, with the Parks Department and other areas to think about how the general population

can, perhaps, find other ways-- nontraditional ways or outdoor mechanisms-- to stay cool. Again, the demand is not less. The demand will be more, but with limited resources available and the limited amount of cooling center options, we need to target that to those that are the most vulnerable. The first step in that, though, is providing the in home cooling assistance and that is going to be the number one way that we can protect those that are most vulnerable is providing in home cooling to the greatest extent possible.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And that definitely could make up for the lack of options outside of the home. And I do want to ask about that in a moment, but chose to stay on the cooling center questions, so mentioned that normally we have about 500. Understandably, some are pretty small and that you identified 80 where there's enough room for adequate social distancing. So, that leaves a pretty big gap, even if we do deploy a line of home air conditioners, considering the other factors I just mentioned. How far along are you on identifying ways to make up that gap? Larger facilities where we can really spread people out?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: There is definitely a gap and, again, we have identified 80 of our traditional cooling science that we know we can use, but we are also so looking at our traditional cooling sites that, perhaps, are closed, and trying to figure out the best way or what the lead time might be that we could open them up in a timely fashion to still utilize them as a cooling center. So, can we open up our libraries and what would it take to open up those kinds of schooling center sites that we traditionally use? Again, where working with the Department of Education to see what we can use to support. For me, we are really looking at how can we use them to target and put in place non-congregated type settings for our most vulnerable. Those that don't get air conditioners and we can keep them separated in classrooms. And then we are working really closely with the Mayor's office of Resiliency to identify some nontraditional sites. But we are targeting, again, those areas of the greatest heat vulnerability and we want to see where our current gaps are and then we will reach out to them to see if there is any other resources that we can put in an agreement in place or a lease in place with. My team

has been working on cooling center strategies. They have a plan that is due to me by the end of this week. And so, we can see what the next steps are to put those either memorandums of agreement or lease agreements in place to expand that capability.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. There's been some reports that you are considering some really out-of-the-box ideas like arena is where you would have enough space to allow people to spread out in big numbers and where the cooling infrastructure is good. Can you speak to that? Are you looking at using those structures which are otherwise totally empty and they really may be a good solution there?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Yeah. We're looking at a number of different sites that could be possibilities. And, again, our goal, though, is to really focus on those areas of most vulnerable and where are our gaps. And so, we are looking at a number of different potential sites. Anything is on the table if we can negotiate a good memorandum of agreement or a lease agreement to utilize them, depending on what may or may not be open as we go through the summer. I don't know, Jainey, if you have-- I know your team has been working a little

bit on the. But, again, really trying to figure out what our gaps are first before we decide which ones we need and which ones we are going to negotiate with.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: That spray. We are looking to see what kinds of facilities might be viable for the summer. We have reached out, for example, to the VOAD organizations. Volunteer organizations active in disasters. Just to reach a network of facilities that otherwise wouldn't necessarily be used as cooling centers to see which ones can be activated. So, we are looking at various networks and facilities. Then, as Commissioner Criswell said, we are really working to make sure that we are surveying the most at risk areas as we identify which facilities might be viable.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Moving on to the question of the air conditioners. And it is really important and welcome that the city is moving to distribute these units. I do want to understand the scale of the need and I wanted to know whether you have analyzed how many low income households there are don't have air conditioning currently. I know you are focusing just on those over 60 which,

clearly, the most vulnerable, but I guess I'll start with the big question. How many in New York City lack air conditioning?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: The process that we use to come up with the number, I'll turn that back over to Director Bavishi to answer.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: Sure. Yeah. We used the HPB housing vacancy survey as a basis to estimate the New Yorkers that are most vulnerable to extreme heat. And we also use health-based criteria for heat related illness and death focusing on residents who are over 60 years old, as you mentioned and have income below 60 percent of the state median income and do not have air conditioning at home. And then, additionally, we accounted for seniors in NYCHA who rely on electronic medical equipment or have mobility issues that might make it difficult for them to attend cooling centers when and if they're available. So, would goal here was to really identify and focus on the population that are both vulnerable to extreme heat, but are also at serious risk of COVID-19 illness. And we're working hard to deliver these AC units as quickly as possible to those households.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And that was the
72000 number?

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: 74,000.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: The households that
met those criteria?

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: Yes. The number is
74,000.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. We have to
prioritize the most honorable, but there is a public
health interest in ensuring that everybody at every
age can avoid having to go somewhere where it is
crowded to seek relief from the heat. And if someone
who is 50 or 40 or 30 is to go to the home of a
neighbor or a family member which is crowded, that
could accelerate to the spread of the virus, even if
that individual is not, themselves, as senior. There
really is a public health interest in avoiding that
and I think we need to expand the program to address
that. If we believe that FEMA is largely
reimbursing, why not extend this to any low income
family? Perhaps prioritizing as supply is limited,
those with a senior in the household, but why not go
big and meet the need for every low income household
to prevent the kind of overcrowding I described?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: It's a really valid point, with a very limited and, you know, supply air conditioners that are out there and time frame that we are looking at, we really wanted to focus on reaching those that are the most vulnerable. Again, those that are at the highest risk for heat related illnesses, as well as those that are at the highest risk for COVID-19 related illnesses. We are certainly open to, perhaps, expanding as we meet that need, but that is really our focus right now. And, again, looking at a very short period of time, trying to get 74,000 installed by July 1, that is we wanted to do the most good for those that are the most vulnerable.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: And can I just add to what Commissioner Criswell said? This is why we are taking a multilayered approach and also working to identify cooling centers and other outdoor cooling options that we can operate safely this summer in the context of social distancing. So we are also-- Our teams are very focused on that at the moment and we will have more to talk about very soon.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. I do want to move on to couple logistical questions about the program, but I think we can all agree that we have gotten lucky with the weather in the last two months. It's been unseasonably cool and wet and it's meant that most people, at least from a heat perspective, have been comfortable in their apartments and that's about to change. And that could really have a big impact on social distancing both indoors and outdoors and the amount of money that it would cost to install air conditioning is quite minor compared to the cost and financial human terms of the second peak in coronavirus. So, I really do think it warrants the investment, even if FEMA doesn't reimburse. But I do just want to ask about the process. So, at what point do you think you will start to deliver and install the first air conditioners?

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: Commissioner Criswell, I'll take this. Or would you like to?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: I'll start and then I can turn it over to you, Jainey. So we have started outreach already. NYCHA has been doing outreach, as well as DSS and HPD will be doing outreach. DSS, NYCHA, and DIFTA are doing outreach

to their most vulnerable clients. We do have two vendors that are already on contract. Clearview and AJ Madison. Clearview has been installing air conditioners for the few days going into the long weekend and we expect to see an increase in the number of air conditioners being installed starting today and through the week. Our goal, again, is to try to get all 74,000 installed by July 1st and so it starts with the outreach piece of it. Then we will schedule with those that opt-in and want to receive an air conditioner and then we will give that list to the vendors who will then install. Is there anything that you wanted to add to that, Jainey?

