

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY
WITH THE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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January 22, 2021

Start: 10:05 a.m.

Recess: 1:49 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 2)

B E F O R E: Margaret S. Chin,
Chairperson for Committee on Aging

Robert Holden,
Chairperson for Committee on
Technology

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala
Chaim M. Deutsch
R. Diaz, Sr.
Mathieu Eugene
Mark Treyger
Paul A. Vallone
Deborah Rose
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A P P E A R A N C E S

Katlyn Andrews
LiveOn New York

Margaret Rau
Bay Ridge Senior Center

Alfreda Haaland
Bay Ridge Senior Center

David Dring
Bay Ridge Senior Center

Michael Bosnick
Deputy Commissioner for DFTA

Kate Hohman
Director of Research and Future Planning at the
Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer

Guillermo Cruz
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Sarah Sanchala
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Thomas Kamber
Older Adults Technology Services

Christian Gonzalez
Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging

Robert Veksler
Brooklyn Fiber

Beth Finkel
AARP

Melissa Sklarz
Sage Senior Center

Ravi Reddi
Asian American Federation

Shaaranya Pillai
India Home

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
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Mary Archana Fernandez
South Asian Council for Social Services

Kerly Serrano
Sunnyside Community Services Senior Center

Alexander Ryley
Legal Aid Society

Beth L. Williams
Project Guardianship

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SERGEANT LUGO: Okay, live stream is rolling.

3

Sergeants if you could start you recordings please.

4

SERGEANT LEONARDO: PC recording is up.

5

SERGEANT PEREZ: Backup is rolling.

6

SERGEANT LUGO: Alright thank you. Sergeant

7

Jones, if you could take it away with the opening

8

statement.

9

SERGEANT JONES: Good morning everyone and

10

welcome to today's remote New York City Council

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hearing of the Committee on Aging and Technology. At

12

this time, would all panelists please turn on their

13

videos and to minimize disruption, please place all

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electronic devices to vibrate or silent.

15

If you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at

16

testimony@council.nyc.gov and again that's

17

testimony@council.nyc.gov. And thank you for your

18

cooperation and Chair, we are ready to begin.

19

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. [GAVEL] Good

20

morning, I am Council Member Margaret Chin, Chair of

21

the Committee on Aging and I would like to welcome

22

you to today's joint oversight hearing on increasing

23

senior access to technology. I would like to thank

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Chair Holden of the Technology Committee for co-

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hosting this very important hearing with me.

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2 For far too long modern technology has been
3 labeled as solely a tool for the younger generation.
4 However, if any moment has proven this to be false,
5 it is this moment. Access to the internet has played
6 a critical role in surviving the current pandemic for
7 everyone, especially our seniors.

8 Since the very beginning of the pandemic, many
9 older adults have been using the internet to find
10 important information such as where to pick up free
11 meals, what stores have senior shopping hour and ways
12 in which they can protect themselves from the virus
13 and to perform necessary tasks such as ordering food
14 and grocery for delivery.

15 Further, since many older adults have been
16 quarantining and social distancing at home since
17 March of last year, for safety, the internet has
18 become a critical tool to help them stay connected to
19 loved ones. The internet has helped older adults
20 connect to others through virtual visitation
21 platforms like Face Time and Zoom. It has been an
22 invaluable resource in combating loneliness and
23 social isolation. Letting many seniors stay socially
24 and physically active by allowing them to participate
25

1
2 in virtual classes and programming operated by our
3 City's senior centers and other service providers.

4 Beyond offering social connection and activity,
5 the internet has also served our older adults as a
6 vital resource for health services as the need and
7 for the use of telehealth has rapidly increased.

8 Accordingly to an August 2020 telehealth poll,
9 one in four older Americans reported having a virtual
10 medical during the first three months of the COVID-19
11 pandemic. This is a much higher percentage than the
12 4 percent of adults over the age of 50 who reported a
13 virtual visit with a doctor in 2019.

14 Researchers are predicting that telehealth
15 services will remain an instrumental part of society
16 for years to come. Despite these numbers, not every
17 older New Yorker has access to the internet or even
18 to basic technology.

19 The Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging has
20 recently reported that there are 474,000 older New
21 Yorkers, that's one in three older New Yorkers.
22 According to 2019 U.S. Census data, 18.8 percent of
23 New York City households over the age of 65 don't
24 have a computer at all. This digital divide is also
25 more prevalent among seniors who live alone, have

1
2 limited English proficiency and have lower level of
3 formal education.

4 In a world where the internet and technology are
5 a necessity to our seniors lives, we must help them
6 bridge this divide. We as a city must make sure that
7 our seniors are connected to the internet, have
8 access to basic technology and are taught how to use
9 it.

10 At this hearing, the Committee's will examine the
11 Administration's effort to ensure that seniors have
12 adequate access to internet and technology and that
13 it is actively working to expand that access to the
14 many seniors who have leaders. Additionally, we look
15 forward to learning more about the Department for the
16 Aging's virtual programming and services and how they
17 will continue to grow during the pandemic.

18 We are also particularly interested in learning
19 how DFTA and the Mayor's Office of the Chief
20 Technology Officer are working collaboratively with
21 other as well as with other city agencies to ensure
22 seniors have the resources they need to connect to
23 the internet.

24 How do we ensure we are creating and distributing
25 technology and virtual services that are not only

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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2 useful for seniors needs but which are also created
3 with their unique conditions in mind. Seniors are
4 using technology and their internet at a higher rate.
5 It is time the city take a look at how we can better
6 help them do that.

7 Finally, to our seniors watching this hearing,
8 remember if you are over the age of 65 and live
9 within New York City, you are now eligible for the
10 COVID-19 vaccination. The city has opened COVID-19
11 vaccination clinic in NYCHA developments to offer
12 onsite vaccination for those residents 65 and older.
13 Open clinics includes the Van Dyke I and II houses in
14 Brooklyn, Cassidy-Lafayette Houses in Staten Island
15 and Polo Grounds Tower in Manhattan. Let's make sure
16 you get vaccinated and stay healthy.

17 I would like to thank the Committee staff for
18 their help in putting together this hearing. Our
19 Council Nuzhat Chowdhury, Policy Analyst Kalima
20 Johnson, Finance Analyst Daniel Kroop and Finance
21 Unit Head Doheny Supora[SP?] and my Director of
22 Legislation and Communication Kana Ervin. And I
23 would like to thank the other staff that helped put
24 this hearing together.

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2 Now, I will turn it to Chair Holden for some
3 opening remarks.

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you Chair Chin. Good
5 morning, I am Council Member Robert Holden, Chair of
6 the Committee on Technology and I want to welcome
7 everyone to our hearing. I a pleased to join the
8 Committee on Aging Chaired by my colleague Council
9 Member Chin.

10 Today, we will focus on increasing senior access
11 to technology, which is especially important today.
12 Technology has played an essential role in our lives
13 which is increasing now in response to the
14 coronavirus pandemic. For seniors, access to the
15 internet is particularly vital as we continue to
16 practice social distancing and combat the virus.
17 Unfortunately, not every household has broadband
18 access and not every household has a device or
19 technology for online access.

20 Accordingly, the recent data from the U.S. Census
21 Bureau in New York City, about 20 percent of
22 residents age 65 or older do not have a computer at
23 home. Further, only 71 percent of seniors with a
24 computer have a broadband subscription.

25

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2 Accessibility and affordability are common
3 factors for lack of access but these are not the only
4 factors that leaves seniors behind. Studies have
5 shown that many seniors are not comfortable using
6 computers and technology in general and often need
7 someone to assist them with setting up and using
8 electronic devices.

9 The ability to access and confidently navigate
10 the internet was important before but is crucial now.
11 As information about the COVID-19 vaccine rollout is
12 mostly available online. The process of scheduling
13 COVID-19 vaccines in New York is not easy, I can
14 attest to that. Especially for the elderly who may
15 not be familiar with browsing the internet. I have
16 heard so many complaints from constituents who find
17 this online process very, very difficult. The portal
18 often redirects you to other websites and then you
19 run into a nightmare of pages and pages.

20 Some of those sites require extensive information
21 to book an appointment including an email address
22 that some older New Yorkers may not have. Other
23 websites just keep crashing. This experience is
24 frustrating for everyone but can be exhausting for
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COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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2 seniors. There is no question that technology is
3 having an increasing role in our society and we must
4 make sure that seniors do not get left behind.

5 To protect this growing class of citizens, we
6 should take concrete steps and work with the
7 Administration to ensure that older New Yorkers have
8 access to resources often available through the
9 internet. We look forward to hearing the valuable
10 testimonies from the Administration, experts and
11 community advocates on this important issue.

12 I would like to recognize members, Council
13 Members who are on this hearing is Council Member
14 Vallone, Council Member Yeger, Council Member
15 Deutsch, Council Member Lander, Council Member Ayala
16 and Council Member Rose.

17 I would like to thank our Technology Committee
18 Staff, Counsel Irene Byhovsky, Policy Analyst Charles
19 Kim and Finance Analyst Florentine Kabore and the
20 staff of the Committee on Aging for their hard work
21 in preparing for this hearing. Also, my Chief of
22 Staff Daniel Kurzyrna and Communications Legislative
23 Director Kevin Ryan.

24 Thank you Chair Chin. I will turn it back to
25 you.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so we have our first
3 panel of advocates and service providers.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. I'm Nuzhat
5 Chowdhury, Counsel to the Committee on Aging. I will
6 be moderating today's hearing and calling on
7 panelists to testify. Before we begin testimony, I
8 want to remind everyone that you will be on mute
9 until you are called on to testify. After you are
10 called on, you will be unmuted by the host. I will
11 be calling on panelists to testify, so please listen
12 for your name to be called.

13 I will also be periodically announcing who the
14 next panelist will be. Before we hear from the
15 Administration today, we will hear testimony from the
16 following individuals. Katlyn Andrews from LiveOn
17 New York followed by Margaret Rau from Bay Ridge
18 Senior Center followed by Alfreda Haaland from Bay
19 Ridge Senior Center followed by David Dring from Bay
20 Ridge Senior Center.

21 Panelists, I will call on you when it is your
22 turn to speak. During the hearing, if Council
23 Members would like to ask a question, please use the
24 Zoom raise hand function and I will call on you in
25 order. We will be limiting Council Member questions

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2 to five minutes; this includes both questions and
3 answers. Please also note that for ease of this
4 virtual hearing, we will not be allowing a second
5 round of questions. Thank you.

6 All public testimony will be limited to three
7 minutes. After I call on your name, please wait a
8 brief moment for the Sergeant at arms to announce
9 that you may begin before starting your testimony.

10 We will begin this hearing with public testimony
11 from senior service providers. As a reminder, I will
12 be calling on individuals one by one to testify in
13 panels. Council Members who have questions for a
14 particular panelist should use the Zoom raise hand
15 function and you will be called on after the entire
16 panel has completed testimony.

17 First, we will hear from Katelyn Andrews from
18 LiveOn New York. Please begin after the Sergeant
19 gives you the queue.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

21 KATELYN ANDREWS: Thank you for the opportunity
22 to testify. My name is Katelyn Andrews, I am the
23 Director of Public Policy at Live On New York. Live
24 On New Yorkers members include more than 100
25 community based nonprofits that provide core services

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2 to all New Yorkers. Bay Ridge is one of those that
3 you will hear next.

4 Throughout the pandemic, the entire aging
5 services network has found new ways to provide
6 critical services to older New Yorkers. Tech is what
7 made this possible and it is important because
8 isolation is now known to be a greater predictor of
9 mortality than things such as cigarettes, obesity.
10 It is a really important issue that we need to be
11 addressing.

12 And unfortunately for too many older New Yorkers
13 financial barriers, connectivity issues or lack of
14 training inhibit their ability to get online and find
15 the resources that exist. Encouragingly both the
16 city and state are beginning to address this issue,
17 for example, the city's tablet distribution program
18 is a positive step and the governor recently outlined
19 intent to mandate \$15 per month high speed internet
20 for low income families. Live On New York encourages
21 the state to ensure that program eligibility for this
22 initiative is inclusive of low income older New
23 Yorkers.

24 One of our members PSS surveyed more than 700
25 older adult participants finding the lowest tech

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2 usage among their senior center attendees. With many
3 having no personal means to access the internet,
4 whether it be through Wi-Fi or cell service. Many
5 clients reported that only a basic cellphone was
6 their ability to connect with the outside world
7 throughout the entirety of the pandemic. These
8 findings underscore the urgency of the following
9 recommendations. It is critical that senior centers
10 that are the connection point for so many older
11 adults had the infrastructure they need to continue
12 to connect.

13 The Blasio Administration previously promised \$10
14 million annually to senior centers that never went
15 through. This was to right size senior center
16 budgets. If we are underfunding the budgets that we
17 know senior centers need, we are not allowing them to
18 fully engage and support older New Yorkers virtually
19 or otherwise. This should be addressed.

20 Similarly, the indirect cost rate is an
21 initiative promised by the de Blasio Administration
22 that has not gone through. This needs to be
23 addressed. We need to fully fund the indirect cost
24 rate. Much of this funding goes towards the backend
25 software that would support virtual opportunities.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
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2 We also need to prepare for reopening. So, many
3 seniors utilize computer labs in senior centers to
4 get online. So, we need a plan for how will these
5 spaces reopen and how will we keep those computer
6 labs safe into the future.

7 We also know that we need to make sure that when
8 we are distributing information such as the vaccine,
9 that non-tech options are not second tier. If there
10 is going to be a hotline, their shouldn't be waits
11 for it. Every single system that we create, needs to
12 be accessible via technology.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 KATELYN ANDREWS: And we know that we can do this
15 and I am really excited to see some of the success
16 stories in here from a senior participant as well as
17 an instructor to show how great these programs can
18 be. Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Katlyn. Next, we
20 will hear from Margaret Rau of Bay Ridge Senior
21 Center.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

23 MARGARET RAU: Hello City Council Members. My
24 name is Margaret Rau, I am a Social Work Master's
25 Student at Hunter College and I am serving as an

1
2 intern this year with Bay Ridge Center in Brooklyn
3 New York. My primary responsibilities at the center
4 are conducting wellness check in calls and
5 facilitating weekly virtual programs. One of the
6 programs I host is called, What's Driving You Crazy,
7 which is style that is like a support group.

8 I have learned a great deal from these
9 conversations about what the pandemic experience has
10 been for Brooklyn older adults. I have heard
11 numerous stories of people feeling isolated, lonely,
12 fearful and sad. There is a shared sentiment echoed
13 amongst Bay Ridge Center members that because of the
14 pandemic, they are now living in what feels like a
15 void, just waiting for conditions to change so they
16 can resume life.

17 Many adults have wholeheartedly heeded the
18 warnings by health professionals and have committed
19 to leaving the house only for absolute essentials and
20 unavoidable appointments. For some, that means that
21 they are isolated without social interactions for
22 weeks or months on end. Staying connected while
23 taking physical health seriously has been a
24 precarious balancing act, impacting some older adults
25 in severe ways.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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2 The center offers over 30 virtual programs that
3 create a range of opportunities for people to engage
4 and voice their experiences with their community. In
5 this setting, I have had the opportunity to act as a
6 witness and supporter. I get a glimpse into some
7 specific issues in the position I hold. Such as how
8 for the many low income older adults I work with,
9 they do not have the discretionary income to afford
10 the technological devices or internet connectivity
11 necessary to participate consistently or at all in
12 our virtual programming.

13 I have seen how virtual programming can foster
14 healing spaces for older adults as they navigate some
15 incredible hardships. In my What's Driving You Crazy
16 program, we have discussed topics like cognitive
17 distortions or otherwise known as unhelpful thinking
18 patterns.

19 When spending a great deal of time ruminating on
20 a potential outcomes, we tend to catastrophize and
21 think about worse case scenarios. Observed
22 individuals begin to identify and work beyond these
23 unhelpful thinking styles as a group. Some of the
24 older adults who attend my program have developed
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COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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1 friendships with neighbors they have never met before
2 and others have built their network stronger.

3
4 On the calls and in the groups, I observed that
5 there are still gaps between what is available and
6 what is needed. I see the importance of these groups
7 in creating an atmosphere of community and an
8 opportunity to talk and work through issues during
9 the pandemic. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Margaret. Next, we
11 will hear from Alfreda Haaland of Bay Ridge Senior
12 Center.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Maybe having some technical
15 difficulties.

16 ALFREDA HAALAND: Should I start over again.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh, sorry, okay, we can hear
18 you now. Yes, please.

19 ALFREDA HAALAND: Hello members of City Council.
20 I am Alfreda Haaland, member of Bay Ridge Center. I
21 lived in Bay Ridge Brooklyn for 50 years. I retired
22 in September 2019. I have a desktop computer that I
23 use occasionally and recently obtained an iPhone XR.
24 I am fortunate that my neighbor allows me to use his
25

1
2 Wi-Fi connection to access the internet at high
3 speed.

4 Both my desktop and iPhone use that connection.
5 Since I don't have a webcam or speakers for my
6 desktop computer, I use my iPhone to connect to
7 several virtual classes offered by Bay Ridge Center
8 and other organizations that I am affiliated with.
9 They have been enjoyable, educational and helpful
10 during this pandemic. I was asked to testify today
11 to explain the challenges I have encountered as they
12 relate to obtaining affordable high speed internet
13 connectivity. But my neighbor is moving, so I will
14 not be able to share his generous connectivity much
15 longer.

16 While I have been told there are multiple service
17 providers, it seems that there are only two that
18 service my building, Verizon and possibly Spectrum.
19 Both offer a discount program but I do not qualify
20 for either. Spectrum is suggesting that I pay \$49.99
21 for 200 megabytes per second when I don't need that
22 much speed for myself, plus an additional \$5.00 per
23 month for a Wi-Fi router. That's approximately
24 \$55.00 plus all of the taxes and fees, it's nearly
25 \$65 per month.

1
2 Interestingly, Verizon is similar. They offer
3 300 megabytes per second for \$39.99 per month and
4 separately charged for their Wi-Fi router at \$15.00
5 per month. When in approximately \$55.00 monthly fee
6 plus all the taxes and fees, so that it is similar to
7 Spectrum \$65.00 a month. The additional 100
8 megabytes per second is meaningless to me, as I am
9 the only person in my apartment and I only have two
10 devices.

11 I never planned for internet connectivity, so
12 this is an extra expense. My income is now fixed and
13 I will be effected by the additional payments of
14 \$65.00 per month.

15 I fully appreciate the benefits of participating
16 in the virtual programs, browsing the internet,
17 emailing and other opportunities of the world wide
18 web. Access to the internet is essential, I do not
19 have a choice. I decided to give this testimony
20 specifically to implore you to consider alternatives
21 that will make it more affordable for older adults
22 like myself to access this essential service. It is
23 practically a utility and I would encourage you to
24 make it as easy as possible for older adults to
25 benefit from it. Thank you.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Finally, we will
3 hear from David Dring of Bay Ridge Senior Center.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 DAVID DRING: Hello, I am Dave, I am the Director
6 of Innovation programs at the Bay Ridge Center. I am
7 honored to be here and have a chance to present to
8 you on the need for low-cost, high speed internet
9 connectivity. I am among the team that rapidly
10 pivoted from onsite to virtual programming in March
11 last year. Today, we average 30 virtual programs a
12 week to cross a range of topics including arts,
13 education, health management, nutrition, physical
14 exercise, support groups, recreation and technology.

15 In this fiscal year already, we have delivered
16 over 580 virtual classes to over 7000 older adults.
17 But we are still missing many people in the Bay Ridge
18 area. You have heard from Margaret and Alfreda now
19 on the value of these virtual programs. Yet we are
20 only reaching a fraction of those who could benefit
21 from low-cost, high speed internet connectivity.
22 There are several companies shown to offer broadband
23 connectivity in the Bay Ridge area, including
24 Atlantic Broadband, Optimum, RCN, Spectrum and
25 Verizon but our research shows that only two actually

1 do just the ones that Alfreda mentioned, Spectrum and
2 Verizon. And Alfreda testified that they have
3 similar rates of about \$65.00 per month which is not
4 affordable. The City of Boston is working with RCN
5 and Comcast to offer a complete package for only
6 \$10.00 a month. AT&T offers a senior discount
7 program also for \$10.00 a month. The AT&T plan
8 provides 25 megabytes per second which is sufficient
9 for a single person to be able to access video,
10 streaming, email, web browsing and all of the things
11 that the previous Council Members had mentioned about
12 the connection to setting up vaccine appointments and
13 these programs are truly affordable for seniors.

14
15 The eligibility for the Boston program is just
16 being an older adult. The AT&T program does require
17 a person to participate in SNAP. The income
18 threshold to qualify for SNAP as an older adult is
19 \$25,512 for a single person.

20 If there must be an income level, SNAP is more
21 preferable than SSI, which is only \$12,880 which is
22 the eligibility for both the Spectrum and the Verizon
23 program here in New York City. There is a precedent
24 with the New York City with an older adult program to
25 be offered citywide without a means test. That's a

1 home delivered meal. There are also federal subsidy
2 programs through the Federal Communications Council
3 called Life Line. Live Line offers a monthly benefit
4 of up to \$9.25 towards phone or internet services for
5 eligible subscribers.
6

7 I would recommend to the Council, three paths
8 moving forward like Boston, work with the existing
9 providers to offer truly low-cost high speed
10 connectivity to change the plans not to offer such
11 high broadband but lower so that it can be cost
12 appropriate and reduce their cost and change their
13 eligibility.

14 Open up New York City to another vendor such as
15 AT&T to enable them to provide their \$10.00 a month
16 program -

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 DAVID DRING: Okay, thank you, appreciate it.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you David and thank you
20 to our first panel. I will now turn it back to the
21 Chair. In the meantime, Council Members if you have
22 any questions, please use the Zoom raise hand
23 function. Chair Chin.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you to this panel and
25 thank you to the staff at the Bay Ridge Center. I

1 know also Katlyn talked about the funding. So, I
2 just wanted to like Alfreda, yeah, I see you and I
3 just wanted to ask you that when you were at the
4 senior center, did you utilize the computer lab at
5 the center to do some communication technology? You
6 know, connecting with friends or did you participate
7 in the classes to learn how to use the computer and
8 how to use the internet?
9

10 ALFREDA HAALAND: I attended some classes that
11 were given by Rachael for smart phone.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, okay.

13 ALFREDA HAALAND: But they stopped the course.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: That's true. Yeah we have seen
15 a lot of senior centers having volunteers to help you
16 know train seniors how to use their smart phone.

17 My other question is to David. Can you just
18 finish up your recommendation.

19 DAVID DRING: Sure, so just for the City to
20 consider a provider owned where the city would
21 actually provide a low-cost high speed connectivity
22 to city properties and low income families. There is
23 such a need and there is the capacity within the city
24 to be able to provide that I believe and therefore
25 the city would be able to address the loneliness that

1
2 in isolation that older adults are facing and
3 ensuring that they are having the access to life
4 sustaining service. Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah and then we also know
6 that some federal money is supposed to be coming, so
7 definitely we have to work on that.

8 I will pass it over to Chair Holden.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yes, thank you Chair Chin.
10 I have a couple questions or just some comments also
11 to the first panel. Does your senior center, the Bay
12 Ridge Center, do you guys help your obviously your
13 seniors make appointment or try to maneuver through
14 making appointments for the vaccine?

15 DAVID DRING: Yes, we are doing that both over
16 the phone with people and actually all of the
17 services have been doing over the phone. But
18 sometimes we will use the computer on their behalf to
19 try to define and identify appointment locations.

20 For the most part, we have been having a lot of
21 difficulty in being able to find places close by or
22 those that would be easily accessible by a bus route
23 to be able to get to. The Bay Ridge Center does have
24 some money to be able to provide Uber transportation
25 to people who can't get to a location close by when

1
2 they are available. But we have not been
3 extraordinarily successful it seems like, by
4 Wednesday, all the appointments are quickly booked
5 up.

6 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Margaret, you are shaking
7 your head. Do you have anything to add to that?

8 MARGARET RAU: Yeah, I agree that it has been an
9 incredible challenge to try to connect willing,
10 interested, older adults who want the vaccine with
11 the vaccine right now. It have been a frustration.

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Well how many of you have
13 wasted time on trying to make that appointment? You
14 go down third party websites and – or you go to even
15 a pharmacist who – and I tried calling some
16 pharmacists in my area that were issuing the vaccine
17 and every pharmacist said we you know; we are getting
18 so many calls. Call next week, call the following
19 week. And I experienced just going on and filling
20 out several forms with my medical information and
21 personal information only to find a dead end where
22 they said, you don't qualify for the Moderna, without
23 an explanation. Did anybody find these frustrating
24 parts of you know, the Health + Hospitals website or
25 NYC.gov.

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KATLYN ANDREWS: This is the challenge across the board. We are hearing from our entire network of senior center providers just constant challenges and dead ends and even waiting on hold through the hotline and getting disconnected after hours waiting. And additionally, for those that want to assist an older adult in registering for the vaccine through the registration portals, you need an email address at some point to actually put in for the vaccine. So, people are like making up email addresses, so that they can help multiple people and using their personal one.

So, we are just seeing a consistent sort of overreliance on technology and misunderstanding that many older adults don't have an email address to utilize and that's really a barrier. Or at least an extra step that takes time and by the time that you get it all set up that slot has been taken.

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Right, I found that with filling out the forms for my mom who is 96. She doesn't have an email address but it requires an email address to move on.

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2 So, you are in a catch 22 automatically and even
3 the technology that you said that they rely heavily
4 on technology but the technology is awful. You know,
5 you should have one place where you could, you know,
6 you fill out your information and find out the
7 available vaccines in your area, the closest one and
8 then make the appointment. All in one, you know,
9 step or even in three steps but here you are going to
10 50 steps and then just you go onto a dead end.

11 But I just want to ask the senior center, what is
12 your suggestion for the vaccine rollout? What would
13 you say is the best way to reach your members?

14 DAVID DRING: That's a great suggestion and from
15 a technological perspective, it would be wonderful to
16 sort of reorient the sign in process, the online
17 form, so that you could do just what you mentioned.
18 You know, be able to say I live in Bay Ridge, where
19 is the closest available vaccine that I can go to?

20
21 Even if it was done in that way, we as staff
22 members could then help our clients know where to be
23 able to go and we could enter in information for
24 them, so that information was available for them.
25 Otherwise, it would be great for us to kind of to -

1
2 for us to get some sort of communication about how
3 many vaccines are going to what places in our
4 neighborhood.

5 So, if we knew that one of the 24 hour places,
6 the Brooklyn Marine Terminal, that they had 100,000
7 vaccines, then we would you know, try to direct and
8 use that one location to send all of our clients to.
9 Otherwise, like you said, we have to go to all
10 whatever 100 of different places in Brooklyn to be
11 able to find a possible place and each time we have
12 to restart the process from the beginning. That's
13 very time consuming. I spend over an hour and a half
14 with just one particular client only to not find a
15 vaccine location. We just became so frustrated, we
16 decided to do it again the next day. We spent an
17 hour the next day and we are just continuing to try
18 to find a possibility.

19 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Anybody else, suggestions?
20 Aside from technology, this is my last question
21 Chair. Aside from technology, let's say rolling out
22 the vaccine and trying to reach seniors, let's put
23 technology aside now because we don't have a good
24 website to do that and we just, what I said was the
25 nyc.gov is you know, how to access the vaccine. It's

1
2 a glorified store locator. That's all it does, it
3 locates here is your vaccine area but try to make an
4 appointment if you can.

5 But aside, let's say put technology aside for a
6 second, how else would you reach seniors with the
7 vaccine? You guys are the experts. How would you
8 suggest to the city that they roll out the vaccine to
9 your members? To your seniors?

10 DAVID DRING: Probably what would be a phenomenal
11 way to do it was to use our center to give us -

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: That's exactly what we were
13 talking about yesterday. Use your centers to roll
14 out the vaccine. Use the senior centers. They
15 exist, your seniors know it. They know where it is.

16 DAVID DRING: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you. I am sorry
18 David, go ahead, continue I am sorry.

19 KATLYN ANDREWS: One thing to add, we know that
20 seniors trust their center. If they were to come to
21 the senior center and see the Director getting a
22 shot, that might make them a little bit more likely
23 to accept the vaccination as well. And similarly, we
24 have hundreds of HUD 202 buildings that hundreds of
25 thousands of seniors live in. We could be in lobbies

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2 vaccinating to the extent that supply is the problem,
3 totally understand that we need the federal
4 government to step in there but to the extent that we
5 can be doing a better job of reaching seniors where
6 they are, that would be a really wonderful
7 improvement.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And added benefit that would
9 be more seniors would know about your senior center.
10 Because some obviously don't go to the senior centers
11 but all of a sudden if they had to go there for the
12 vaccine, they would find that oh, this is a nice
13 place, it's great and they meet other people and it's
14 very, very important. And I think we are missing
15 that opportunity now but anybody else.

16 DAVID DRING: I would just add that we have a
17 number of partnerships with local nursing programs
18 that come and do health programs. So, I am sure we
19 would be able to get the nurses or student nurses to
20 be in our building in our center to be able to allow
21 that to facilitate those vaccinations.

22 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Okay, thank you Chair. I
23 just want to mention we have been joined by Council
24 Member Treyger and Council Member Ulrich.

25 Thank you Chair.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, thank you Chair Holden. I just wanted to add to that. I mean, that's what we have been telling the Administration. You know we have the infrastructure ready. The senior buildings, the NORC's senior center utilize them and when they have this vaccine action center whatever and they set up a taskforce to talk about how to provide vaccine to older adults. Katlyn, have they even met yet?

KATLYN ANDREWS: They did meet. They met twice now.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, okay they are finally moving ahead.

KATLYN ANDREWS: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But the infrastructure is there. I mean we just need to get the vaccine and we can work with the centers and the senior housing provider and get our seniors vaccinated. I think I saw Council Member Deutsch raising his hand for questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Hi, yeah, I am sorry. Can you hear me? Can you hear me now? Okay, I just have my dog in the background barking.