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: No. I think you covered it.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So, I was confused. There was installation over the weekend?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Right before the weekend. So, we installed a few-- two air conditioners into NYCHA buildings, I think, on Thursday or Friday of last week. There was a little bit of slowdown over the weekend as far as outreach and installation because of the long weekends, but it is starting back up this week and we have 591

households have already identified that they would like one and they will be installed this week.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Great.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Still a long way to go to get to 74,000.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: It seems like it. You did two last week, so 73,998 to go. But in all seriousness, I mean, that's like 20,000 a week or something like that hit your target. 15 to 20,000.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Uh-hm.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So, yeah. You're talking about 500 this week. That is also way below the pays. That is going to mean for the following three weeks, you know, you may have to be over 20,000 a week. Are you going to be able to meet that target?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: So, we're deftly going to be about to meet that target. It is definitely a slow start trying to get everybody on board, information sharing, data-gathering, and we are bringing on additional vendors to support this installation effort, as well as city employees and some support from the National Guard that is going to help us to the outreach calls. So, with a slow

start, understood, but we are going to meet that as we bring on additional vendors to both provide air conditioners, as well as install.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And, finally, if you could just explain enrollment or how someone opts in. It sounds like for NYCHA families, NYCHA itself is planning kind of a coordination role there. Then, so, for families and private housing you need a unit, is there an application process to establish? To individual families apply if they are not in NYCHA?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: So, this is a direct outreach program through pre-identified populations in NYCHA, in DIFTA, through the DSS channels, as well as HPD. So, we are reaching out to them on the information that we have received on who would be eligible for this program. And, Jainey--

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: That that could leave someone that is over 60 of low income who is not part of any of those programs. No?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: I think there is always the possibility that we might not reach everybody. If there is somebody that-- or if there is a population that you think is missed, you know, we can certainly reach out to your office or you can

engage with our offices. But right now, it's a direct outreach program based on the data that we have.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: So, to city reaches out to you? And there is no way to apply? And if you are in one of those programs, presumably, that will happen soon. Otherwise there is no option?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: All of our outreach is scheduled to be completed by June 10th and so we should have all of our populations out of those for or all of our residents out of those four different populations should have received some kind of communication by June 10th.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. And if they are in one of those groups and they haven't heard by then, is there a way they can proactively enroll or someone they can reach out to?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: At this point, it is still just a direct outreach, but let us get back to you and see about somebody who is in one of those and has not been contacted.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And, look, I'm going to wrap up. I understand that even the goal you've laid out now is ambitious considering the

timeline. I don't want to minimize that, but it sure seems to me that we are leaving out some very needy families from this program and that it would simply be a smart investment to expand this. I mean, most obviously, the people who made the age and income criteria, but aren't in one of these programs. But I would say even further, people who are low income, families who are low income but don't have a senior in the household, I really do think this is a key pillar of keeping the city's safe assembly from a public health perspective this summer. So, thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. I look forward to working with you, Commissioner, and also you, Director, and I will pass it back to you Chair Cohen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you. Balkis, and giving it back to you, I think, and you're going to call on members. Is Balkis there?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There we are. I was on mute.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: No problem. Okay.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: all now call on Council members in the order that they have used the Zoom raise hand function. You should begin 15 called

on you and the Sergeant has announced you may be again before asking your questions. First, we will hear from Council member Rose followed by Council member Lander. Council member Rose, you may begin after the Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starting now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council member
Rose?

COUNSEL MEMBER ROSE: Am I unmuted now?
Hello?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. We can hear
you.

COUNSEL MEMBER ROSE: Okay. All right. I want to thank the Chairs for holding this really important meeting. And my questions were about the cooling centers, but my colleagues have, you know, very thoroughly sort of examined that topic and I want to thank Chair Levine for really drooling down on the cooling centers. But you stated that you identified 80 locations that can be used for cooling centers from a total of 500 that was used last year. My question is, you know, what metrics are you using to determine how many people need to access cooling centers and do you think you're going to be able to

accommodate that need? More specifically, my concerns are with the fact that Staten Island, my district specifically, continues to be under resourced this by the administration's commitment to make sure that there is an equitable distribution of resources to the most vulnerable. And we have not gotten equitable distribution of resources on any of these, you know, initiatives or programs. Starting with testing, PPEs, etcetera. So, I really would like to know what metrics you are using to determine how many people are going to need cooling centers and how are you going to be able to accommodate that with having only identified 80 sites and, specifically, how are my constituents going to actually get the amount of resources that they need? Thank you.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Thank you, Council member Rose. So, the number 80 that we have identified our 88 out of our traditional sites that we know are available. There is going to be a number of factors that go into play on whether we can actually open them, as well. Right? In that is, you know, is the public health guidance that is going to come from DOHMH on how to safely operate and how that would look like. As far as the metrics on how many

we think we will need, again, we are looking very closely at the vulnerability index. And I will turn it over to Jaaney a little bit that can talk a little bit about that. But we look at that and we are looking at those cooling centers, other traditional cooling centers that may fill in gaps that we can open up that are, perhaps, not on that list of 80 because they are currently closed and then what it would take to open those up. And then, we are also looking at census data. So, how many people went to a different cooling centers last year in these most vulnerable areas to help those can an idea of the probable number that we might need? We're going to see some changes in that as we go through the summer. Right? Because we are going to have some changes in that because we are providing air-conditioners to some of our most vulnerable people and that will also, once we have for those identified and installed, we will go into helping to further define or refine what the gap is in different--

COUNSEL MEMBER ROSE: Are you going to be able to, based on the metrics you're using--

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Yeah.

COUNSEL MEMBER ROSE: Are you going to be able to meet the need?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: So, I need to identify what the need is and then, again, it's not going to be the same. It is very much a different year this year. We are not going to be able to open all of the cooling centers that we normally would've opened. And our focus is going to be on those areas that are the most vulnerable that have the highest need for cooling assistance.

COUNSEL MEMBER ROSE: How are you going to determine who the most vulnerable are? I know that we have some sort of idea of how you identify them, but how are you going to make sure that the distribution among the most vulnerable is going to be equitable?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: It's a great question and, again, we use the vulnerability index to help guide our planning decisions. And I am going to turn it over to Jainey and, if you have some additional information you can provide on why that index is so important for this planning process?

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: Actually, I'm going to turn it over to Cary Olson from the Department of

Health since the Department of Health helped to create that index.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Okay.

CAROLYN OLSON: Great. Everybody can hear me? Good afternoon. So, our HEAP vulnerability index is a measure that was developed in collaboration with the Columbia University in order to understand the variation and vulnerability to the heat related deaths. And it takes into account both environmental and social factors that determine--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time's expired.

CAROLYN OLSON: Sorry?

COUNSEL MEMBER ROSE: I just want to know are you going to be able to meet the need based on your index? Are you going to be able to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people that will need cooling centers? That is really my concern.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: That is a valid concern and we are going to do everything we can to open up additional cooling centers in those areas that we have identified as the most vulnerable. I need to know what my need is first and see where my gaps are and then we will be doing whatever we can to

find additional facilities that aren't normally used that we can add to it.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: And I think it is also important to highlight another piece of this overall strategy, which is utility assistance. We mentioned in our testimony, but we haven't really focused on it during the Q&A and, Chair Cohen, you mentioned that you are willing to help support our work with the Public Service Commission, as well as our advocacy on the HEAP program. There is actually a deadline at 4:30 today. We have filed a petition to the Public Service Commission asking them to help provide utility assistance to low income families across the city. This would go to about 450,000 families. Any support of the Council can provide in the form of a letter to the Public Service Commission will only help to strengthen our case, but the deadline is up 4:30 p.m. today. So we would really appreciate your support on that front.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member Rose. I'd now like to turn it over to Chair Cohen to acknowledge Chair Constantinides.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I am unmuted now. I think Council member Rose had one more follow up.

So, if we could throw it back to Council member Rose. And I will acknowledge that we have been joined by Chair Constantinides.

COUNSEL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. Thank you so much, Chair Cohen. Yes, you do have my support on the letter that is going out. I'm all for that. I just want to impress upon the Commissioner that the most vulnerable exist in all of the five boroughs and I want to make sure that my most vulnerable are included in whatever metrics you come up with so that they, too, can have the resources that they need this summer. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Absolutely.

COUNSEL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you, Chair.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member Rose. I would now like to turn it over to Council member Lander.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thanks very much. Thanks to the Chairs for this really important hearing. And my question actually follows well from the dialogue you had at the end with Council member Rose. I learned an immense amount from Eric Kleinberg's book Heat Wave which looked at the 1995

summer in Chicago when something like 700 Chicagoans died from a heat wave for many of the reasons we're talking about. So, I think it is really good that we are getting out in front and making sure the way, you know, do everything we can to get ready. And, you know, he is found, as we are discussing here, that, you know, heat related deaths were disproportionately an African-American and low income communities. So, I really appreciate the work that you have done with Columbia to really target and think about how you get out in front of that. Another thing that he found, though, that I thought was really interesting was that one of the real factors was social isolation. Not in that that was an independent factor of race and income and people-- and it makes sense. The people that have more ties have someone checking in on them and talking to them. And, you know, that is good for getting an air conditioner and not dying of heatstroke. And it's good for her not having all kinds of other health and mental health problems, as well. And, obviously, that wasn't even in a pandemic where everyone is stuck inside their homes for the better part of the year. So, I guess my question is a little less about the heat related side of this and

a little more about what we're doing on the social isolation side. I know that calls, you know, are going from, you know, seniors serving organizations. I know a lot of volunteer groups are doing kind of one time check in calls. In my office, we have stood up a thing that we are trying to expand. And I would be glad to talk to you guys about. To enable reoccurring calls. So a volunteer doesn't just call once and say, do you have food and air conditioner, but says, would you like to talk once or twice a week for the duration of this crisis to sort of build social ties that help combat social isolation? Can we have had good success with that working with heights and hills in our part of Brooklyn and aren't talking with some others about it. But, I guess, I would like to tell you-- if you could tell me a little more. And I know this was designed to be about heat and not about social isolation, but they goes so much together here. What can you tell me about what we are doing collectively? And this isn't just on the city. I mean, the city can do some things, but really doing this would mean tapping into the social relationships and volunteers, you know, on a much broader scale. Are we using this, you know,

Be A Buddy program to build that more strongly? And what could we do together to really scale this up to the level of need which, obviously, goes way back on those-- I mean, 74,000 is a lot of people to get air conditioners to, so I don't want to-- But there are probably hundreds of thousands of vulnerable at risk homebound seniors right now for whom the risks of social isolation, as well as the risks of heat, you know, present real risk.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: It's a great question. I am going to turn to Cary from DOHMH on the social isolation. Is there anything that you cannot do that? Or answer for that?

CAROLYN OLSON: Okay. Yes. Thank you. So, yes. I think it is a great point. I really appreciate you bringing it up. We need to know from our research not only from Kleinberg's amazing bug, but also our research here in New York City that social isolation is a very important factor and not just for heat, but for a number of other health issues. I can follow up with more information about this, but I know, apart from HEAP, the Health Department is actually doing wellness check calls to New Yorkers as part of our response related to COVID.

And then I also want to speak to our cat be A Buddy program, which you mentioned and which we do in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Resiliency and is part of that Cool Neighborhoods program. So, we have partnered with three amazing organizations in three of the neighborhoods that have the highest vulnerability to heat related health impacts. And those organizations actually have done amazing work responding in this pandemic, as well. So, they are using the social infrastructure that is so important as part of our response to be both climate resilient and also resilient to other emergencies. And they are using that to reach out to the community members and check and on mad men also connect them to available resources. And so, we will be leaning on all of those different pieces, as well as a number of other amazing efforts that I know Commissioner Criswell and Jaaney can also speak to.

COUNSEL MEMBER LANDER: Okay. I'd love to maybe follow up off-line on this because I think this tool--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: we were surprised to learn that there wasn't a good tool for recurring

calls to set somebody up in an ongoing relationship. And we have built a pretty good tool for that and are having some good success with it. So, I would be interested in talking a little more. We could share the tool with others who might find it valuable. I think they opportunity they get even more volunteers-- people are so desperate to help and some can go out and do emergency food service, but I think a lot of folks would be willing to join a much bigger team doing-- and oh, one time wellness checks are great and also building some durable relationships that can help people whether this. So, is that with Ms. Olson, should I follow up with you?

CAROLYN OLSON: Yes. We would definitely be interested in talking more about that. Thanks.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: All right. Thanks to the Chairs for this valuable hearing.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member lander. I will now be calling on Counsel member Barron to ask her questions.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time now.

COUNSEL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. Hit the right button. Thank you so much. I want to thank

the Chairs Brannan, Cohen, Levine, and Constantinides and I want to thank the administration for coming to participate in this hearing. They environmental Justice Bell, which is a part of local law 64 says that they recognize that there is been his stork racism and how communities of color, black and brown communities have been the site for transfer stations and other negative impact fall environmental projects that go on. And that they have said is that these have resulted in high levels of asthma being in those communities and that communities are suffering and have health concerns. So, the bill says that there would be a working group of different agencies within the city that would be tasked with coming together to develop a plan. And those agencies were to include DEP, DOH MH, planning, DOT, DSNY, Department of buildings, and others. And the intent was that communities would share equally in the benefit, as well as the burdens of environmental justice issues. And the working group was supposed to have met, come up with plans, which they were then to bring forward so that they could be reviewed. The public would have an opportunity to comment on those issues and the plan would be finalized by December 2021. So,

now I think that we are little, again, behind in making appropriate arrangements for what we expected in a more general term to be issues that needed to be addressed. And we have not moved forward. So, I wanted to know, first of all, what is the administration's position on putting this working group and the plays, getting these meetings going, getting people to have input, so that as we sit and hear what you plan to do and where you plan to put the centers, we don't again get stuck with the injustice and the inequity of plans being put that do not benefit our communities and, in fact, harm our community. We need to be involved in making the decisions. Not you telling us where you plan to put them and we have to then react. We need to be on the ground that the planning stages to make sure that there is, in fact, the equity as we get the benefits because we certainly have more than our share of the burden. So, where is the administration in this regard?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Cary, do have an answer for this working group? We're not part of this.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: The Mayor's Office of Climate Policy and Programs oversees this working group. No one from that office is testifying here today, so we can follow up with you about the status of the working group. What I can say about our HEAP work though is that, absolutely, we are-- the heat vulnerability index has taken both physical and social risk indicators into account in order to assure that we are identifying who are the most vulnerabilities, not just from the physical indicators of risk, but also the social, including income and race. And we are--

COUNSEL MEMBER BARRON: [inaudible
03:30:48] for those part.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: I'm sorry. I didn't hear that part.

COUNSEL MEMBER BARRON: Yes. They tend to travel together for the most part and they are the black and brown and economically oppressed communities.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: That's right. And we are working to target our solutions so that the environmental benefits we are delivering from our resiliency approach, as well as the approaches that

we are taking for this summer, which is such a unique situation, reach those exact communities. So, we are absolutely placing equity at the center of our approach. But, to your question about the environmental justice working group, we will get back to you that.

COUNSEL MEMBER BARRON: And when can I expect that we will have-- not only just when we will get back, but when it will start functioning and when it will start doing what it is required by law to do?

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: I'm not intimately familiar with that work just because it is run by a separate Mayor's Office, but I do believe the working group has been stood up. So, again, we'll get back to you with a detailed status.

COUNSEL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. I think it's critical that the communities that are most negatively impacted are involved in making the decisions about how these programs will roll out. Thank you very much. Thank you to the Chairs.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member Barron. I'll now turn it over to the Chairs for any additional questions. Chair Cohen?

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you very much. First, Director Bavishi, could you maybe email me are one of your team email me may be what you sent the Commission so that I could use that as a basis of draft? Something that I would want you to have before 4:30, that way we would have to do it now.