Yes, I just want to thank Council Member Holden for bringing up the vaccine question and the issues

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2 on seniors being vaccinated and we all know that even
3 if you do get an appointment, it's a hurdle for a
4 senior to actually go down and wait in line to many
5 of these vaccine locations. Where they have to wait
6 in line for some time, a number of hours just to get
7 the vaccine but what I wanted to bring up, which I
8 think is important to reach out to our senior
9 population is to maybe try to push the
10 Administration, which I have spoken to that they
11 should get the vaccine to the doctors that have
12 Medicare patients. And no one knows the seniors
13 better than the doctors and I think that's a way to
14 reach out to as many seniors as possible to make sure
15 they get vaccinated and in particular in my district,
16 I have a very large senior population and
17 unfortunately my COVID rates in my district is pretty
18 high. And I think it is important that we do rollout
19 the vaccination and put more pressure on government
20 to make sure that our senior population gets reached
21 out to through the senior providers, through the
22 Medicare doctors, that doctors that accept Medicare
23 and it's only with speaking to the people, speaking
24 to doctors to find out where the patient saw it and
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1
2 have them locate them is the only way we are going to
3 be able to get the seniors vaccinated.

4 Unfortunately, in this city, one doesn't know
5 what the other one is doing and that is the major
6 problem, so I just wanted to bring that up. Reaching
7 out to the doctors who have Medicare patients.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Committee Counsel,
9 other Council Members?

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, I see that Council
11 Member Vallone also has his hand raised.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Thank you and especially
14 to the Co-Chairs. Mighty Margaret, we know we love
15 you. You have been defending our seniors through the
16 eight years we have been working together. And Co-
17 Chair Robert Holden, this is going to be a wonderful,
18 perfect way for you to continue this conversation
19 after our battle for the last eight years and to the
20 DFTA workers and those who are testifying today.
21 Thank you for always helping.

22 I think that overall topic of the hearing is so
23 many things that I want to bring up with questions
24 about providing that technological support to seniors
25 but as the Council Members have noticed, when we are

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2 in this pandemic and how they started talking, it
3 kind of gets overshadowed. But the only thing that
4 really matters which is vaccinating our seniors and
5 our people in the city.

6 So, two separate things and you may have
7 mentioned it before, I apologize. Multitasking
8 things while you are doing this hearing. Has there
9 been an active plan or role that you have played in
10 providing knowledge to the seniors who meet the
11 requirements to get the vaccination? That DFTA or
12 any city agency has ever reached out either through
13 phone call or email to advise our seniors that this
14 is what they have to do to register online and this
15 is the closest sites to do it with. Has there been
16 any active plan directly by you to do that?

17
18 DAVID DRING: So, as the Bay Ridge Center, we are
19 doing wellness check-in calls with people every day
20 so that we reach all of our seniors and for the most
21 part, everyone that is part of our program is over
22 65. We are encouraging them if they have the
23 technology, what is the website address to be able to
24 reach to connect to or if we can, we will take some

1
2 time to try to help them get on their behalf,
3 connected to a local vaccination site.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Okay, so that's a great
5 step on your part. That's something that you are
6 individually doing. That's commendable. So, do you
7 have any data on of those seniors that are within
8 your network on how many you have been able to reach
9 and how many you have not been able to reach because
10 that might be a way of microcosm to give us an
11 example. Because that's a difficult yeoman's task to
12 do to call each one and make sure that you are giving
13 them that information and how to log in and how to do
14 that. Because I know with my parents and the seniors
15 in my life and the seniors in my district, they have
16 been unable to navigate the insanity that has been
17 put out there on these portals. Uploading the
18 documents and this one is not here and you want to
19 the Bronx at seven o'clock at night. The state sites
20 are different than the city sites and now the fear
21 that everything is going to run out. So, I don't
22 think that's enough. I mean that's exactly what we
23 love is your personal attention because that's the
24 only way mom and dad can get it though is if you
25 personally call them and guiding them through and

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2 this is the first Speaker in the Council and he still
3 needs that help to get through those.

4 I mean, I still get all those emails but that
5 goes to show you what the difficulties are. I think
6 we need to take a much broader approach, an
7 agencywide approach that we mandate interaction with
8 our seniors through this because the process is going
9 to change now. It is always going to evolve right.
10 There is going to be new pop up sites, there is going
11 to be new procedures, there is going to be new
12 guidelines on the state and the city level that we
13 are all still navigating.

14 So, imagine what's happening on the seniors of
15 trying to navigate all that. So, as we are preparing
16 for the new batches of vaccines and trying to expand
17 that, we should now have a plan tomorrow, Monday on
18 how to advise as soon as we know those next steps,
19 what are the group here going to do to advise their
20 seniors of how to quickly navigate that.

21 DAVID DRING: From the Bay Ridge perspective, I
22 really think the opportunity to use the senior
23 centers as a hub for that vaccination, I think would
24 be a terrific opportunity. Really for two reasons:
25 One because it is already known and two, for the most

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2 part, the people that come to the senior center are
3 often the folks that don't have a lot of the
4 technology themselves. And so, they are looking to
5 use the senior center to be their sense of
6 connectivity because they don't have other means of
7 doing that to a large extent.

8 So, I would - you know, if there would be a way
9 that we could use it as a hub, I think we would be
10 able to inoculate a lot of seniors and to really be
11 able to -

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: And I agree with you but
13 that's the point. Because you are saying, if there
14 was a way. We need to establish that way. I am not
15 saying you individually, that's why we are having
16 this hearing. We need to create the plan citywide on
17 how we can activate every senior center to every
18 provider, every third party provider to have a
19 uniform way to reach out via call, email, or they are
20 coming in and the reason why Margaret and I fought so
21 hard for virtual senior centers because a lot of
22 seniors can't make it.

23 So, we would sorry but I just want to finish it.
24 Those virtual senior centers, which is part of this
25 technology hearing and DFTA hearing, why we fought

1
2 for them but those tablets were so expensive and so
3 hard to get into the hands of seniors and to get
4 those programs up but that's not even a viable option
5 because I know, unless we funded individually as
6 Council Members, it didn't happen.

7 And it was such an expensive initiative to fund,
8 that we didn't set up a template or basis to prepare
9 for this crisis because only a very small percentage
10 of seniors have that technology. So, we have to find
11 a way through technology, through DFTA and through
12 aging to quickly, like they had to do for the
13 students and the schools to get them all laptops. We
14 can't do that with our seniors, so we need to find
15 another way to get that information to them. It may
16 be exactly what you are doing, which is reaching out,
17 calling them, finding out who the guardian is, who
18 the family member is to help them through but now is
19 the time to do it.

20 Thank you Co-Chairs for allowing me to just put
21 my two cents on that. But you have been battling and
22 I think Council Member Holden continue that battle
23 going on in subsequent use but if there is a call
24 that might be something that we could quickly all
25 unify on is a unified plan to address, get that

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2 knowledge out to the seniors on a simplified email
3 and or call or notice to a senior as to this is
4 what's happening. You know, and this is how you do
5 it. Thank You.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member
7 Vallone. I see that Council Member Rose also has a
8 question.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. I have a quick
10 question. Some organizations in my district have
11 reached out to my office to requesting a change in
12 purpose of funds, in order to purchase more laptops
13 and tablets for their new online programming. They
14 stated that DFTA will not approve their request to
15 purchase equipment to distribute to their program
16 participants. Have any of you experienced this and
17 what's been you know, the outcome of your requests?
18 Or have you had a need to purchase more equipment?

19 DAVID DRING: I am not the liaison to DFTA so I
20 don't know the sort of joys of doing that budget
21 activity. But as the technology person, I have had
22 the pleasure of being able to create some tech loaner
23 programs that we have been able to implement
24 throughout our community. And that's part of the
25 reason why we wanted to be so vocal on the need for

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2 low cost internet connection. Because if you can
3 provide a \$200 tablet to somebody, then you have to
4 pay \$65.00 a month for an internet connection. And
5 then that's forever. That's very expensive over the
6 long term for all parties involved. So, if there was
7 lower cost internet connectivity, that could make
8 more people be able to get these devices and be able
9 to connect.

10 KATLYN ANDREWS: I can add a little bit. From
11 what I have heard similar experience that shifting
12 funds can be a difficult process especially knowing
13 there might be incentive for agencies to find savings
14 that might misalign with the flexibility for agencies
15 to approve changes in how funds are being spent. I
16 don't know if that's in across the board policy or it
17 might be varying depending on who your physical
18 officer is. Some might be more flexible in that
19 respect.

20 I think overall we should really be looking at
21 how the budgets are constructed from the beginning
22 and make sure that there is funding from technology,
23 so that they are not trying to shift from other
24 budget lines. But from the start, we should have an
25 investment in all senior centers to make sure that

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2 they have funds to purchase tablets for their
3 instructors. To purchase Wi-Fi, to make these
4 investments as well as to fund marketing. There is
5 no marketing budget in a senior center, so they have
6 no ability to pay for a Facebook post to connect with
7 the 50 plus individuals in their neighborhood who
8 might now know about the senior center.

9 To do a Facebook post saying you can get
10 vaccinated here, should we get to that point. So,
11 there is certainly a lot of gaps within the senior
12 center budget that we would love to see addressed.
13 So, that way, we are not looking to pull from other
14 funds where we have accruals but it is just there and
15 we are fully funding everything that a senior center
16 might need.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. I just wanted to
18 make sure that you know, the funding was adequate and
19 if not, every body found themselves in a situation
20 that hadn't been planned for. And so, I just don't
21 want there to be impediments to people being able to
22 provide the equipment that our seniors need to be
23 able to you know, function throughout this pandemic.
24 And especially in light of the fact that everything
25 seems to require that an online registration and I

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2 think it's a travesty that vaccinations are tied to
3 their online connection. Their ability to utilize or
4 navigate the online connection and we haven't really
5 made sure that all of our seniors are able to do
6 that.

7 So, thank you. I just wanted to know if we were
8 able to supply the need and if not, if there was some
9 flexibility. If your experience had determined
10 whether or not you had the flexibility to meet the
11 need. Thank you. Thank you Chair.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I have a question
13 from Council Member Ayala.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Hi, good morning everyone.
15 I think my question is, is really geared towards the
16 distribution of tablets that happened at the
17 beginning of COVID. Does anyone know if there was an
18 effort to connect those seniors that already knew how
19 to use a tablet with the actual tablet or the tablets
20 just distributed arbitrarily so that you know, we are
21 not sure if the seniors that actually have possession
22 of them can even use them.

23 KATLYN ANDREWS: I am unaware as to how exactly
24 the distribution was chosen. I know it was targeted
25 at NYCHA buildings and there was follow up from OATS,

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2 Senior Planet to assist individuals who did not have
3 the understanding of how to utilize the tablets to
4 make sure that they are getting some training to
5 fully utilize that. I don't know the process in
6 which those tablets were determined who exactly would
7 be receiving them. Other than it was in NYCHA.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Now, I know that DFTA has
9 been hosting some activities virtually. Some more
10 successfully than others. Is there anyone that is
11 capturing that data to find out how successful
12 virtual programming has been at the senior centers.
13 I know that at the Community Boards, I mean they are
14 seeing the largest numbers of people participating
15 than they have ever seen. You know there are others
16 that share similar experiences. Is that the case for
17 the Department for the Aging? Is that the case for
18 the senior centers because I think I am not yet sold
19 on the idea that this has kind of caught on and I
20 think that I have been at some virtual events that
21 are very well attended and then I have heard about
22 others where you have maybe two or three participants
23 from a single senior center.

24 KATLYN ANDREWS: Yeah, I think across senior
25 centers the proliferation of virtual programming is

1
2 incredible. We have a resource page on our website
3 that actually catalogues all the senior centers that
4 we are aware of that are offering virtual programs.
5 An older adult could go on there and chose one that
6 focuses on art classes and really find what is
7 important to them.

8 To the extent to which we know how many seniors
9 are logging on on an average day, I don't have that
10 data. I would imagine that these numbers are being
11 captured through the senior centers, they are
12 inputting into stars and the Department for the Aging
13 could at some point report out on that. That would
14 be wonderful to learn how had the engagement changed
15 throughout the pandemic. Are we continuing to
16 attract more individuals?

17 But to a certain extent, until we are able to
18 make sure that all older adults have access, we are
19 going to continue to have pockets of the city where
20 people just can't get online and for the most part,
21 that's going to be the hardest hit communities to
22 COVID. Where folks have the lowest income. So, it
23 is certainly not until we have universal broadband,
24 it's not going to be an equitable system.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Understood but I think that if, you know, I know most of a lot of my seniors were recipients of the free laptops, the iPads. But they are just still not connecting and that concerns me because if someone is capturing that data, you know, we know that the senior centers have been closed for many months. We know the depressions runs rampant and you know, there is a correlation between poverty and mental health, and so, it concerns me that you know we may essentially have access to the data but are not coordinating programs and services and really planning out around that information.

So, I appreciate you guys coming to testify this morning. Obviously this is an important subject matter and I look forward to continuing this conversation. Thanks.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member. We have no further Council Member questions, so I will turn it back to Chair Chin.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and we also have been joined by Council Member Constantinides. Any other Council Members join? So, I guess we will call the Administration panel. So, Committee Counsel can swear them in.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

48

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I will now call
3 on the following members of the Administration to
4 testify: Michael Bosnick Deputy Commissioner for
5 DFTA; Kate Hohman Director of Research and Future
6 Planning at the Mayor's Office of the Chief
7 Technology Officer; Guillermo Cruz Associate
8 Commissioner for DFTA; and Sarah Sanchala Director of
9 Government Affairs for DFTA.

10 I will first read the oath and after, I will call
11 on each of you to individually respond.

12 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
13 and nothing but the truth before this Committee and
14 to respond honestly to Council Member questions?
15 Deputy Commissioner Bosnick?

16 MICHAEL BOSNICK: I do affirm.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kate Hohman? Guillermo Cruz?

18 GUILLERMO CRUZ: I do affirm.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sarah Sanchala?

20 SARAH SANCHALA: Yes.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kate Hohman, are you there?

22 KATE HOHMAN: I am yes, I do affirm. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Deputy
24 Commissioner Bosnick, you may begin when ready.
25

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

49

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2 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Good morning. Thank you,
3 Chairpersons Chin and Holden and members of the
4 Committee on Aging and Committee on Technology. I
5 am Michael Bosnick, Deputy Commissioner of Planning,
6 Evaluation, Research and Training at the New York
7 City Department for the Aging, known as NYC Aging.

8 I am joined today by Guillermo Cruz, Associate
9 Commissioner of Community Services. I appreciate
10 the opportunity to testify before you today about
11 increasing access to technology for older adults.

12 In a 2017 Pew Research Center National Survey, 67
13 percent of adults ages 65 and older say they go
14 online, that's up from 14 percent in the year 2000.
15 But rates of internet and broadband adoption also
16 differ considerably by household income and
17 educational attainment. Of seniors whose annual
18 household income is \$75,000 or more, 94 percent say
19 they go online and 87 percent have high-speed
20 internet at home. Those shares drop to 46 percent
21 and 27 percent, respectively, among older adults
22 living in households earning less than \$30,000 a
23 year.

24 According to the New York City Internet Plan
25 issued in January 2020, only 40 percent of New

1
2 Yorkers over the age of 65 and living alone have a
3 broadband internet connection at home. A situation
4 that has intensified the negative health risks of
5 COVID-19 and social isolation. Technology has
6 become a literal lifeline, providing a link to
7 government information, emergency notifications,
8 access to benefits and financial management tools,
9 delivery of food and household essentials and
10 connection to services such as telemedicine and
11 online psychological counseling.

12 Access to technology is not just the device
13 itself but access to reliable broadband internet as
14 well. Older adults must be able to use online
15 resources, especially during COVID-19, in order to
16 stay safely at home and connected to their family,
17 friends and loved ones.

18 Combatting social isolation has always been a top
19 priority for the agency. Social isolation occurs
20 when a person has little to no contact with anyone
21 else. In older adults, it can be harmful to their
22 wellbeing and lead to a variety of serious health
23 problems, including depression, cognitive impairment
24 and heart disease.

25

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2 During the pandemic, NYC Aging and our providers
3 have also been doing case management calls and
4 wellness check-in calls. These calls have an
5 essential purpose. Not only to check in on the
6 older adults, but to provide referrals to services
7 like food, friendly visiting, elder abuse programs,
8 mental health and other services the City has set up
9 during COVID.

10 To date, almost 2.9 million calls have been
11 placed, with over 191,000 older adults reached.
12 COVID-19 has exacerbated social isolation. With
13 older New Yorkers asked to stay indoors, many have
14 been cut-off from friends and family. Technology
15 access is a bridge to reducing this isolation. Not
16 only does it enable older adults to connect to
17 programs and vital resources such as the above, it
18 also allows older adults access to health care,
19 information, programing, entertainment and
20 engagement with family and friends.

21 NYC Aging is fortunate to receive funding for the
22 New York City Connected Communities program first
23 from DOITT, the NYC Department of Information
24 Technology and Telecommunications and then during
25 this administration from the Mayor's Office of the

1
2 Chief Technology Officer known as MOCTO. The goal
3 of this program is to promote digital literacy and
4 provide seniors with internet access. Only 18
5 percent of older adults say they are comfortable
6 learning new technologies on their own, presenting a
7 major roadblock to digital inclusion efforts that
8 focus only on devices and connectivity.

9 This program provides the supports needed for
10 older adults to safely learn new technology. NYC
11 Aging contracted with Older Adult Technology
12 Services, known as OATS, to provide ongoing
13 technology support and education. OATS maintains
14 computer labs at older adult centers also known as
15 senior centers, provides center members with
16 computer training, sustains a seniors-oriented
17 website and operates a technology center for older
18 adults.

19 OATS offers technology classes at 22 older adult
20 centers and the Senior Planet Exploration technology
21 center which they operate as well. Currently,
22 virtual technology trainings are offered in five
23 languages: English, Spanish, Bengali, Russian and
24 Mandarin/Cantonese. So far, in Fiscal Year 2021,
25 OATS has facilitated almost 600 virtual training

1 sessions that have included over 60,000
2 participants.
3

4 In addition to the technology center, OATS also
5 operates the Senior Planet website that shares
6 information and resources that support aging, with a
7 particular focus on technology's role in helping
8 older adults connect, stay healthy and enjoy life.
9 In addition to articles written especially for
10 Senior Planet, the site includes a calendar of local
11 events of interest to seniors.

12 NYC Aging is also pleased to have facilitated
13 tablet distribution for several groups of older
14 adults including those living in New York City
15 Housing Authority developments and those who are
16 kinship caregivers. Led by the Mayor's Office of
17 the Chief Technology Officer, with support from
18 NYCHA and NYC Aging, the City delivered 10,000 free
19 Wi-Fi-equipped tablets to older NYCHA residents
20 during the summer.

21 NYC Aging again contracted with the NYC-based
22 nonprofit Older Adults Technology Services to
23 provide outreach, support and training focused on
24 the use of tablet devices to combat social
25 isolation, connect with family and friends, to

1
2 access critical health information, improve
3 financial security, increase access to benefits and
4 engage effectively with government services and
5 local community resources during the COVID emergency
6 and its aftermath.

7 OATS launched a new, multilingual call center
8 staffed by professional trainers, which has made
9 thousands of phone calls to confirm device receipt
10 and help recipients get acquainted with their
11 tablet, create email addresses, access specific
12 websites and resources and log into Zoom in order to
13 be able to take advantage of virtual programs. A
14 collection of handouts and welcome videos designed
15 to acclimate the NYCHA residents to basic functions
16 of their new devices was also created.

17 OATS also developed and implemented a new five-
18 week course called "Android Essentials," complete
19 with a printed and mailed course manual to walk
20 seniors step-by-step through using email, taking
21 photographs, accessing websites and getting in touch
22 with family and friends. Shorter one-time training
23 sessions were also developed to engage those who may
24 not want to commit to a 5-week course. To date,
25

1
2 they have provided 630 hours of virtual training to
3 tablet recipients.

4 Offering multimodal, high-touch support through
5 the mail, on the phone, and through virtual
6 programs, has successfully empowered even total
7 "technology novices" to be able to use their devices
8 to stay connected to family and friends. OATS has
9 conducted more than 47,000 phone calls with device
10 recipients that range anywhere from 30-90 minutes
11 long, helping them feel confident and comfortable
12 enough to use their device to attend religious
13 services, use telemedicine and pursue further online
14 resources.

15 Additionally, NYC Aging distributed more than 370
16 tablets to grandparents and relative kinship
17 caregivers through our Grandparent Resource Center.
18 This was funded through the Mayor's Office of
19 Criminal Justice and the Foster Parent Grant. These
20 tablets serve to connect GRC, Grandparent Resource
21 Center clients to virtual older adult programs,
22 technology training, caregiver services, workshops,
23 and support groups.

24 In addition, NYC Aging surveyed foster
25 grandparents to determine who needed a tablet in

1
2 order to regularly participate in trainings and
3 volunteer opportunities. As such, NYC Aging is in
4 the process of providing tablets to an additional
5 270 foster grandparents to support virtual
6 programming initiatives for both training and
7 volunteer work with youth through the Foster
8 Grandparent Program. This is funded through the
9 Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and again the
10 Foster Grandparent in this case grant.

11 Since March, providers have had to transition
12 many programs, which normally are offered in person,
13 to virtual or telephone-based services. Our
14 providers are now offering more than three times the
15 virtual programs to older adults than was the case
16 before the start of the pandemic. Older adult
17 centers, many of which offered some virtual
18 programing, pivoted quickly in order to increase
19 virtual program offerings in the areas such as
20 social engagement programs that help keep older
21 adults active and socially connected.

22 A total of 242 older adult centers in our
23 network. The vast majority of our centers are now
24 offering an array of free programs that include
25 fitness classes, arts & crafts, music and

1
2 socialization programs online and via Zoom. About
3 3,000 virtual programming events were offered
4 through October 2020, involving and they involve
5 more than 78,000 attendees.

6 As a result, older adults now have a wider range
7 of options and fewer barriers to attend. Centers
8 are providing virtual programming in English,
9 Spanish, Chinese, Italian, Russian, French, Polish,
10 Korean, Arabic, Albanian, German, Greek, Lithuanian,
11 Tagalog and Yiddish. Over the last year, NYC Aging
12 and our providers have also transitioned other
13 programs and services to be virtual or telephone
14 based. These include, Friendly Visiting, Geriatric
15 Mental Health, Caregiver Support, Case Management
16 and HIICAP webinars and the development of new
17 programming such as Fraud Prevention and Empowerment
18 series through our Elder Justice group.

19 Virtual programs provide older adults with
20 flexibility to join when they can and not have it
21 interfere with their schedules. It fosters
22 community, connection, wellness and intellectual,
23 creative and physical engagement. We have
24 increasingly seen the value in this delivery method
25 and are working on ways to ensure that virtual

1
2 programming continues post-COVID to provide older
3 adults with more choices and flexibility.

4 Additionally, NYC Aging has long had a Friendly
5 Visiting program in which volunteers visited older
6 matches in their home. This program shifted to
7 virtual check-ins in March. In October, we launched
8 Friendly VOICES meaning, Virtual Opportunities
9 Improving Connections with Elders, which is based on
10 the Friendly Visiting program model; however, it is
11 designed to be virtual, even after the pandemic is
12 over. Friendly VOICES is also available to all older
13 adults who are socially isolated. Friendly VOICES
14 offers the option to have a peer-to-peer match or
15 the ability to join small virtual groups.

16 In conclusion, we would like to say, the pandemic
17 has really highlighted the digital divide and the
18 need for this work to be a continued priority. We
19 have learned from providers' work that virtual
20 programming can be used to convey important
21 information to older adults about benefits critical
22 to their well-being as well as other social
23 services. Technology can be used to combat social
24 isolation through friendly visiting and caregiver
25 support and can be used to promote good mental

1 health and stay engaged and connected. It can be
2 leveraged for exercise and nutrition information to
3 help achieve and maintain good physical health.

4
5 While many programs were offered virtually prior
6 to the pandemic, we will continue to support
7 increased options going forward and expect that they
8 will remain an integral part of programming even
9 after the pandemic has ended. Through our work with
10 Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer, we
11 are considering and identifying opportunities to
12 expand on the resources already available to achieve
13 the full potential of this remarkable pathway for
14 communication information, and for engagement and
15 support.

16 We look forward to continuing our partnerships to
17 evaluate ways to increase access to devices,
18 connectivity and training for especially lower
19 income people to increase their ability to make use
20 of such offerings. As always, we are grateful to
21 the Chairs and the Committees for your advocacy and
22 continued partnership to support our older New
23 Yorkers. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
25 We will now turn to Chair Chin for questions.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Learning how to use technology. Okay, thank you for your testimony. And you have heard from the providers earlier and some other Council Members question. Is DFTA collecting data on how many seniors are actually participating in these virtual programs? Because you talk about you know, there is thousands of programs that's been offered, are you collecting like the daily attendance and to show like how many of the senior center members are actually participating in these programs?

MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, we are collecting that data. Katlyn mentioned in her conversation with you STARS, which is the client tracking system at the Department for the Aging and we have been using STARS so that our providers can integrate on who is attending, so that we can see those patterns over time and how they have been changing.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, can you share some of that data with us?

MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, you know, the information that we shared today was that we have had between March when the pandemic really took hold. In October, we had 3,000 different events virtually

1 through our provider agencies and 78,000 attendees.

2 So, that was data through March. Now we are updating
3 that data and we can certainly share the updated with
4 you. That will come through shortly.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, what percentage of that
7 compared to before you know, a participant who
8 actually was able, when the senior centers were open?

9 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, you know, every year we
10 have about 165,000 different older people attend the
11 senior center. Only a portion of them choose to do
12 the kinds of activities that you would have on
13 virtual programming. So, when we are analyzing this
14 data, the updated analysis that I mentioned to you
15 that we are doing right now will be comparing the
16 patterns of usage now with the patterns when the
17 senior centers were open. But we are reaching a
18 large percentage of older people compared to who was
19 attending before the pandemic.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I mean just looking, yeah,
21 just looking at the number briefly, there is only -
22 it only looked like 50 percent participate in these
23 programs and a large number of seniors actually are
24 not taking advantage or cannot participate in these
25 programs. Because the senior centers are not open,

1
2 so we are – besides you know, getting wellness calls,
3 which is great but they are not really actively
4 engaged in the programs. I mean when you talk about
5 78,000 compared to a 165,000.

6 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, I understand and we have
7 definitely shared you know the concern of providers,
8 of the Council about reaching as many older people as
9 we can and emphasizing that throughout the pandemic.
10 And not everybody will want to attend a certain event
11 at a senior center or to attend virtual programming.
12 We expect that when we update the data through this
13 month. The number will be significantly larger
14 because you might have heard from our testimony that
15 the number has been increasing at senior centers
16 participating.

17 When Commissioner Cortes Vasquez testified at a
18 hearing that you Chaired, 171 programs were
19 participating, now 242. So, it is constantly growing
20 and I expect that number to be much larger when we
21 analyze it today. And then of course there are the
22 other kinds of outreach we do to our members, which
23 we could speak about today as if you would like.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Is your 78,000 participants, I
25 mean the number, are they – they are not duplicated?

1 Like not - it's individual and not just participant.

2 Like I could attend five of these programs. So, do I
3 get counted five times?
4

5 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, these are unduplicated.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Unduplicated, okay. That's
7 good to know. I know that Katlyn also talked about
8 you know, the budget and Council Member Rose asked
9 about you know, some centers were having problems
10 with you know, transferring funds to get these
11 tablets or whatever.

12 The senior center RFP, will that include funding
13 available for technology?

14 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, two things that I would
15 say. One is that our Commissioner has been hosting,
16 envisioning the senior center of the future sessions
17 with our providers and we have had stakeholder
18 sessions related to the RFP. And Katlyn's point
19 about having flexibility on making use of the funds
20 and their budget, so that you can shift them where
21 they are needed was one of the major points that
22 people have raised.

23 So, we are definitely paying a lot of attention
24 to that point as we structure the RFP allowing for
25 maximum flexibility in using funds.

1
2 There are some unspent monies that we think by
3 allowing that flexibility we will make sure that we
4 are spending maximally the available dollars. So,
5 that's one advantage of the RFP we think. And as far
6 as using some of those funds for devices, I wanted to
7 ask our Associate Commissioner Guillermo Cruz to
8 address devices and senior centers. Guillermo Cruz,
9 our Associate Commissioner for the Bureau of
10 Community Services oversees community-based programs
11
12 including senior centers. I don't know Guillermo if
13 you would like to add something.

14 GUILLERMO CRUZ: Yeah, just that I think that the
15 department is very much aware of this issue and is
16 very much aware of the need for more access by the
17 seniors and we are working with MOCTO to look at that
18 - we are looking at that particular issue [INAUDIBLE
19 53:49] with respect to the individual request, the
20 department really is looking at it in a systematic
21 way to increase this access by senior centers.
22 Because it is not only a question of the tablets,
23 it's also the question of the broadband access and
24 then also there is a question of support.

1
2 You know, the delivery of the equipment is not
3 enough in those cases. The senior really needs
4 support in many cases to learn how to use the device
5 and feel comfortable taking advantage of the
6 equipment they have.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I guess related to that, is
8 that you know, with the new RFP, there has got to be
9 increased funding in there to provide for this
10 component and I also go to this years budget whether
11 or not, you know, when we talk about the \$10 million
12 that was supposed to be in the budget last year
13 disappeared.

14 So, we got to get that back and also the indirect
15 cost that you know Katlyn was talking about earlier.
16 There has got to be sufficient funding because the
17 technology component, it's going to be an important
18 component for the senior and more seniors will
19 participate in our center. And then I think one of
20 the earlier question or comments was about you know
21 the computer rooms in the senior center are very
22 needed because a lot of seniors, that's how they
23 learn and that's how they are able to do emails and
24 access because they don't have it at home. So, is
25 DFTA actively kind of planning on this because there

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2 will be money coming from the federal government and
3 then the governor talking about you know, offering
4 programs for you know, a low-cost broadband. Is DFTA
5 actively you know, coordinating with other agencies
6 and really planning how to make sure that this
7 funding is going to be available to help our seniors
8 get broadband access. You know, computers, so that
9 we don't miss out because a lot of these are first
10 come first serve.

11 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yeah, I want to mention a
12 couple things related to that. One is, of course we
13 are really pleased with what we have been able to
14 accomplish with our provider partners and our sister
15 agencies to date related to virtual programming and
16 other forms of online access through then real gains
17 with the funding that we do have and we are very,
18 very pleased by that.