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: Absolutely. We'll pass along a draft letter.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I do want to drill down a little bit on the cooling center situation. Something that we discovered on the ground-- and, you know, it's funny. One of the advantages that I think sometimes as a Council member we have is because we are dealing with all different agencies all the time. People who we did not know were food insecure or who might not have been food insecure pre-COVID, turned out that once COVID hit, that they did face food insecurity. And I am wondering if there might be a similar situation brewing sort of about access to the cooling that, you know-- I people who did not go to a senior center for lunch, but turned out, once COVID when they weren't able to shop for themselves anymore, needed help getting food. So, I'm concerned that the matrix that you're

using that relying on agencies, that, you know, their information is based on the norm and there are, you know, real significant changes taking place, as we all know, so that we don't want to leave a huge swath of people out who might need access to cooling just because they are not sort of traditionally in need of cooling. Have you thought about that and how do you think that what we have covers that?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: It's a great point. Again, I think it goes back to this is a unique summer and this is going to take a layered approach to make sure that we provide solutions that can reach out to this newly vulnerable population. The air conditioning program is really targeted at those that are the most vulnerable because, as we have seen, that we want to-- the best way to keep them safe and keep them cool is to keep them in their homes. But there has to be the other options that we are putting out there. And so, where do we need cooling centers and how can we safely operate those? As Director Bavishi pointed out, they assistance with their utility bills, reaching out to, hopefully, 450,000 individuals that, maybe, would have chosen to go to a calling center in the past because they

didn't want to use their air-conditioner, but now may be using their air conditioner. It is going to take this type of a layered approach to make sure that we provide resources to reach those vulnerable populations. And, again, those populations are definitely going to be different this year than they were last year just because of the environment that we find ourselves in now.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I guess, one, I am concerned that our definition of most vulnerable is outdated because that definition is sort of pre-COVID. I can envision a scenario where I could have a constituent who doesn't have an air conditioner in their apartment because they use a senior center normally and they just never-- you know? And even if they could afford an air conditioner, they might not be able to access one now. So, they don't have access to the senior center and they don't have the ability like-- they are not Internet savvy. They can't go on to PC Richards.com and have somebody appear.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Right.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: That's a problem.
And those people, you know, just like, you know, the

tragedies of people found in their home with COVID, the last thing we want is to have people found in their home because of heat.

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: No. It is a fair point. And, you know, as we are getting this program up and running, I think it definitely warrants some further analysis to see, you know, are we targeting everybody that we can? We have data that shows where our most vulnerable populations are historically. We understand that there are newly vulnerable populations out there, as well. We have a short period of time to really impact those that we know are going to need it the most. And but your point is well taken and we will certainly, you know, continue to look at how we can reach out to other populations if we are not quite hitting the mark with the current efforts that we have.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I appreciate that. Chair Brannan, do you have anything else?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair. I want to just ask about my bill that is we are hearing. And according to the CDC, the average of 13 city residents died each year from heat-related illness between 2000 and 2011. However, some studies

indicate that this number may be much lower than the actual number of heat-related deaths because of how a hot day is currently defined. The city also reports an average of 115 excess heat-related deaths, 150 heat-related hospitalizations and 450 heat-related ER visits every year. So, does the administration support this legislation and do you agree that it's important to account for deaths that are exacerbated by heat? Which, you know, meaning a natural cause of death is natural only because it's resulting from an existing condition exacerbated by heat?

CAROLYN OLSON: Yeah. So I'll take this one. So, yes. I want to start by saying we share your interest in making these data can also recognizing that heatstroke or hyperthermia death where there is actually a cause of death on the death certificate that says heat are only the tip of the iceberg. And so, actually, the analyses that you're citing around 150 additional excess deaths were conducted by the Health Department and we have done that because we want to make sure that we are understanding the full scope of the problem in our city, as well as tracking the other health indicators that you mention. We make many of those available on

our environment and health data portal and we have also published to the news and reports and used them regularly in our outreach so that people can understand that heat is not just uncomfortable, but that it can truly be dangerous. So, we are very interested in continuing to discuss this and also talk with you about how the ongoing work that we have been doing for really more than a decade to really understand both the scope of heat -related illness and death and also the inequities that we see and we have all been talking about here. How we can align those with your interest in a report and be even more transparent with our data.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Yeah.

Because one of the main things, obviously, that was really one of the main concerns and one of the main reasons for this hearing is, you know, the concern that the same communities that have been disproportionately devastated by COVID are also the ones that are the most impacted by summer heat. Is there an overall focus from the administration as far as anticipating a higher risk of heat -related deaths or heat -related issues through these vulnerable

populations this year and what is being done around that broadly?

CAROLYN OLSON: Yeah. So, I'll start, if that's all right. But I think the big picture, I think that's exactly what this whole conversation has been about and I completely agree. So, we do know that the individuals that are at greatest risk of severe COVID complications are in large part exactly the same individuals that we know are at greatest risk of heat -related illness and death if they don't have an air conditioner in their homes. In our research has really shown that-- and I think you actually in your opening remarks mention that the vast majority of heat deaths that occur in New York City occur in homes where there is no working air conditioner. And so, the exposure that people are experiencing is happening in their homes. Which is exactly why the unprecedented program that the city is putting together now in order to address in-home cooling assistance is so important it is going to save so many lives. We don't know exactly what the summer will bring. That depends on the weather, but we do know that, with COVID prevention measures in place and all of the things that we've been talking

about about needing people to stay home in order to reduce their risk of contracting COVID, especially for those highest risk populations, we need to find ways to keep people safe at home as much as possible, which is exactly why this program is so important. And I also want to, again, echo my colleagues and say that an important part of this, as well, is that utility assistance and making sure that people that, maybe, previously were not as vulnerable, now as they may be facing economic hardship and have trouble turning on their conditioners, we are really hoping that we can provide assistance to those individuals and also that the state, as part of their home energy assistance program, will think about modifying that in order to include utility assistance, as happens in other states as part of that cooling assistance component of that program.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. So, what is being done around that? Because we know that HEAP is for heat in the winter. I know the city is trying to petition the state for funding there. Can you give us an update on what is going on with that?

COMMISSIONER CRISWELL: Jainey, they want to answer that?

DIRECTOR BAVISHI: Sure. Happy to. So, the program is actually-- it originates at the federal level. It is run by the Department of Health and Human Services. It's a low income home energy assistance program and it can actually be used both for heating and cooling. The state uses most of its funding traditionally for heating. Only two percent of its annual funding goes to cooling. However, this year, the state received 28.8 million additional dollars for the home energy assistance program through the CARES Act and the city has requested that the state put those funds towards cooling assistance for the summer. We have also asked for some program modifications to ensure that those funds reach the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Right now, those funds are prohibited from being spent on anybody receiving any kind of federal housing subsidy and those funds can also only be used to purchase an air conditioner, not actually pay for energy bills. So, we have asked for waivers on both of those program restrictions. Finally, there is medical documentation required to receive that funding and we would like to simplify that requirement to ensure that we are not putting any additional stress on the health care system as

families tried to receive those benefits. And so, we have requested these program modifications, as well as a request to put that funding towards cooling assistance for the summer.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Thank you, Jainey. I'll send it back to the committee counsel, Balkis. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Brannan. Chair Levine, do you have any follow-up questions?

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: No. Actually, that's okay. We can move on to-- I think the public section is next-door if there are colleagues that are follow-ups, that's fine, too.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Constantinides?

CHAIRPERSON CONSTANTINIDES: No. I'm good, as well. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now turn to public testimony. Like to remind everyone that, unlike our typical Council hearings, we will be calling individuals one by one to testify. Each panelist will be given three minutes to speak. Please be again once the Sergeant has started the

timer. Council members who have questions for a particular panel it should use the raise and function in Zoom and I will call on you after the panelist has completed their testimony. For panelist, once your name is called, member of our staff will unmute you in the Sergeant-at-arms will give you the go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may be again before delivering it testimony. I would like to now all come Dr. Yury Dvorkin from the NYU Tandem School of Engineering to testify. After Dr. Dvorkin, I'll be calling on Richard Berkeley of the Public Utility Law Project. Dr. Dvorkin, please begin your testimony after the Sergeant starts the time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