19 And certainly, if more resources became
20 available, we would implement more programming in the
21 most effective way as possible. In the meantime,
22 just as you are alluding to Chair Chin, we are always
23 in conversation with our sister agencies about
24 optimal ways to utilize the funding that is available
25 now and that led to some of the programming that we

1 already put in place that several of us have
2 mentioned today but there are ongoing conversations
3 for example that DFTA has with MOCTO and others about
4 where we might go depending on available resources
5 and equally important with the resources that we have
6 available now.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, what is – I know we had an
9 earlier conversation about the problem of getting
10 appointments for vaccine and centers and you know,
11 calling seniors and we had this whole conversation
12 today. What's the plan of getting the senior center
13 open, so that they could be a place where the senior
14 could just get their vaccines? And also, the
15 providers of NORC's and also senior buildings, is
16 DFTA working actively to do that? Because that is
17 what makes the most sense because that where the
18 seniors are and the issue is that when you get the
19 vaccine is two dose. So, way after you get your
20 first dose, you got to come back and get your second
21 dose in two or three weeks.

22 So, is DFTA actively working with the vaccination
23 action center, whatever we call it to work on using
24 our senior centers and our senior buildings and our
25 NORC's to provide the vaccine?

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MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, uhm, in several ways. First of all our Commissioner is a member of the working group established by the Mayor concerning the vaccine programming at this time for older New Yorkers, focused on older New Yorkers. So, lots of discussion, lots of planning through the working group that our commissioner is on and also staff are very closely tied to the vaccine command center that has been set up. So, that there are always conversations there.

In terms of making senior centers available as sites, we are at a -- as I think we all know, we are at a very difficult point at the moment because there is such demand for the vaccinations when the age was lowered from 75 to 65 for vaccinations, which of course we were very pleased by. That's hugely important but that more than doubled the number of older people eligible for the vaccine.

And that equals about 1.3 million people, that's a huge number and that lowering from 75 to 65 by the governor happened almost overnight and there is a bit of a perfect storm because that happened at the same time that the distribution of vaccines from the federal government was really drying up.

1
2 And so, we are really hoping that there is going
3 to be a major increase in vaccine made available by
4 the federal government. We don't think this is a
5 good moment at this exact time to be opening senior
6 centers for vaccination when there just is not
7 vaccine available as we know the Mayor was talking
8 about how we are going to be running out of vaccine
9 momentarily.

10 And again, we are hoping the federal government
11 is going to completely change its pathway now for
12 getting vaccines to us. And with that flow, we
13 certainly will be considering along with the Mayor's
14 working group opening additional sites, including
15 senior centers.

16 So, we will have to see that proceeds but we do
17 have that in mind.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: It's not enough to have it in
19 mind. I mean, like we got to do the preparation
20 because I reach out you know, to the Commissioner
21 early on and I think the Commissioner agreed with me
22 that we got to get the centers open. First of all,
23 even to provide the food, right. The centers are
24 ready but they need the guidance and they need the
25 resources.

1
2 So, what I mean, it's like we can't be continue
3 to plan, plan, plan. We got to get the things in
4 motion and we knew the vaccine was coming. Even
5 though we don't have it now, we have a plan in place.
6 How to safely open up the centers. You know, work
7 with the providers, get the guidance out there and
8 get ready, right. Because right now they are the one
9 that's making the calls to the seniors.

10 So, we just don't see the urgency. I mean, the
11 whole talk about reopening the center and maybe we
12 could do the food, because the Get Food program is
13 not the best for our seniors. Our senior centers
14 know how to prepare you know, well nutritious,
15 culturally sensitive meals and we said that we know
16 but how do we safely do that? You know, let's work
17 it, plan it out and then we can also utilize them to
18 do the vaccination.

19 I mean, Council Member Ayala was telling me that
20 one of the senior buildings in her district was able
21 to do a vaccination for like 200 seniors. And it's
22 like, it's possible if you do it right. But then
23 versus in a NYCHA building where they didn't do it
24 right, they didn't reach the seniors and so, it was a
25 waste of the vaccine.

1
2 So, like, we just got to like plan, work with the
3 provider and start doing it. At the same time, we
4 will advocate for more vaccine but we have the
5 infrastructure. Let's utilize those infrastructure.
6 The senior centers and the NORCs and the senior
7 building that the city, you know, the city know who
8 they are and can really utilize them.

9 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, I do just want to mention
10 again, we absolutely share your concern about this
11 and planning is actively underway and can be stepped
12 up quickly as we proceed. Getting the vaccine is
13 crucial and advocacy around that is important and we
14 very much would like to work with the City Council on
15 advocating for you know federal distribution etc. We
16 do think that the plan being put forth by the current
17 new Administration federally will be of enormous help
18 very quickly.

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. I don't want to take up
20 that much time. I am going to pass it over to Chair
21 Holden and then other Council Members who have
22 questions and I can always come back. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you Chair Chin. Thank
24 you Deputy Commissioner for your testimony. A few
25 questions because I am puzzled. We knew the vaccine

1
2 was coming months ago. We knew we would have the
3 vaccine in place. When this Administration rolled
4 out 1A, the level of 1A for vaccine, there was a lot
5 of things missing. First of all, even when it was 75
6 and over that could get vaccinated, there wasn't even
7 a phone line set up to make appointments. That took
8 a few days to actually have people set up on the
9 phones. And then we have a website in the Health +
10 Hospitals and also NYC.gov that's an absolute joke
11 for seniors especially or much less anybody making an
12 appointment.

13 So, you know, I am just puzzled by some of you
14 know, you said the Commissioner is a member of the
15 working group. Well, what's the plan here? You said
16 well, maybe there is not enough vaccine to go around
17 right now. Yes, but there maybe next week, right.
18 There may be enough vaccine next week in place to
19 vaccinate the population, the eligible population.
20 Yet we still don't have a workable plan in place to
21 reach seniors. Do you think that we are reaching the
22 seniors? Because the seniors in my district and I
23 think every council Member can tell you, we are
24 getting calls from across the board from seniors who
25 can't make appointments.

1
2 So, there should be a comprehensive plan Deputy
3 Commissioner right now, not next week, not three
4 months from now, because our seniors are the most
5 vulnerable.

6 So, there should be a place now that you should
7 say, you know what, when we get the vaccines, we are
8 opening up the senior centers, we are going to
9 vaccinate there starting you know, with that and we
10 are going to do it right away. I don't know how many
11 senior centers, I don't think, you have reached out
12 to yet to do that? Have you reached out to any
13 senior centers to set up the vaccine distribution?

14 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Uh, I would like to just
15 mention, obviously today the hearing was focused on
16 technology, so we came to really talk about
17 technology, so I don't have information in detail
18 about vaccine processes themselves. I mean, we
19 certainly appreciate the question that you are
20 raising on this and we actively involved and very
21 quickly planning and meeting the needs of older
22 people related to the vaccine issue and doing lots of
23 work with seniors right now.

24 One thing we didn't mention, was that we are
25 making - we mentioned in the testimony that we have

1
2 made 2.9 million calls to people. We have pivoted
3 all of that work and that infrastructure in our
4 system to connecting with older people about the
5 vaccine issues to guide them so right now, every day
6 many, many calls are being made to older people by
7 DFTA and our partners to help assist them in getting
8 access to vaccines and dealing with some of the
9 issues that you and others on the Council and people
10 testifying today have raised. So, we do have that
11 program in place.

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I know but it is just more
13 of the — here is what I am hearing, conversations are
14 taking place. You know, we have made 2 million
15 calls, were those robocalls by the way?

16 MICHAEL BOSNICK: No, those were calls —

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Actually people actually
18 reached out, okay. So, the calls were made. Again,
19 I am hearing that the seniors are not getting access
20 to the vaccine or they don't know when they are going
21 to get access to the vaccine. So, you mentioned,
22 this is about technology, that this hearing was
23 about. So, what are DFTA's recommendations to
24 improve the technology to reach our seniors other
25 than given you know, talking about laptops or I am

1
2 sorry iPads. But what right now to get the vaccine
3 in the arms of our seniors, what is DFTA's plan for
4 the coming weeks? Like I mentioned, do you have a
5 comprehensive plan to reach out and technology is
6 important obviously but we know that limitations of
7 our seniors at this point. We can't just say you
8 know by osmosis say, alright, we have the technology
9 ready to go to help our seniors. It doesn't exist
10 right now.

11 So, there has to be plan B and your Commissioner
12 is on this working group. Why didn't the
13 Commissioner, I am sure that the Commissioner
14 mentioned you know what, these, doing this website,
15 it is not going to reach our seniors. So, what's
16 plan B, well by phone. That wasn't set up initially,
17 that took days to set up the phone calls for at least
18 see people without access to the internet, without
19 access to broadband could make appointments. That
20 wasn't set up initially. So, either the
21 Administration is not listening to your Commissioner
22 or it is just not trickling down to the right places.

23 Has your office worked with the CTO to remedy
24 some of these situations?

25

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2 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, two things. One is that
3 you know, we work very closely with the Vaccine
4 Command Center and follow their lead in terms of a
5 number of these issues you are raising, so that we
6 work with them on those issues.

7
8
9 We do have with us today Kate Hohman who might
10 also be able to address your questions. Kate, would
11 you like to do that?

12 KATE HOHMAN: Sure on the question of
13 coordinating vaccines, we are not currently involved
14 in that effort for the city so unfortunately I don't
15 – and I am aware that you didn't speak to our CTO
16 John Paul Farmer about this larger set of questions
17 on Tuesday. I don't have any updated information to
18 what he shared at that time but I am happy to relay –

19 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Sorry to interrupt but I
20 would like to because you know, the CTO has done a
21 great job and I admire him but I would like to know
22 that some of our hearings are yielding results.
23 Like, do you know if anybody is working on improving
24 the site? Do you know if – because if seniors
25 obviously are left out of that, many seniors and you

1
2 heard the numbers today, that many seniors are left
3 out of getting online. Many of them don't have email
4 addresses, so the plan then has to be either your
5 office or DOITT or somebody comes up with, yeah, we
6 have to upgrade this and these are the steps we are
7 taking to improve the online experience for everyone
8 and including seniors. We don't have that yet right?

9 KATE HOHMAN: Yeah, I appreciate that concern, as
10 I said, unfortunately I don't have an update to what
11 the CTO's shared with you on Tuesday but I am happy
12 to relay back your eagerness to hear more.

13 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Okay, I guess its back to
14 Deputy Commissioner Bosnick. So, what is the plan to
15 improve? You know, how do we reach seniors with
16 technology or improve that website?

17 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Again, you know I am not
18 prepared to really talk about that today. The
19 specific vaccine website. We can certainly, we
20 absolutely hear your concern Mr. Council Chair and we
21 are happy to talk with the ECC and the workgroup and
22 all of us have a real sense of urgency around this.
23 So, we will follow up with conversations with them
24 but we followed their lead with the vaccine.

1
2 One thing I wanted to mention is that I don't
3 think others have mentioned today, uhm, we know from
4 your information and from our testimony today and
5 from the people who testified before the
6 Administration, that not everybody has easy access to
7 online resources, especially people of low-income.
8 We are very concerned about that. So, I do want to
9 remind us that there is a telephone number that
10 people can use to be connected as well. That's very,
11 very important I think for everybody to be aware of
12 1-877-VAX V-A-X 4, the number, NYC. So, we are
13 really trying to make people aware of the fact that,
14 if there are difficulties or if you simply don't have
15 access, call that number. And if people are hearing
16 about any difficulties with that number, it's
17 important I think to let the ECC know that but it's a
18 very important resource for people who cannot go
19 online.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I just got to jump in a little
21 bit. I am really a little frustrated. That I mean,
22 DFTA is the agency to help our seniors, right. To
23 take care of our seniors and it's like there is no
24 coordination and then like this is the Chief
25 Technology Officer? There is no coordination in

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2 putting out the website. I mean, language access in
3 different languages come on. Not everybody is
4 proficient in English and then when you talk about
5 spending so much time on the phone, the hotline.
6 There is a problem with the hotline too with language
7 access.

8 So, it's kind of like there is no, I don't see
9 the coordination and I don't see you know, the
10 urgency. I mean, I have so many complaints from my
11 constituents who are seniors who have health issues,
12 who have trouble you know, getting an appointment.
13 You expect someone who is not proficient in English
14 to navigate all those pages or you got to get
15 somebody to help you. Why is the application so
16 long? Why couldn't we make it easier, right. I
17 mean, it's like the website, it's Department of
18 Health but who is helping them? I mean, it's kind of
19 like we have the technology, Chief Technology
20 Officer. I see your job or that office job would
21 severely help. Make sure these websites are
22 operating before you announce the program.

23 I mean, the frustration that seniors are getting,
24 even my own brother who is screaming at me like, what
25

1
2 is wrong with you guys. You can't you know, get it
3 right. Why am I so difficult to get an appointment.

4 So, there has got to be some urgency there.

5 Deputy Commissioner, DFTA right, we should be
6 advocating and saying, making sure our seniors get
7 those vaccines and get the appointment. Even now you
8 are asking providers to make the calls. I mean, and
9 then some of the providers have to help and we heard
10 earlier, it also takes them a long time to help the
11 senior to get an appointment and a lot of times the
12 appointment is not close to where the senior lives.
13 I know the city says oh, we are working on providing
14 transportation. It's just so complicated. Simplify,
15 use the senior center, use the senior building, use
16 the NORC and that's DFTA's job to advocate for that.

17 MICHAEL BOSNICK: And I do want to mention when
18 you say advocate, we very much share, I think the
19 administration overall shares the sense of urgency
20 around vaccination. Working really intensively
21 around that. We are active consultants with the
22 working group, with the vaccine command center and
23 trying to make sure that the process works as quickly
24 as possible. But it is the Vaccine Command Center
25 which is coordinating this work and I think they

1
2 could better respond to some of the specifics of what
3 we are raising today.

4 We are consultants to that process as I
5 mentioned, so certainly, we will discuss all of the
6 things that you and Council colleagues have raised
7 today with them as we continue with this urgent
8 effort.

9 I do want to remind us that while working in that
10 consulting role with the Vaccine Control Center and
11 with the working group, we are also talking every day
12 with many, many people, older people about the
13 vaccine one on one about all the issues of going
14 online and helping them to get online and get their
15 appointment and then to also deal with transportation
16 issues if those issues arise. So, that work is
17 happening each and every day and we set that up very,
18 very quickly because we agree with you concerning the
19 urgency of this issue.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, DFTA actually has already
21 reached out to all of the senior centers and senior
22 services provider to start making those calls and
23 doing that?