DR. YURY DVORKIN: Hello, everyone. I hope you can hear me. Good morning, Chairperson Brannan, Cohen, Constantinides, Levin, and COUNCIL members. Thank you for taking the time to address this important issue. And one of the privilege to testify at the end of this hearing is that a lot of great ideas have already been shared, so I am going to deviate briefly from the written testimony is that NYU submitted on my behalf to you and I'm just going

to emphasize several points that seems to be important and, for whatever reason, were not fully covered to the extent possible. So, one of the most important things is that Con Edison is operated a very complex engineering system and nobody can guarantee 100 percent, despite-- 100 percent reliability despite their best efforts and it's very important to ensure that, in case of any outage-- it doesn't matter what size of this outage, whether it is [inaudible 03:46:32], whether it's in Manhattan or in outer boroughs, Con Edison has an adequate capacity to mitigate it quickly and mitigate it efficiently. Among those concerns, the most important one is that, even using the best index produced by this administration in collaboration with Columbia, we're talking about population groups. Where are not talking about population individuals. And Con Edison should engage into a citywide outreach effort to really collect the information on every customer on their network to realize what that means are. It is not that difficult to organize, especially given the fact that they already have the entire billing infrastructure in place and they know what the electricity needs of every consumer and how

the electricity needs are distributed across the day time and how else where these consumers are located and they can infer a lot of information about their average consumption, their peak consumption. They can track and monitor those pages. Con Edison, leaving this outage, will make it impossible to catch up on Edison to learn about other needs. For example, whether this person is electricity dependent or vulnerable. This information will allow to deploy those generators-- those portable generators that were mentioned in the first panel-- to areas where the majority of vulnerable people are allocated. And another point that comes across at this time is that, actually, Con Edison has money to do it because, as it was explained, their tariff includes three components. The supply component, the deliverable component, and the tax component. So, Con Edison does not produce electricity on its own, but it purchases it from the wholesale market and, over the past several weeks, caught by the coronavirus outbreak, wholesale prices have actually reduced, in some cases, by 30 percent. So the supply component, which Con Edison pointed out is one of the biggest components of the resulting tariffs, right? It

provides a lot of leeway to fund these programs.
Then, in this case, they don't even have to tap into
their capital part of the tariff that is being used
to fund to their maintenance--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time's expired.

DR. YURY DVORKIN: and [inaudible 03:48:42]
projects. Thank you again for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I don't
see that any Council members have any questions for
our first panelist, so I'll move on to Dr. Berkley.
Sorry. To Mr. Berkley.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

RICHARD BERKLEY: Thank you. And thank
you members of the Council and Chairs. It's a
pleasure to be here and discuss these important
issues. Because of all the good questions that you
have put forward so far, I'm going to skip most of my
written testimony, however I've provided it to the
central staff. So, PULP, that is a Public Utility
Law project in New York has a number of concerns
about this summer and I would like to share them, but
I want to start by talking about the legislation that
is in front of the committee. First, we applaud the
move towards collecting data on heat vulnerability

and heat deaths. We have advocated for 40 years to collect more granular data on consumers needs from the electric, gas, telecommunications, and water systems in New York because we believe, as the Council does, that evidence-based policy is best. We also believe that, in this first summer where Con Ed has agreed not to shut off electric customers during extreme heat of events, and it is important to collect granular data on how many lives were at risk and how many might be saved. We also note, by the way, that similar data should be collected for water customers and for heating customers in the winter. In a city that has adopted the use of objective and comprehensive data as thoroughly as New York City, and it is appalling that we are only moving forward on this now. We also suggest that the Council have its research arm examine closely the city's petition for additional discounts for low income seniors energy bills in case 20 M 0231. Our petition, which is for immediate rate relieves, utilities spending reductions, which the Council mentioned earlier, and greater consumer protections for what happens when the moratorium, which is only voluntary, and at the end of the health crisis, but the economic crisis has

not recovered yet. It is our concern-- and we have discussed it with Council staff, that there will be a tidal wave of disconnections at the same time as the evictions and foreclosures restart in New York City and other parts of the state. And it is important to get ahead of that crisis right now, if possible. The type of comprehensive cooling and communications plan that is in front of the Council and legislation is obvious. What is not so obvious is whether the city can deploy those vital needs in a timely way. Nonetheless, we suggest that the New York City Office for the Aging and ACS be added to the list of agencies working on the report for the comprehensive cooling and communications plan so there vulnerable populations means can be advocated for. We also ask that the Council open dialogue with the state's office of Temporary Disability Assistance that they just close to their comment. On plan for the 2020-21 heat plan which could have included reduction of bills for people who need air conditioning. They normally do not go ahead and do that. We have asked them to and we have supported the city of New York's petitions in these areas because we think it is a vitally important move forward. Reforms that are

necessary for the summer. Obviously, there is a lot more, but I hope you will be able to read our written comments. And thank you, again, for the opportunity to be in front of you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Mr. Berkley. I would now like to call on members of the We Act panel. We will start with Mr. Sonal Jessel followed by Tom Matt followed by Anthony Carrion.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts--

SONAL JESSEL: Hi.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: now.

SONAL JESSEL: Good afternoon.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sorry. Can you hold. Sorry. I got-- Ms. Jessel, you can begin. Thank you.

SONAL JESSEL: Hi. Good afternoon, Chairs and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the summer heat plan. My name is Sonal. I am a policy and advocacy coordinator that We Act for environmental justice. We have been fighting for environmental racism since 1988. I, myself and a public health experts who leads our work on heat and health. I'm here to outline how heat and coronavirus is connected as a

precursor to some of the other We Act panel is that will share important recommendations for this summer. As many have already noted, summer is getting hot, hotter. The heat is lasting longer. 2016 Columbia University study projected that, by 2080, up to 3300 New Yorkers could die each year from intense heat made worse by climate change. Not all neighborhoods in the city are equally vulnerable. Department of Health found that neighborhoods such as East and Central Harlem have high heat vulnerability index and also found that between 2000 and 2012, 50 percent of the heat -related deaths in New York City were black or African-American people, even though they are only about a quarter of the city's population. This summer is especially scary. Neighborhoods with high heat vulnerability overlap with high COVID rates. So those dealing with the most COVID cases also have the highest heat vulnerability. The heat will compound COVID-19 issues and many of the inequalities and heat illness and death calm from structural racism where low income people and people of color live in poorly maintained buildings, coded apartments with intergenerational living, lettuce green space access, live in neighborhoods with more air pollution, and

stretch their resilience and their means across many hardships. Food, rent, chronic illness, and more. These are the same hardships that increase coronavirus susceptibility. Culturally, all so I will add that many communities of color turned to one another for support. On a hot day, if you don't have a say in your home, you might go to your aunt's house who does. Maybe a barbecue in the park together. So many minority communities consider family beyond the nuclear household where we lean on each other as a primary means of support and for increasing resiliency. This summer, that is not something that households will be able to rely on one another for and are left without that important social, emotional, and material support line. The city needs to consider this as not only just a mental health impact, but the physical impacts of the losses of planning for heat. So, it is imperative that Con Ed and the city create a heat plan that protects populations. I will leave it to the rest of my We Act panel is to outline that more. Thank you. Oh. I'll also add that we attached a number of maps to kind of outline the overlapped between COVID-19 and heat vulnerability, as well as ac use across the

city. That submitted by Dr. Diana Hernandez's testimony, fall. So, I hope you all can look at those images for reference. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Sonal. Will Tom Matte please begin his testimony, followed by Taylor Martin.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

TOM MATTE: Yes. Good afternoon, Councilmembers. I am very grateful for the chance to speak to you today. I am an environmental epidemiologist and an independent consultant and also an adjunct faculty member at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health. Until 2016, I worked at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and was capably replaced by Carolyn Olson you heard by earlier. The climate and health program at the Health Department has continued great work and provided much of the data that is helped the city to get smarter and more data-driven in its response to extreme heat. So, a lot of the points that I was going to make about the importance of air-conditioning have been well covered by the administration and in the Q&A. And I am really pleased to hear that we don't have to discuss why

air-conditioning is so important. I am just going to try to amplify a few points. First is the there is a huge challenge facing the city and I commend the city on trying to set priorities and reach the most vulnerable populations first, realizing that that population has really grown this summer. Second, the city's plan to provide 74,000 air conditioners to low income New Yorkers 60 and older, one pillar of its COVID-19 heat wave plan is really ambitious and much-needed. But these two other strategies of the planned need quick action at the state level. The low income home energy assistance program, as mentioned, only devoted a tiny fraction of its budget in New York State to calling. And this has remained the case a van while climate change has driven up the need for air-conditioning use in New York City by roughly 30 percent over the last 10 years.

Advocating this change to LIHEAP has been part of the administration's sustainability plan since at least 2015, but action by the state is needed now. Second, the Public Service Commission appeal for the electric bill, that I'm glad to hear many will be supporting, it needs to be quickly approved and whatever influence the state can use to help move that along

would be helpful. So, these are two mechanisms that can be quickly scaled up and implemented. But, as with many challenges facing our city, bringing these three pillars of the heat wave plan together will require close collaboration between the city and the state on outreach, enrollment, and assistance to navigate some different, but overlapping eligibility requirements. Our city needs to adapt in many other ways for hotter summers ahead. We need streets to be greener, building retrofits and design changes. We need to stop wasteful over cooling in commercial spaces which can happen very quickly and, of course--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time's expired.

TOM MATTE: the electric grid. So thank you very much for this chance to speak with you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Tom.

Next we have Taylor Morton followed by Anthony Carrion. Taylor, you may begin your testimony after the Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

TAYLOR MORTON: Good morning, Speaker Johnson, Chairs, and members of the community. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify a recording the city's summer heat plan. My name is

Taylor Morton and I am the environmental health and education manager at We Act for Environmental Justice. I leave much of our NYCHA work and I'm here to discuss emergency preparedness for the summer. Increased energy demand during extreme heat events can result in power outages. During the summer, indoor temperatures can surpass outdoor temperatures, especially for households without air conditioning. And during blackout and brown out periods. This increase is the risk of heat illness and poses an additional challenge to individuals that rely on electronic medical devices. We believe that it is important and vital that communities who have people suffering from coronavirus do not experience shutoffs, brownouts, or any other form of acute electricity-- acute energy and security. Con Ed in the city must plan ahead. There must be no excuse. One way to protect vulnerable populations is to waive the electricity costs for income qualified New Yorkers during heat of emergencies. This summer, many more people are staying at home and many more will be unemployed. Affording no electricity to cool homes will be difficult. Additionally, the city could preemptively set maximum temperatures for large

office buildings, especially considering is most if not all are under capacity. Last summer, Mayor de Blasio signed an executive order number 97 directing owners and operators of large office buildings to set building thermostats to 78 degrees to conserve energy during the July heat wave. Lastly, special consideration must be taken into consideration to those living in NYCHA buildings. More than half of the city's public housing residents live in its most vulnerable neighborhoods. More importantly, there are at least 62,000 and NYCHA residents that are 65 years of age and older. The growest fasting age among NYCHA's tenants. 20,000 ACs is a great start, but it is not enough. Residents need help paying their monthly electric bills for their AC units and the city must ensure that all elevators are properly working in NYCHA buildings. It is important that the city be planning for heat emergencies ahead of time, not to protect just our most vulnerable populations, but everyone. Thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Taylor. Next we have Anthony. Sorry if I mispronounced your names. Followed by Liz McMillan. Anthony, you may begin after the Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

ANTHONY CARRION: Okay. Hello, everybody.

Hello, Chair Brannan and other members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity my name is Anthony Carrion and I am both a member of We Act, but also a member of Manhattan community board nine. I'm also a lifelong Harlem resident and I've been involved in heat related issues for three years now. My testimony is going to be in regard to the cooling center program for the summer. Last year, I, along with others and We Act participated in an initiative to audit all the cooling centers throughout Northern Manhattan and what we found was that many of them went underutilized or were unheard of orders some even had broken down cooling systems. The cooling center report submitted outlines ways-- outlines solutions in the long term, but also offers special considerations for this summer as we deal with the pandemic. I want to highlight to issues in particular. While news communication. We feel communication is key. Cooling centers go underutilized because there is a lack of education and there is poor signage. So, to this and, we feel the city must create a specialized neighborhood-based

communications plan to tell the public a couple things. When the cooling centers are open, where they're located, and how they will remain safe during the pandemic. The plan must also include nondigital outrage for our most vulnerable New Yorkers, as while. The second topic I want to touch on is that now is the time to install and upgrade cooling systems and designated spaces throughout the city. We understand that the proposed budget in April cut funding for the installation of ACs in public school classrooms. We feel this undermines our preparedness for extreme heat now and in the future and now is not only the perfect time to install ACs in schools, but also and other areas such as senior centers, youth centers, etc. In addition, this work would also provide much-needed jobs. As you know, given the economic crisis that has been born of this pandemic. Lastly, I want to say that extreme heat is a consequence of climate change and, as all consequences of climate change, it affects the most vulnerable populations the most. It is also a social justice issue and, therefore, the city needs and equity focused plan for opening cooling centers and to address the issues that I mentioned in my

testimony. I want to join with other advocates on the Week Act team and calling for a comprehensive and environmental justice focused effort to address extreme heat this summer. Thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Anthony. I would now like to call on Liz McMillan, followed by Sophia Longworth. Ms. McMillan, you may begin your testimony after the Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

LIZ MCMILLIAN: Member of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding-- Wait. Can you hear me? Regarding the cities he planned for the summer. My name is Liz McMillan and I am a member of We Act for and environmental justice. In part of We Act's committee on heat, health, and equity. I, myself, I'm a central Harlem resident and I am a graduate student of nonprofit at the New School. I am here as an advocate concerned about the impact to that extreme heat will have on my Northern Manhattan community in this time of the coronavirus pandemic. I'm speaking today on our concerns around the city's communication and public education plans for heat this summer. Act We Act, we have been working with community members to

understand the full nexus of their concerns for summer heat. In these conversations, we have learned that there is an adequate communications between our most vulnerable community members and the city.

[inaudible 04:05:53] about heat and COVID-19

[inaudible 04:06:02] items are heavily [inaudible 04:06:08]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: To interrupt--

LIZ MCMILLAN: [inaudible 04:06:19]

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'm sorry to interrupt, Liz, I'm afraid that your connection is weak. I'm not sure if you want to address that and we can come back to you. Okay. I'm going to call on Sophia Longworth to begin her testimony. Sophia, you can begin your testimony after the Sergeant calls time and we will go back to Liz McMillan after your testimony. Thank you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starting now.

SOPHIA LONGSWORTH: Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the city's heat plan for the summer. My name is Sophia Longworth. I am a member of We Act for Environmental Justice and part of We Act's Committee

on heat, health, and equity. I am a Washington Heights resident who is acutely aware of the dangers of extreme heat on my vulnerable community members. I am here to advocate concerned surrounding extreme heat in this time of the coronavirus pandemic, specifically the city's external cooling plans for the summer because it is important that this plan is equity focused. Act We Act, we have been working with community members to understand the full next set of their concerns for summer heat. We have learned that people feel there is not enough access to green space and cool external spaces of town. Firstly, the Mayors planned to create always sees during extreme heat events. [Inaudible 04:07:56] set up to her and what the city constitutes as a heat emergency. We must remain cognizant that many people are vulnerable to heat related health illness even during times that are not considered to be in emergencies. Secondly, acts as to green spaces. Our most honorable communities already lack access to adequate green spaces and are increasingly concerned that the few areas they do have access to may be closed due to the pandemic restrictions. It is imperative that the city's plan includes keeping the

parks open. Thirdly, Shane. We know that shade in the form of tree covering provides an extremely effective form of cooling and its implementation does not require energy. Naturally, it is necessary that the city's plan includes increasing pedestrian shade covering, primarily in vulnerable communities that bear the highest heat burden. And, lastly, external cooling. Communities vulnerable to heat stress are also at high risk for coronavirus. And so it is vital that every precaution is taken to protect them from contracting the virus when designing external cooling. The parks misting stations and so forth. Therefore, enjoying other advocates in the Week Act team calling for a comprehensive and environmental justice focused effort to address extreme heat this summer. Thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Sophia. Liz, and might be helpful for you to turn off your camera. That may help strengthen your connection. Then you may begin when you are ready.