24 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, it is so important what
25 you just said Council Chair for Aging. We have

1
2 really pivoted completely. The broader wellness
3 calls that we have been making each week, that's the
4 2.9 million calls I mentioned but we have completely
5 pivoted for the moment because we see the absolute
6 urgency of this issue. We have totally pivoted to
7 making calls about the vaccine. Now of course, when
8 we make the calls people have other issues, we are
9 there to help them with that as well. But the number
10 one issue that we are focused on right now that all
11 the calls are centered on and that we are doing with
12 all of our provider partners of course, hundreds of
13 different contracts, centers around the vaccine.
14 Talking with the people about the vaccine, how to get
15 it, how to schedule an appointment, helping them and
16 make sure that that appointment is scheduled. All of
17 that is happening right now.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: You know, my last point is
19 that I don't want to see what happened with the Get
20 Food Program, happen with the vaccine. Okay, because
21 seniors were having so much problem you know, with
22 this whole Get Food, Get Food Star and all of that.
23 While the senior center you know then last minute get
24 you know say, oh now you got to help the senior
25 connect to this Get Food program. I mean, it seems

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2 like this whole thing is happening again and I just
3 want to make sure that the Vaccine Command Center,
4 know that this is a priority and we have been
5 advocating with them and I have spoken to them about
6 it.

7 That you know that the senior utilize the
8 infrastructure that we have now. I don't know what
9 happened with the Get Food program. It is the same
10 problem with the vaccine. Chair Holden, I turn it
11 back to you.

12 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Again, I am very frustrated.
13 I am frustrated with DFTA because I am going back to
14 this uhm, we have seniors now 65 and over, before it
15 was 75 and over that was eligible to get vaccinated.
16 Yet DFTA can't tell me because they said, well it is
17 not really the topic of the hearing. Well the topic
18 of the hearing was tech for seniors and how to
19 prepare to get the vaccine and how we can help them
20 and so forth and so on. So, this is not off topic
21 that you shouldn't have - you can't tell us what's
22 the master plan from DFTA to help seniors gain access
23 to this vaccine. That should be like number one
24 priority.

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2 Yeah, you can reach out to 2 million seniors but
3 we have to have a plan to open up senior centers for
4 the vaccine. Is that a priority of DFTA? To open up
5 the senior centers to help with the vaccine. Did you
6 tell the Mayor's Office and the command center that's
7 a priority because we are not giving the seniors the
8 vaccine in numbers that we need to do because they
9 are the most vulnerable.

10 MICHAEL BOSNICK: You know as I mentioned
11 earlier, opening sites including senior centers we
12 think is a good idea. We are not opening them at the
13 moment this week because to open sites, additionally
14 without any vaccine available is not a good idea. We
15 are hoping that -

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: I posed that question
17 before. Let's say next week we have enough vaccine.
18 Remember we did have enough vaccines and we - this
19 Administration took Christmas day off for vaccinating
20 people and took New Years off from vaccinating
21 people. That's how urgent this is to them and the
22 Department of Health. They took those two days off
23 and vaccinated maybe 100 people out of the city of
24 8.5 million.

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This is the mentality of this Administration. And I am not sensing an urgency. I am outraged by the way because personally, my mom is in a nursing home. Right, 96-years-old, the nursing home, this is in December, got the vaccine. They just didn't want to vaccinate every member of that nursing home. They only vaccinated the long term members who were there.

That means my mom was only there a couple of months. That wasn't long enough for them to vaccinate. So, guess what? My mom wasn't vaccinated. There is an outbreak in the nursing home. 24 patients got COVID and now my mom is the 25th. She has got COVID, she is in the hospital because the roll out of this Administration did not really prioritize seniors and DFTA should have a master plan that if we got you know, a million doses next week, we open up all the senior centers and they vaccinate but I haven't heard that today.

Because that what you heard senior center - the senior center that we heard today and I am hearing from all of my seniors, they could do it. It is outrageous and first of all, even your answer on the budget for the senior centers, that a year into the

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2 pandemic we can't pivot so that they could spend some
3 of their money on technology to reach the seniors.

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5 I mean, that's outrageous. So, I am just puzzled
6 by a lot of the answers here. We need DFTA to take a
7 lead role here and if the Mayor's not listening then
8 we have to make him listen because our seniors are
9 being left out and our seniors are dying.

10 Dying you know, every day because the vaccine is
11 not getting into their arms quick enough and just
12 rely on a horrible website, that's nothing more than
13 a glorified store locator and seniors are hitting
14 their heads against the wall trying to schedule is
15 outrageous and all the phone calls you make are not
16 going to you know, get us senior appointments.

17 I will turn it back to you Chair because I am
18 just frustrated. We are not going to get anywhere if
19 we are going to take this - we are not getting the
20 answers today from DFTA at all and the fact that CTO
21 and to his defense, the CTO's office by the way was
22 not asked to participate in the rollout of this
23 website or anything else and neither was really
24 essentially DOITT and we found that out.

1
2 So, the Mayor's Office is not reaching out to the
3 people that they have that can solve this problem.
4 They have the technical people, they have the
5 designers that could upgrade this website, that could
6 reach a lot of people but you are hearing from DFTA,
7 they don't really have a plan to reach senior centers
8 with the vaccine or at least they wont tell us.

9 And that's another - we are kind of hitting a
10 dead end. I will turn it back to you Chair because
11 we are getting nowhere.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, we got to have another
13 hearing in the beginning of February, which is going
14 to be focused and it is a joint hearing with the
15 Health Committee. It is going to be focused on this
16 and I hope by then you will have all of the answers
17 related to the plan of opening senior centers and how
18 do we get the vaccine to the seniors and hopefully by
19 then, the plan is in place and we already started
20 doing that.

21 GUILLERMO CRUZ: Chair Chin?

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes.

23 GUILLERMO CRUZ: I am Guillermo Cruz at DFTA. I
24 just wanted to make sure that first of all, I wanted
25 to communicate that there is an urgency about that.

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2 We have definitely at DFTA reviewed our senior center
3 sites, our NORC sites. There are requirements that
4 we looked at. There are requirements for size,
5 square footage. There are requirements for
6 refrigeration, electricity. We have conducted a very
7 in depth review of our senior center facilities. All
8 sites, whether NYCHA, whether city owned or city
9 leased or privately owned and have done an extensive
10 review and have forwarded that information to the
11 Vaccine Command Center.

12 So, it is definitely an act of concern. As you
13 mentioned earlier in this hearing, a number of NYCHA
14 sites including senior centers have already been
15 participating. You know, [INAUDIBLE 1:16:15] as you
16 mentioned Van Dyke, Polar Grounds and I think there
17 are more. I think the big issue is supply and that's
18 going to be a federal, that's really a federal issue
19 as I understand it.

20 So, I just wanted to make sure that -

21 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Mr. Cruz, let's put aside
22 the supply because you have to prepare that the
23 supply will be there. You have to prepare for that.
24 So, how many senior centers did you reach out to?

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2 Did you reach out to a few hundred of them or how
3 many?

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5 GUILLERMO CRUZ: We reviewed all the
6 specifications of different site facilities. So, we
7 have 249 centers. Some of them are more likely to
8 serve as a point of this – as a pod, as a point of
9 dispensing the vaccine and we have forwarded that
10 information to the Vaccine Command Center as Michael
11 Bosnick has mentioned. We are in close communication
12 and very collaborative with them. So, they have this
13 information and would be able to turn on these sites
14 and initiate these sites and it is definitely a very
15 high concern for the Department for the Aging.

16 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: How many senior centers do
17 you think you could roll out the vaccine in by – in
18 two weeks let's say?

19 GUILLERMO CRUZ: Well, we identified around 100
20 sites that would meet the specifications for you
21 know, refrigeration, site facility, size. So, these
22 sites have been identified as likely to be points of
23 dispensing or that meet these qualifications
24 identified by the Vaccine Command Center.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Because I am going to reach
3 out to my senior centers and I have a bunch and I
4 want to see if they are - because they are very large
5 and if we are just talking about a freezer, I think
6 DFTA could provide freezers to the senior centers and
7 if we provide the medical staff to do this. I mean,
8 this seems like a no brainer.

9 So, I think all of the senior centers, at least
10 the vast majority should be mobilized and there has
11 to a massive plan. I am not hearing that and I hope
12 you know, I hope you reached out to areas that don't
13 have transportation where seniors, they can walk to
14 the center but in my district, I have very little
15 options on public transportation. I don't have - I
16 didn't have testing sites in my district and I don't
17 have a vaccine sites in my district. And yet, I have
18 a lot of senior population, so I just think - I want
19 to make sure that we are reaching out to all the
20 senior centers and if you think they are not
21 eligible, that we make them eligible. We make them
22 really, give them the freezers, give them the
23 necessary people to mobilize this. That's what it
24 takes. It is a war time effort here against the
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1 pandemic and we have to have some sense of urgency.

2 Thank you Chair. I am sorry.

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5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: No, I mean, I am glad to hear
6 that you are working on it and you surveyed all the
7 centers but I think it will be good that you provide
8 or get the Vaccination Command Center to provide that
9 information, what is needed and give that to every
10 senior centers and the senior buildings and the NORC
11 and see you know, how you work together to make sure
12 that those facilities have what they need to do the
13 vaccination and as I talk Council Member Ayala has a
14 question but she is the one that gave me the example.
15 How one senior building already done it. So, it was
16 like, it should not be that difficult and I think we
17 should be well prepared making sure that the centers
18 and the buildings have the resources.

19 So, once we get the vaccine, they are ready to go
20 and that's what we want to you know, to hear that
21 DFTA is actively taking a role with the Vaccine
22 Command Center. And it should not be just you know,
23 advising. I want to make sure that the Commissioner,
24 I mean, if we need to back her up we will back her

1
2 up. Because I don't want to see what happened with
3 the Get Food program happen again.

4 So, I am going to pass it on to other Council
5 Members.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. We have
7 Council Member Ayala followed by Council Member Rose.
8 Council Member Ayala.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Yeah, I just wanted to
10 follow up on that. I think that while we wait for
11 next months hearing and we are preparing for more
12 doses to become available, that we should be
13 utilizing this time very strategically to educate the
14 older adult population on the benefits of
15 vaccinating. I think that this is a real concern in
16 communities of color. There is a lot of
17 misinformation that is being spread across our
18 communities and I think that the fact that you know,
19 we do have some seniors that are connected virtually
20 should allow us a window into their homes and allow
21 us an opportunity to really connect with them
22 differently.

23 I remember many years ago when I used to run a
24 senior center at the Casita Maria Senior Center, we
25 were invited to participate in open house for a

1 senior center in a more affluent community. And I
2 remember getting there and there was a workshop, I
3 could hear the woman speaking in a very low tone and
4 she was singing a song from the musical, "The Sound
5 of Music" and it was a yoga class that was being done
6 on over the phone right.

7
8 So, we know that you know, we have so many
9 seniors that are homebound. This is - I think we
10 need to learn lessons right. This is an opportunity
11 for us to really rethink how we connect with people.
12 Older adults with children, with families, you know
13 it's kind of like a redo and if we don't take
14 advantage of these lessons then we are missing the
15 mark here.

16 So, I think you know one, I would suggest that
17 you know, there be better coordination between DFTA
18 and the local senior centers to try to come up with
19 programming opportunities and maybe invite local
20 doctors to come in and speak to you know, host
21 webinars with our older adult population to make sure
22 that we are getting information as we are preparing.

23 And I hope to see you know again, I hope to see a
24 bigger effort made towards really securing the
25 funding necessary to revamp our technology systems at

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2 the local senior centers because I think that again,
3 there is a real opportunity to connect and more
4 specifically with seniors who are homebound and
5 socially isolated.

6 I am not sure if DFTA has given any thought to
7 this or if you know we are just kind of living day by
8 day and just checking the box and saying you know, we
9 had an event and ten seniors showed up, we are good.
10 Or there is a bigger more comprehensive through
11 process behind how we can utilize this experience and
12 the lessons learned to make you know, the senior
13 center experience better for more generations of
14 older adults.

15 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, I just want to mention
16 related to that, we have been talking about the
17 lessons that we can learn from this pandemic each and
18 every day and various initiatives and various steps
19 that we are taking come from observing what has
20 happened and learning from that quickly. The NYCHA
21 Tablet Project was one initiative that came about as
22 a result of seeing just how valuable and important
23 all of this is and connecting 10,000 NYCHA residents
24 and their families as a result of this Tablet
25 Project.

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3 I also wanted to ask Kate to talk a little bit
4 about connected communities because Council Member
5 Ayala when you are talking about what have you
6 learned and how can we reach people, one of the major
7 efforts is connected community. So, I did want Kate
8 to have a moment to share that with everybody.

9 KATE HOHMAN: Sure, so the Connected Communities
10 Program is a long standing program that we have been
11 overseeing for many years. We partner with DFTA on
12 that program as well as with all three library
13 systems. The Parks Department and NYCHA and this is
14 a program to support public computer centers across
15 the city that are managed by those partner entities
16 and to ensure that New Yorkers across the city have
17 that social and technical support and that training
18 available in their communities.

19 We provide some funding to all of those agencies
20 through the program to boost resources in high need
21 areas and facilities and we also do some citywide
22 coordination through that program across the city.
23 The city has over 500 of these public computer
24 centers that you know, generally offer over 2,500
25 hours per week of digital literacy training. So, it

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2 is a large system and we do some coordination work
3 across that system as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you. Madam Chair,
5 if you will allow me one more question. I just - my
6 concern has always been really related to you know we
7 know that -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: We know the digital divide
10 exists right. It exists in the older adult
11 population as well. However, there are seniors that
12 are connected. My concern is that if a senior center
13 is hosting you know, events, right and they are
14 trying to transition to virtual programming and three
15 people are showing up, then that is not work right.

16 So, who is responsible then for saying you know
17 what, this is not working, we need to try a different
18 approach. You know, are we following it up with a
19 call? How are we engaging with those older adults
20 and encouraging them to use this as an opportunity to
21 really socialize with their peers?

22 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, two things and then
23 Guillermo if you have anything you would like to add.
24 That I would mention is first of all, in terms of
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2 that digital divide, I don't want to lose sight of
3 the larger issue which is that especially given the
4 city's current fiscal situation, it's very, very
5 important to think in terms of the state and federal
6 governments and investments needed. That digital
7 divide as we all know from the data that we have
8 talked about today is really, really large and no one
9 city can bridge that divide on its own.

10 So, we definitely appreciate your partnership and
11 would like to see ways that we could work together
12 with the Council on frankly lobbying Albany and DC to
13 fund expanded access to technology. That's one point
14 that we actually wanted to make today. So, I am very
15 pleased Council Member Ayala that you raised the
16 digital divide and how to bridge that. There are
17 definitely things we can do locally and are doing
18 locally but we have to have more state and federal
19 support. So, we would like to join with you in that.

20 And then in terms of programming, Kate mentioned
21 Connected Communities. I wanted to mention and
22 hopefully Guillermo can spend a moment talking about
23 our work with OATS because you made a very important
24 point about connections to homebound people and
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1
2 making people aware absolutely hugely important and
3 we have had a relationship with OATS, Older Adult
4 Technology Services since 2013 with funding to them
5 to deal with some of the issues you raised and we
6 didn't have much time to talk about that today and I
7 was hoping that Guillermo could take a moment to talk
8 about our two different contracts with OATS and what
9 we have been doing with them to address some of the
10 issues that you raised.

11 GUILLERMO CRUZ: Right, so we have currently two
12 contracts with OATS. One was the support that was
13 mentioned for the 10,000 tablets because that
14 contract runs through June 30th of this year and you
15 know, really to at first, when the seniors first got
16 the tablets, they did outreach to all the seniors to
17 make sure they got the tablets. And then, they have
18 really a sort of multifaceted approach to supporting
19 them. So, everything from a hotline, from virtual
20 trainings and then also of course T-Mobile who
21 supplied the tablets also has a customer helpline.