LIZ MCMILLIAN: I'm so sorry about that. [inaudible 04:09:37] internet is not the best. So, to continue, first the communications about heat. COVID-19 19 and cooling centers related items are

heavily digital information, whether from TV, digital news outlets, or signage where they may be prompted to contact the website for additional information. So many Week Act members do not have access to the Internet, computer, phone, or they may be homebound, so may not see public signage. Essentially, the number of people that do not have digital access for homebound is higher due to the pandemic. How is the city addressing these obstacles? It is vital that there be signage posted in buildings, particularly [inaudible 04:10:23] neighbor had specific information about heat safety, resources to protect themselves, and about cooling centers. We recommend that communications have a distinct icon that signals to New Yorkers that the topic is heat related. We also recommend the city not rely on notifying NYC texts for [inaudible 04:10:51] residents that receive [inaudible 04:10:59] a lack of trust of government by many different communities around New York City. How well the city work with other [inaudible 04:11:05] versus trusted key community members and community-based organizations to share important pandemic [inaudible 04:11:14] consistent and highly accessible communications is extremely important for people's

health and well-being. Many people trust information if it comes from a familiar source. Third, we know that about 400 people go to the ER or are hospitalized for heat related illnesses every year in New York City. We are concerned that this year, people will not seek medical care for the fear of contracting coronavirus at the hospital or for fear of overloading the system. Without adequate understanding of heat safety, how to detect signs of heat stress, and heat stroke in [inaudible 04:12:09] hospital safety. We're concerned that many people will avoid--

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'm sorry to interrupt, Liz. I'm afraid your connection is still weak. I would urge you to submit your written testimony to testimony@counsel.NYC.gov. Another panel is, please feel free to also submit your written testimony. Thank you. Next, I would like to call on Cecil Corbin Mark, followed by Julissa Gilmore. Cecil, you may begin when that Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starting now.

CECIL CORBIN MARK: Can you hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

CECIL CORBIN MARK: Okay. Brannan, Cohen, Constantinides, and Levine, as well as all the other distinguished members of the Council who participated in the hearing today and, in particular, special shout out to Council member Barron, as well as Constantinides for their leadership around the environmental justice act local laws 64 of 2017. As my colleagues have covered a lot of territory, I just want to sort of lift up some of the economic impacts that that COVID-19 is wreaking havoc with and then proceed to a couple of recommendations. According to reports by leading economists, New York City's economy is more-- in a more precarious state than of many times since the 1970s fiscal and economic crisis. The current situation has been described as likely to be worse than the economic devastation wrought by 911. The 2008 to 2009 great recession or super storm Sandy. The social distancing public health orders, at present, has incapacitated substantial fruition of the city's economy. Weekly, the news catalogs job losses and new unemployment claims that have mounted since the beginning of the pandemic and are unprecedented. There is currently an estimated more than 1.2 million New Yorkers, or

somewhere over 27 percent of all private sector workers reported to be job was as of the end of April. And in an environment where businesses have been ordered to close and nonessential personnel told to stay at home, the economic situation, when layered on the extreme heat crisis due to climate change, then layered on the social disparities and structural racism problems that have been revealed, create a profound set of displacement and economic loss for communities like Northern Manhattan and other environmental justice communities across the city. I think that the pandemic, as many of us know, is not something that we can expect to be ended in the short run and we are appearing from public health officials that, indeed, we won't be experiencing a possible second wave of the COVID-19 crises. In light of these particular affects, one of the things that we are looking for at this particular moment as we want to definitely applaud the pre-considered Bell for 6197:4 the collection of he dad on vulnerable populations in New York City. That data should be shared with the environmental Justice advisory board that is pursuant to local laws 64 of 2017, the environmental justice law. We want to also make sure

that the city is considering expanding the people that could be considered for the air-conditioners inside of NYCHA, as Chairman Levine also pointed, to include low income families that may not include seniors. We know that there are many--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

CECIL CORBIN MARK: Thank you for your time. I look forward to submitting my testimony moving forward.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Cecil. I would now like to call on Jalisa Gilmore to testify followed by Carlos Castille Cru. Jalisa, you may begin when the Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starting now.

JALISA GILMORE: Thank you, Chairs, and members of the City Council. I am Jalisa no more and I am testifying on the half of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance. NYEJA is a citywide network of grassroots organizations from low income communities and communities of color and environmentally overburdened neighbor owns, including those on the front line of climate change and its impacts, such as extreme heat, which results in more deaths than any other weather related event. NYEJA

commends Mayor de Blasio and his team on the COVID-19 heat wave plan to keep vulnerable New Yorkers cool and safe at home. However, there is still more that the city can do to protect vulnerable New Yorkers. The administration has recently taken important steps towards preparedness with the city's cooling center program, but cooling center locations still need to be publicized prior to an extreme heat event. We commend Speaker Corey Johnson for acknowledging the need for building specific cooling centers for vulnerable populations in his State of the city. All cooling centers should ensure extended and overnight hours to address high nighttime temperatures due to the urban heat island effect. It's likely that New York City is underestimating the number of annual heat related mortality. It is absolutely necessary to ensure estimates are as close to accurate as possible so that the scope of this issue is not underestimated and the appropriate amount of resources can be directed towards reducing related morbidity and mortality. NYEJA appreciates Speaker Johnson's call for legislation requiring DOHMH to reevaluate its metrics for counting heat-related deaths, at NYEJA has long championed. We

also recommend that this legislation call for data transparency by making daily level heat mortality data available. Heat waves put increasing strain on our energy grid and causes the most polluting peak power plants to be fired up, worsening air quality and increasing electricity costs. As Con Ed considers how they prepare for extreme heat, they need to specify a clear plan for how to protect New York City's most vulnerable communities from extreme heat in the event of brown and black outs in the future and this summer. There was a missed opportunity for local green jobs hiring throughout Central Brooklyn when Con Ed pursued the Brooklyn Queens Demand Management program. This time around, both Con Ed in New York City must ensure that clean, renewable, distributed energy investments commit to a just transition framework where green, local jobs are stimulated and maximized for frontline communities. NYEJA supports the city Council bills that address extreme heat, but we look forward to ensuring that these bills address all of NYEJA's long-standing priorities related to extreme heat. As the climate continues to warm, we will see increased social consequences of more frequent in severe extreme heat

events. New York City needs to ensure that we are protecting the most vulnerable by properly preparing for heat--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time's expired.

JALISA GILMORE: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Jalisa.

Essay we have a question from Chair Levine. Chair Levine?

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Yes. Thank you so much. I did want to follow up with We Act on one or two points. You raised so many good ones. So, now, the low income home assistance-- home energy assistance program is probably more important now than ever. Are you pushing an agenda for a ways that can be improved? And I'm going to ask one question to the Cecil, two, and then I will let you all respond. I know you have looked at a lot of other cities beyond New York for examples good and bad on kind of social justice issues related to heat and other factors we are discussing the day. I think Paris and Barcelona are often cited, but, if you have any lessons, good or bad, we can learn from those other cities, I would be interested in hearing. But,

Sonal, if you want to start us off, that would be great.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sonal?

SONAL JESSEL: Oh. There we go. Thank you. Yes. Thank you, Council member at Levine for asking the question. Broadly, We Act is working on what we are calling the heat, health, and equity initiative. And it is going to be a multiyear campaign around how to address the issue of extreme heat for not only Manhattan, but New York City overall. Even New York State. And that's like a multiyear plan. And before COVID-19 hit, we were thinking a lot about how to put in kind of like more systematic sixes and how LIHEAP, as a funding source, can be used to put in those systematic sixes by way of more energy-efficient systems for lower income folks. Now, with COVID-19, we are also looking kind of a little bit more towards the short-term and we have really, you know, been staunch advocates in kind of China push forward this aspect of how to cover people's cooling bills, not just giving people a seas. Right now, HEAP only covers about 1 to 2 percent of their funding that goes to cooling in like 98 percent of it goes to heating in the summertime.