22 You know as I mentioned before, it is really
23 important not just to get the technology to the
24 clients but it is also to support them so that they

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1 know how to use it. That they can enjoy and have
2 full usage of the tablets that they received.
3

4 The other OATS contract we had has been one since
5 2013, New York City connected communities and that
6 has been housed in 22 different sites. We make sure
7 that there is a representation of low-income sites.
8 There is some NYCHA sites there too and again they
9 provide all kinds of training to seniors. They also
10 host a really great website, the senior planet
11 exploration site which is really geared for seniors.
12 If you visit the site, it's so upbeat it makes you
13 feel good about being a senior. It is really well
14 planned, well executed.

15 So, that OATS has been very key and also their
16 trainings are multilingual, I believe in five
17 languages. They have been incredible and then of
18 course what used to be congregate or onsite service.
19 They pivoted to virtual programming and virtual
20 service so their reach to the senior centers is much
21 broader but they have been very key in helping
22 seniors get the technology but also really use the
23 technology and supporting them. Supporting them so
24 they can use it for all the different functions and
25 all the different aspects of accessing the internet

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2 and accessing online opportunities. So, I just
3 wanted to mention that OATS has been very key in
4 addressing that - uhm, I was also going to mention
5 back to another point about educating the seniors.

6 So, as was mentioned, you know first of all as we
7 mentioned a few times, the city has been in close
8 contact with the Health Department and the Vaccine
9 Command Center. I know that there was a mailer sent
10 out to millions of New Yorkers including seniors that
11 have information about eligibility. The vaccine
12 finder website and the call center.

13 Additionally, I know that there were robocalls
14 made to seniors to give them information about
15 vaccines. So, there is a large effort to get
16 information about the vaccine, the safety of vaccine,
17 of educating seniors.

18 Also, I think Michael, maybe you can speak more
19 about this. There was just recently a webinar this
20 week that a panel of different scientists,
21 representatives of pharmaceuticals, the Health
22 Department that provided information, educational
23 information about the vaccine because as was
24 mentioned, I believe that you mentioned it Council
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1
2 Member Ayala that there is a lot of miss information
3 and there can be in certain communities distrust of
4 the vaccine. So, there is also an educational
5 campaign.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: And I know that we are
7 going to have a hearing about this next month but you
8 know, it's really serious because as I mentioned to
9 Council Member Chin, you know, I had the benefit of
10 attending school events this weekend and one of the
11 rolled out really nicely. We had a building with 300
12 units, a little over 200 seniors signed up for and
13 you know, got vaccinated and then we have NYCHA
14 development where you know signs were posted, the
15 vaccine is available tomorrow come down. And they
16 were having a really hard time getting seniors to
17 come and I am very familiar with you know the seniors
18 in that building and I was making those phone calls
19 and a lot of them didn't want to come down. They
20 didn't want to come down and I think you know going
21 back and asking the other building you know, what
22 made this event so successful right? Was the fact
23 that the participation rate is so high is really
24 because they took the time to connect with their
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2 older adults, to educate them and walk them through
3 the process, to answer questions, right. And really
4 demystify a lot of what they have been hearing you
5 know, from friends and relatives and that made for a
6 really successful vaccination. I think that you
7 know, I look forward to that but I just really wanted
8 to go in on the fact that guys have the opportunity
9 you know, technology to really to hundreds of
10 thousands of older adults throughout the city and if
11 we are not doing that properly, then that is really
12 [INAUDIBLE 1:29:29] and we withdrawal ourselves.
13 Because it is a new day and I think that you know we
14 need to adjust.

15 Thank you Madam Chair for your time. You have
16 been very generous. I have to get to another hearing
17 but this is really a good hearing.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member
19 Ayala. To the rest of the Council Members, I would
20 like to remind you that if you have any questions for
21 this panel, please use the Zoom raise hand function.
22 You have five minutes for your questions and after I
23 call on you, the Sergeant at Arms will keep a timer
24 and will let you know when your time is up.

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2 If there are any other Council Members who have
3 questions for the panel, please use the Zoom raise
4 hand function now. Council Member Rose.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. I just want to
6 circle back to the change in the purpose of funds in
7 order to purchase laptops and tablets. And just a
8 short answer. Will DFTA allow organizations to use
9 their FY21 expense funds to purchase laptops and
10 tablets for seniors? Just a yes or no is okay.

11 MICHAEL BOSNICK: I am not sure the answer to
12 that. I would like to get back to you on that
13 question. We will talk with people at DFTA and
14 fiscal and get back to you unless Guillermo, you know
15 the answer to that question. Otherwise, we will get
16 back to the Council Member.

17 GUILLERMO CRUZ: I think we will get back to the
18 Council Member on her question. I know also that
19 with respect to let's say discretionary funds. The
20 Councilmanic funds, I think that they are - I a
21 understand it there would be difficulties let's say
22 if there were accruals or with the councilmanic
23 discretionary funds, using them for tablets unless
24 the purpose and I am not thinking of the actual
25 terminology but the actual scope of the -

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Could you get back to me
3 with an answer. This is a question that my
4 organization you know that's very important to my
5 organizations.

6 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, absolutely we will get
7 back to you shortly on that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, earlier - thank you.
9 Earlier, we heard from Ms. Alfreda Haaland who talked
10 about access and the high cost of broadband services.
11 The emergency broadband benefit program, which is a
12 federal program and it was passed December 2020. The
13 larger broadband access agreement would invest \$7
14 billion to increase access to broadband. Would this
15 service help an individual like Ms. Haaland who
16 doesn't meet the current financial criteria but lives
17 on a fixed income? How many New York City seniors
18 are participating in that program? What is the
19 rollout time and is this program in Staten Island and
20 are there income requirements and how is the outreach
21 being done to ensure that everybody who is eligible
22 to access this program is made aware of it?

23 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, I am going to ask Kate
24 Hohman from CTO to help us with that answer and to
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2 the degree that we don't have details concerning
3 that, we will need to get back to you soon on that as
4 well. But let's see if Kate has some information.

5 KATE HOHMAN: Sure, well I would just generally
6 say that you know, certainly the city agrees that
7 universal broadband is essential to building and fair
8 and equitable city. As I think the Committee knows
9 universal broadband is a key part of the CTO's
10 portfolio and we have been doing work on a number of
11 fronts to address the issue for a number of years
12 including as was mentioned developing a citywide
13 master plan to achieve universal broadband.

14 We are focused on that broader effort. I don't
15 have information in front of me about that particular
16 federal effort, I am happy to follow up with my
17 colleagues in the office and get back to you about
18 that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I think this is really a
20 critical issue, especially when we talk about the
21 inequities and the digital divide. How is it that no
22 one can give me any kind of information on a program
23 that's scheduled to bring \$7 billion to New York
24 City? I find it a little disconcerting that we don't
25 know about it. You know, the program was passed in

1
2 December and this is definitely going to be an asset
3 to our ability to provide services to those
4 communities that have especially our seniors that
5 have you know historically been you know victims of
6 the digital divide.

7 How soon can you give me that information if you
8 don't have it now? I need to know how soon you can
9 get that information to us.

10 KATE HOHMAN: Yeah, I am just saying I don't have
11 it personally. It is not an issue that I am
12 personally working on and we have colleagues in the
13 office who are preparing comments on that and I can
14 get back to you briefly.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I guess I wanted to
17 follow up with that. I mean this is money that it's
18 great. I mean this is part of the \$900 billion
19 federal stimulus that was passed in December that has
20 \$3.2 billion for new emergency broadband benefit and
21 they have the criteria about who is qualified.
22 People who have SNAP or Medicaid would qualify. And
23 that program offers a \$50 monthly subsidy for
24 broadband and discount tablets for a laptop up to
25 \$100.

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I mean and then this program has like an early bird gets the worms, you got to apply and then money is going to run out. I am surprised the city is not aware of that and then also the Governor and his Fiscal 2022 Executive Budget also pose a \$15 per month broadband service for low-income families. I mean, the Mayor's Office, shouldn't they be like really aware of this? Like, okay, how do we get the money to New York City seniors and residents, low-income residents? Somebody should be looking out for this.

KATE HOHMAN: Again, it is not that we are not aware of it, it is just not an item that I am personally working on. I do have colleagues in the office who are and I would be happy to follow up.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Deputy Commissioner Michael, is DFTA with the calls that the providers are making? Are you also telling them to let people know about these programs, so they could get ready to apply?

MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Or do you have the numbers who could really use these programs and to make sure when you are doing your wellness call, your vaccine call,

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to also talk about that these programs are available.
That they could apply to get access.

MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, I mean, you know the point
that you make about the broadband access legislation
and that Council Member Rose raised as well, very,
very important. You know as Kate said, she has
colleagues working on this and we will definitely get
back to you very soon and your right, DFTA's job as
we hear about this, which we will hear very soon in
how the city will tap into this legislation in the
funding stream. Our job is to get the word out about
that and so, we will have that on the front burner.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so you should get that
back to us as quickly as - so, we want to make sure
that our seniors don't lose out and our low income
families don't lose out but I mean, this is first
come first serve. So, just like all the other
federal programs. You know, you find out too late,
you are out. So, we want to make sure that the
information gets to our seniors as quickly as
possible.

MICHAEL BOSNICK: We understand and we will get
back to you really soon, as Kate said.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Chair Holden, do you have any
3 other questions?

4 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yes Co-Chair Chin. I just
5 want to – I just reached out to four of my senior
6 centers, all very large and so far, three of the four
7 got back to me. None of them were contacted by DFTA
8 to issue a vaccine location. One of my senior
9 centers, which is the largest. It has 800 seniors as
10 members that regularly attend. I can go there in an
11 afternoon before the pandemic and there would be 3-or
12 400 people having lunch there. Very, very large
13 location.

14 One of the four that I did speak to said that
15 reached out to DFTA to offer their services as a
16 vaccine center and nobody ever got back to them. So,
17 something is not right here. I have one of the
18 largest senior populations in my district. None of
19 the senior centers have been contacted. You
20 testified Mr. Cruz that you have reached out to 100
21 of the 200 senior centers. Are you doing every
22 district? Are you doing every zip code? Are you
23 making sure that you are reaching out to enough that
24 would cover the population of New York City?

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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2 GUILLERMO CRUZ: First of all, the reach out to
3 the centers would be coordinated by the Vaccine
4 Command Center as I understand it. We have at DFTA -

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: So, wait a minute, your
6 reported that - hold on. You reported that you
7 reached out to 100 or so that you didn't find
8 eligible.

9 GUILLERMO CRUZ: No, we survey.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: They survey.

11 GUILLERMO CRUZ: Right, we have information about
12 all the sites. We have the square footage; we have
13 information about the sites and then we looked at all
14 of our sites and then sent this information to the
15 Vaccine Command Center. That's what we did. We
16 didn't reach out to each center, no. We have this
17 information and forward this information to -

18 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Well, I would hope that the
19 Mayor's Office and DFTA would reach out to the
20 centers and start planning this. That if they don't
21 have refrigerators, get them. Get them to them and
22 prepare for a rollout and not when the vaccine is
23 available and then like, when the vaccine rolled out,
24 the city was very slow and like I said, taking days
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1 off. Some days inoculating 5,000 and in another day
2 inoculating a few hundred. So, that's why I said we
3 need to plan ahead and these senior centers should be
4 contacted, say get ready. And again, we haven't seen
5 that. What's the problem with calling all the
6 seniors. There is not that many to call them all and
7 say, let's start planning this? Alright, thank you
8 Co-Chair.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Chair Holden. Yeah,
11 I mean we will also you know, talk with the Vaccine
12 Command Center and push again. I mean they know that
13 infrastructure is there, we are ready. They got to
14 help us prepare and let the senior center know what's
15 needed and they can get ready and that should be part
16 of the plan. Any other questions from other Council
17 Members?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There are no other hands
19 raised Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so I just wanted to you
21 know, thank this panel. Deputy Commissioner and
22 everyone for testifying and we will follow up with
23 additional questions that we did not address and we
24 look forward to getting it done. Okay, getting the
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1
2 centers open, getting seniors connected and also, I
3 think with the virtual program that the senior
4 centers are doing, it probably would be good for DFTA
5 to reach out to them to do some workshop about you
6 know the vaccine and then they should you know, if
7 they have any questions, so that we make sure that we
8 get the correct information out to them.

9 So, thank you again for being here today. Uhm,
10 Committee Counsel, would you like to call up the next
11 panel.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, thank you Chair. We
13 will now turn to public testimony. Once more, I
14 would like to remind everyone that unlike our typical
15 Council hearings, we will be calling individuals one
16 by one to testify in a panel. Council Members who
17 have questions for a particular panelist should use
18 the raise hand function in Zoom and you will be
19 called on after each panel has completed their
20 testimony.

21 For panelists, once your name is called a member
22 of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms
23 will give you the go ahead to begin after setting the
24 timer. All testimony will be limited to three
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2 minutes. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce
3 that you may begin before delivering your testimony.

4 Our first panel will be Thomas Kamber from Older
5 Adults Technology Services, Christian Gonzalez from
6 Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging, Robert Veksler
7 from Brooklyn Fiber and Beth Finkel from AARP.

8 Thomas Kamber, you may begin once you have been given
9 the queue.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now. Time begins

11 -

12 THOMAS KAMBER: Yes, can you hear me okay?
13 Excellent. I want to thank the Council for holding
14 this hearing and for inviting us to speak. And also,
15 I can answer some of the questions around the
16 emergency broadband benefit after this testimony if
17 people want to ask them.

18 While I was preparing my testimony for today, I
19 went back and looked through some old records and I
20 found a hearing that the City Council held in October
21 28, 2005, which is the first hearing that I ever
22 testified at and it was called Circuits and Seniors,
23 assessing the technology needs of senior citizens.

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1 A couple of quotes from the briefing paper that
2 we were using there for that Council hearing.

3 Technology is quickly being seen not only as a vital
4 outlet for pertinent information but also as a portal
5 through which seniors can get in touch with loved
6 ones or plug into online communities. There is a
7 growing gap between seniors and technology. There
8 are a number of successful initiatives presently
9 active in the city and the feedback has been very
10 positive.
11

12 The City should consider allocating funds for
13 programs that train seniors to use technology working
14 with the nonprofit sector to decide what needs to be
15 done and gathering relevant data.

16 Sixteen years later, the situation hasn't changed
17 very much and we're observing many of the same
18 alarming facts and trends that were identified in
19 this hearing, except that today approximately 21,000
20 older New Yorkers have died from the Coronavirus.
21 OATS research shows that 40 percent of New Yorkers
22 over the age of 65 lack wireline internet at home.

23 So approximately 8,400 senior citizens died this
24 year in New York City from coronavirus and did not
25 have a reliable home broadband. They had no way to

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2 participate on Zoom calls with family, no way to
3 order food or supplies online, no way to manage their
4 finances safely and no way to go online for reliable,
5 up-to-date information about how to stay safe from
6 the virus. While the rest of us were home using
7 every technology tool available to avoid getting
8 sick, these individuals were forced to make life-and-
9 death decisions about exposing themselves to a deadly
10 pathogen just to carry out daily activities. How
11 many died because they had to do something in person
12 that could have been done online if they only had a
13 simple internet connection?