I mean, in the wintertime. So, we know that the program isn't really adjusting for climate change and, b, for really what is the reality this summer. So, yeah. We are really pushing in the short term how can we find-- like pull HEAP funding that we are getting extra from the federal government. There is also another bell in the federal government looking for, I think, like 1.5 billion dollars for HEAP, effective, there would be a lot more funding source for this. And how we can kind of coordinate with our utility companies to provide the monetary assistance for paying the energy bills because, you know, we have members that have said, I have a 300 dollar energy bill in the summertime. There is no way I'm turning on my AC. So, we know it's a big problem and are really actively working on that in the short term. But also planning for the long-term. Ultimately we want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, achieving more energy-efficient, you know, New York City. So, we also sort of in this long-term campaign towards how do we kind of reimagine the home energy assistance program to cover that for low income folks, as well. Were part of the petition to the PSC about utility bills. Yeah.

CECIL CORBIN MARK: And thank you, Chair Levine, further question. Just in response to other models around the world, I would encourage the city to look at Paris and, in particular for the app that they developed to share with the residents of the city of Paris the cooling infrastructure that they have around the city. Clearly, there is the digital divide in our communities, but still many people in our communities do have smart phones. And so, we want to be able to take advantage of the opportunity to make sure that the data that is being collected both on heat vulnerability, but also on cooling infrastructure, is shared as widely as possible with the city. We, too, have also called on the city at different times to really look at the issue of creating signage and possibly to launch a program in collaboration with residents of the city about the most effective signage and way finding towards cooling centers. Barcelona, on the other hand, has really, I think, effectively used to the issue of implementing more green infrastructure to lower the sort of urban heat island effect of the city. And so, that is another example from the international realm that can be got. The seed

forward a collaborative, which New York City is a part of has documented a lot of these findings. And so, the folks in the city can definitely log to those examples through the C 40 collective. And then, lastly, I will just say on the issue of really creating an opportunity for a state budgetary funding to advance the payments for cooling centers. I think that is-- not cooling centers. Sorry. That the air conditioning so that people's bills can be paid, as Sonal Jessel was saying. I clearly have become so critical in the wake of some of the economic devastation that we are seeing. I mean, we are looking at economic forecast that is now [inaudible 04:25:19] years for the economy to cover. Small business says are shutting down really means that many of the people in our community are not going to be able to have, you know, the income to be able to pay for electrical bills, which is why We Act, yes, as Sonal pointed out, join the position. But we also need both folks in the city and the state to take a longer-term view of this in terms of not just the immediate response, but what are going to be the programs in place where the two, three, and four, possibly five years out as we go through an economic

recovery, as many economists are telling us. So, just a word of caution that this is not something that is short-term in nature.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Very helpful.

Thank you, Cecil thank you, Sonal. And thanks to We Act.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Levine. We will now call on our final panelist, Carlos Castille [inaudible 04:26:16]. After Carlos, if there are any witnesses who have not had a chance to testify, please use the Zoom raise hand function and will call on you after Carlos' testimony. Carlos, you may begin after the Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starting now.

CARLOS CASTELL CROKE: Good afternoon. My name is Carlos Castell Croke and I am a representative from the New York League of Conservation Voters. NYLCV represents over 30,000 members and New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy more healthier and more resilient. I would like to thank Chairs Brannan, Cohen, Levine, and Constantinides for the opportunity to come testify before the council

today. We all know that, as we continue to pollute and over consume, our climate intensifies. This is already resulted in noticeable climate changes, including unusually frigid winters, scorching summers, and unpredictable natural disasters. As we approach the summer months, we worry about the imminent heat waves that we will experience so often in recent years. Last July held the hottest July on record for the planet and, as the years go by, summer temperatures are expected to increase exponentially. Heat waves taken even greater toll on New Yorkers, is the urban heat island effect intensifies warm weather. Moreover, these heat waves disproportionately affect New York City's environmental justice communities. High rates of illness, including COVID-19 and limited access to air conditioning puts these communities at a higher level of risk during extreme weather. In addition, cooling areas such as local calls and beaches are expected to remain close to this summer, leaving many residents, especially seniors, with nowhere to escape the heat. For these reasons, we are asking that the city formulate a thorough plan to ensure that residents of environmental justice communities will be provided

with safe ways to stay cool in the summer months. We commend the city for its recent announcements to purchase 74,000 air conditioners for low income seniors. This will surely provide several ACs for many residents. Still, we look forward to a more comprehensive plan that reaches all environmental justice community members. We hope that Con Ed will serve as a partner in this effort by helping to protect our most vulnerable neighborhoods. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Carlos. As there are no raised hands, I will now turn it back to Chair Cohen to give closing remarks.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: All right. I really just want to say thank you to everybody who participated patiently. I really want to thank the staff, again. I thought today could not have gone more smoothly, so I think that, you know, we are cautiously optimistic, based on the testimony of Con Ed and the administration, but I want everyone to know that the Council is going to be vigilant and monitoring the availability and access to cooling through this summer. So, with that, I don't know if

any of my other colleagues want to say anything before we close? Chair Levine? Chair Brannan?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chairman Cohen. Yeah. I echo your comments. It's always nice at a time like this to be cautiously optimistic. I think we have no choice to be, but to be cautiously optimistic based on what we were told today. You know, I think trust but verify is a phrase we heard a couple of times today and that is our job in the city Council to make sure that this stuff goes awry. And I think part of the reason why we had the hearing today was because we want to address this now. Right? We don't want to have an oversight hearing in October to talk about what a disaster it was and we don't want our heads to be exploding in June as this whole thing in July or August when this whole thing unravels. We want to get ahead of it now. It does seem like the administration agrees with that and they seem to trust with Condit is saying, so we will take their word for it and we will just have to stay vigilant on it. We are very concerned that the same communities who were greatly impacted and devastated by COVID are the same ones that are in the cross hairs of a long, brutal, hot summer in New York City,

especially in the outer boroughs. And as we have seen, you know, the dynamics of the summer, as far as power outages, where you have a lot of our districts far outside midtown Manhattan that have overhead power lines, our power goes out every summer on a normal summer when everyone is on vacation. So, everyone being home, running their air-conditioners, trying to stay inside in social distancing is a real, real concern. Con Ed and City Hall, I wouldn't say that they don't share our concern, but they don't seem to be-- they seem to think that they are prepared. So, we're going to have to stay on top of them. So, I think we got a lot on the record today and we are just going to have to stay vigilant. And I thank the staff for doing such-- like Chair Cohen said, really doing an amazing job behind the scenes and running is, basically, effortlessly. Which I'm sure it's not the effortlessly behind-the-scenes. But it felt that way to us, as Chairs. So, thank you so much and back to you, Chair Cohen.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you. I think Chair Levine had a--

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Very bravely, Mr. Chair. And I also want to thank the staff. This was

pretty much a flawless five hour hearing except for one or two times where I couldn't figure out how to unmute myself, but that is on me. On a serious note, you know, the activists who spoke, the experts who spoke, and, I think, just about all the Council members who also asked questions and spoke, you know, we've been talking about equity issues around heat for a long time. Long before this pandemic, but coronavirus has now raised the stakes immeasurably and this is really has the potential to result in wider spread of this horrible virus and profoundly inequitable ways if we don't address the cooling needs of low income New Yorkers in this city before it gets hot. The stakes really are incredibly high. So, to everyone who spoke today, who is working on these issues, we need you more than ever and you certainly have the support of all of us in the Council in that effort. Thanks again to everyone and thanks to my great co-chairs. Chairs Brannan and Cohen and Constantinides. Back to you, Chair Cohen.

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Okay. And, with that, I'm going to gavel it--

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date _____ June 26, 2020 _____