14 We recently asked seniors who participate in our
15 Senior Planet programs to let us know if they found
16 the internet help them stay safe during COVID and in
17 a single day we received 196 responses. Every single
18 one making the case that technology was an essential
19 ingredient for survival during COVID. People
20 referred to it as a "God-send," "essential," and a
21 "life-saver," and commenting on how it helped them
22 maintain social connections, manage finances, order
23 food and connect to fitness programs online.

24 People have talked about our OATS programs quite
25 a bit during this hearing, so I won't go through all

1
2 the details, but since 2005, when we were founded,
3 the City Council was our first public dollar that
4 supported this program and we think of ourselves as a
5 City Council success story. But we have built our
6 program up to the point where we are services tens of
7 thousands of people a year. We have served 60,000
8 people on Zoom through December 31st this last year.
9 And we have expanded our programs into five different
10 states now.

11 We applaud the efforts of city leaders like Mayor
12 De Blasio, Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez, and CTO
13 Farmer, and I will stop just a second and say the
14 staff have also been amazing, Michael Bosnick and
15 Kate Hohman and others who testified today are really
16 amazing.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 THOMAS KAMBER: The last point is that our
19 funding in the last five years an organization, OATS
20 has doubled in size in the last five years, but our
21 City Council, our overall city public funding for
22 programs like this has actually gone down in the last
23 five years.

24 So, we are calling on the city to make more of a
25 substantial commitment to focusing on these programs

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2 because less than one percent of funding allocations
3 from NYCHA, I am sorry, from New York City Aging
4 focus on technology right now. Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will next hear
6 from Christian Gonzalez.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

8 CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ: Hi everyone, can you hear
9 me?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: We hear you.

11 CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ: Great, so hi, my name is
12 Christian González-Rivera and I'm the director of
13 strategic policy initiatives at the Brookdale Center
14 for Healthy Aging.

15 We are CUNY's aging research and policy center
16 and a part of Hunter College. So, thank you Chairs
17 Chin and Holden and members of the Committee's for
18 holding this oversight hearing to draw attention to
19 really one of the most important lessons that the
20 city must draw from this COVID pandemic. And that is
21 the vital necessity to protect the health and safety
22 of older New Yorkers by ensuring that they have
23 access to technology.

24 And just this morning, we released a report as
25 Chair Chin mentioned in her opening remarks on how to

1
2 ensure that older New Yorkers can age well by
3 providing meaningful access to technology. The
4 report draws on months of research including dozens
5 of conversations with providers of services to older
6 adults, experts and others to document the evolving
7 tech challenges that older adults and the service
8 providers have been facing as a result of the
9 pandemic.

10 It also includes a review of literature on what
11 motivates older adults to get online and also
12 importantly a demographic analysis of
13 unconnected older adults that shows how deeply lack
14 of connectivity among older adults is related to
15 socioeconomic disadvantage. So, that report is
16 available on our website brookdale.org right now.

17 So, and I will discuss a few highlights now. So,
18 chances are that those of who depend on regular
19 internet access at home, which likely includes all of
20 us you know right here on the screen right now or
21 most of us, have really been grateful to order stuff
22 online and have Zoom dinners with friends and see our
23 doctors without actually going to the clinic. But
24 for the 474,000 New Yorkers age 60 and above who lack
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2 internet access at home, either through broadband or
3 mobile or any other means, have not been able to do
4 so and as a result, they have been among the most
5 isolated people in this pandemic and in fact,
6 unconnected older New Yorkers are missing out on a
7 lot. They are missing out on telehealth, which has
8 great potential to help them manage chronic
9 conditions and access preventive care. An
10 opportunity to reduce social isolation and so many of
11 the other uses that have been mentioned already. But
12 the important thing is that internet access is not
13 the end of the story. A device and Wi-Fi are of
14 little use if you don't know how to use them.

15 So, one of the most important things that the
16 Council can do is to ensure that any city investments
17 in expanding internet access recognize the internet
18 does not stop at having your apartment or building
19 wired for internet.

20 Meaningful access to technology is a three legged
21 stool. It includes access to appropriate devices,
22 access to an internet connection and the skills and
23 tech support to thrive online.

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2 And that last one, the skills and tech support,
3 is by far the most important. Specifically for older
4 adults, since that's what they lack the most. And as
5 many providers learn I mean; this is a very hands on
6 process that starts with identifying the older adults
7 needs first.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ: This is the last piece.
10 Helping them figure out how to solve their problems
11 through technology. You know, as Tom Kamber knows
12 very well as well, the hook is not often, how do I
13 use the internet? The hook is how do I manage my
14 diabetes? How do I get in contact with my loved
15 ones? How do I get a job? How do I you know, expand
16 my purse making business into online?

17 Those are the problems that people want to solve.
18 So, the investments need to start with that work.
19 Helping people solve their problems and how
20 technology can be a tool. Much more details in the
21 report and thank you so much for the opportunity to
22 testify.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Christian. Next,
25 we will hear from Robert Veksler.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

ROBERT VEKSLER: Hello everyone. Thank you Chair Holden and Chair Chin. I don't have a prepared statement but I can tell you, I am the Founder of Brooklyn Fiber, we are an internet service provider based in Brooklyn. We primarily provide service to what you may refer to as digital deserts or historical digital deserts. Parts of Brooklyn and parts of Queens now. Also parts of Manhattan that traditionally have very limited access to broadband. The biggest defenders for that are definitely parts of Brooklyn if you look at the digital, the master plan from the city, there are many parts of Brooklyn which are white or a light blue, meaning there is only one option for ISP's for Internet Service Providers.

Just listening to the testimony today, I can completely sympathize with what Ms. Haaland said earlier about the cost of her broadband as well as the limited options that she may have. The reason for this from our perspective is a lack of access, infrastructure, as well as competition. All three of those will lead to one another.

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2 The lack of – the infrastructure problem inside
3 Brooklyn, I can speak to directly is this, the
4 internet master plan, which is well meaning and very
5 smart, calls for broadband access to all New Yorkers
6 I believe by 2040 or some future date. The one thing
7 that I believe is left out is the ownership of the
8 infrastructure. The way to make this all happen from
9 our perspective as an ISP is for the city to take
10 charge of running fiber line internet down the areas
11 through the parts of the city that are most in need
12 of broadband. So, we get calls every day from
13 Flatbush from East New York from Bushwick from
14 Brownsville. These are typically lower income areas
15 that have one, if they are lucky two choices for
16 broadband service.

17 What happens then is you have no downward
18 pressure on prices. No upper pressure on broadband
19 plans. If the city wants to actually – if the city
20 is serious about providing broadband access to all
21 New Yorkers, especially those in under privileged
22 areas, they need to take charge of the infrastructure
23 part of it.

1
2 If the city were to run wireline internet fiber
3 down the parts of Brooklyn, that I can only speak to
4 Brooklyn really, that need it most, we as the
5 providers would lease out those fibers, those
6 connections and last mile to the actual consumer.
7 That will create mass amounts of competition.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 ROBERT VEKSLER: No problem.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: You can finish. Yeah, Robert
11 finish.

12 ROBERT VEKSLER: Sure. Uhm, my point is that who
13 ever controls the infrastructure controls the
14 timeline. So, to make this a realistic endeavor, the
15 city needs to put its money where its mouth and its
16 hopes are and actually take control of the
17 infrastructure. Lease out that fiber to companies
18 like my own and we will provide service to those
19 areas that are underserved with a combination of
20 wireline service as well as fixed wireless service
21 and you will see a mass adoption of broadband
22 services, particularly in those areas that are
23 underserved now. As well as a downward pressure, a
24 massive downward pressure on prices.

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2 If I could just say one last thing, as an ISP, I
3 can tell you that there is absolutely [LOST AUDIO
4 1:47:04-1:47:08] of this meaning should have the
5 broadband prices going up. Not tooting our own horn
6 but we have never raised a single price. There has
7 been no price creep in our plans and there is no
8 reason there should be in Verizon's or Optimums or
9 anyone else's. If you start with a \$40 plan or a \$20
10 plan, there is enough meat on the bone from our end
11 to keep that price at \$40 or \$20 for the life of that
12 plan. Thank you for letting me speak.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will hear from
15 Beth Finkel.

16 BETH FINKEL: Hi, first of all I want to thank
17 Council Member Chin and Council Member Holden for
18 convening this so important and it encourages and
19 enforces that. I am not going to go through my
20 testimony because you have it written but you know I
21 am a head of AARP New York over three quarters of a
22 million members across New York City, over 2.5
23 million in New York State and what you are talking
24 about today gets at the heart of the needs of every
25 person 50 plus in New York City.

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2 We know that although 51 percent of older
3 Americans say that they have bought at least one tech
4 product in the last year, that is not prevalent among
5 low income or in a lot of communities of color, you
6 need to have that front and center.

7 I think what we have heard from so many of my
8 esteemed advocacy partners is that we now have what –
9 I hate to go back to [INAUDIBLE 1:48:04] for those of
10 you who might remember that name, who called this
11 cultural lag when the cars were first invented, you
12 know, there were no highways to take the cars through
13 and right now we are facing that same thing with this
14 broadband lag. It is a cultural lag and
15 unfortunately it is effecting communities of color
16 and those cultures even at the greater extent.

17 This is about working people, this is about
18 people who are still pursuing, trying to get more
19 education, this is about telehealth, this is about
20 access to the vaccines. This is about access to
21 benefits. It is every realm of people's lives and so
22 that's why we are so excited that we are doing this
23 today. I want to assure you that we are working at
24 the state level, looking at the broadband
25 accessibility. We have got a bill that is on the

1
2 governor's desk right now that would go back and
3 survey properly where there is and where there isn't
4 broadband and at the same time, making broadband
5 affordable which everyone else has pointed to.

6 I want to say one more point, this is also about
7 civic involvement. How does an everyday citizen get
8 involved with civic involvement today? We can't get
9 to the steps of City Hall. AARP has hundreds of
10 thousands of activists in New York State and how do
11 they get through? How do they get through and how do
12 they make their presence known and how do they make
13 their opinions known if they can't get on the
14 internet and show that? So, we really need to do
15 that.

16 I do want to separately applaud OATS and Tom to
17 the work that they are doing and aside, they are now
18 a part of the AARP family which we are very proud of
19 but we really need to keep driving this forward. So,
20 I want to applaud you all. All the City Council
21 people that are on this hearing right now. This is
22 so very important and AARP is here to help, so please
23 call me.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Beth.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. That is all the members for this panel. Chair Chin, any questions?

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, Tom, so can you explain a little bit more about the federal program? I mean, the money that was allocated.

THOMAS KAMBER: Its past as part of the emergency stimulus package in December. The FCC is responsible for implementing the program and there is \$3.2 billion for broadband subsidies and it is couched at \$50 a month and they put together limited guidelines for how the money will be distributed in the original bill language. But they are currently taking comments for, public comments because it's an FCC program. They have to open up all these programs for public commentary and those comments are due on the 25th of January.

My understanding is that the Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Office will be filing comments on that. I am assuming that is true. We will certainly be filing comments and I hope, I think AARP is also filing comments. So, we have been speaking with folks over there. But it is very important that people make clear that those dollars need to be

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2 available for older adults because many of these
3 programs are very, very heavily tilted toward young
4 people to close the homework gap and while we
5 absolutely support getting everybody online, the
6 challenge here is that so often the resources are
7 people are so focused on the school issues because
8 kids are taking classes without laptops and it is
9 really important. They are forgetting that there is
10 - we have just done a research study that shows that
11 21 million older adults in the United States do not
12 have broadband internet at home. We are about to
13 issue that study next week and it's a real high
14 priority to get those rules written to make sure that
15 people are both making it easy for enrollment and
16 engagement for older adults through you know,
17 mechanisms that are available, the triple A systems
18 and things like that.

19 And then finally, it is really only enough money
20 if everybody who signs up who is eligible, there is
21 only enough money for about four months' worth of
22 subsidies, maybe five months and so, there is a
23 question about what happens afterwards and we are
24 going to need a conservative public effort. If it is
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2 a successful program, this is the first time there
3 has ever been a broadband subsidy in the United
4 States that's available for older people to use
5 that's federally funded. There has never been one
6 before. It is kind of like Section 8 but for
7 technology and people in need.

8 So, it's a great kind of opening of the door for
9 us to do something. South Korea has a subsidy for
10 seniors using technology. It is something that we
11 really ought to try to support on an ongoing basis
12 and it would really support all the other things
13 people have talked about today.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Great, thank you and I think
15 also Christian was talking about that you know it is
16 not just enough to get the access. We have to make
17 sure that we have resources for training and tech
18 support. That's really critical because like, what
19 happens if the computer goes out or you are doing
20 something and you don't know how you lost that page.

21 THOMAS KAMBER: I might say by the way that the
22 way that the funds are written right now there is no
23 funding for tech support or training at all in that
24 system. It is deliberately written to not do that.

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2 And so, they are just kind of leaving it open to
3 states and localities. If we want to supplement, you
4 know New York City has the largest program in the
5 country because of the work that we have been doing
6 with the government and by the way, thank you to all
7 of the Council Members who supported our program.
8 And so, we actually have a kind of – we are a little
9 bit ahead of the curve in terms of being able to
10 implement but there is no money federally right now
11 for those resources that you described.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, when we are talking about
13 this broadband you know subsidy from the feds, so I
14 think part of the comments, we can also put in that
15 it is not just enough to provide the subsidy but you
16 also have to provide the training and the tech
17 support.

18 THOMAS KAMBER: Right, you might mention that the
19 previous program from which Connected Communities
20 emerged, which is the program that Kate and others
21 were talking about was a program that was funded
22 through the national telecommunications and
23 information administration, which is part of the
24 Department of Commerce, that included not just, that
25

1
2 had \$7 billion for infrastructure but it also
3 included I believe \$3.5 billion nationwide for
4 broadband adoption services and training.

5 So, that model already exists and it was very
6 successful given how quickly it was rolled out during
7 the last economic crisis. There is you know a
8 predecessor for this approach.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Can you send us that
10 information so that -

11 THOMAS KAMBER: Of course, I will send it to you.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And the other thing is that
13 with the Governor's Executive Budget, but that also
14 is just for providing broadband service. That might
15 be another opportunity to add.

16 THOMAS KAMBER: Can I comment very briefly on
17 that?

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah.

19 THOMAS KAMBER: So, we are 100 percent supportive
20 of the Governor calling for this. I do think it is
21 really important first of all to incorporate
22 conversations with the large infrastructure providers
23 like Verizon and Charter and companies like that in
24 these conversations. I really think they should be
25

1
2 invited to hearings like this and apparently, you
3 know Verizon have been really reached out to around
4 this stuff. They are a major asset for these things
5 and can help us close the gap there. And I will say
6 that when we do these franchise agreements, they are
7 super widely desperate in terms of who provides
8 service. So, Comcast which is not in New York State,
9 has a thing called internet essentials that provides
10 \$10 a month internet to people all over the country,
11 in 40 different states and seniors are eligible. We
12 did a calculation that 53 percent of older adults in
13 Comcast areas are eligible for internet essentials.

14 In New York State, the comparable program is run
15 through Charter and Spectrum, only two percent of
16 seniors are eligible for that program because it is
17 very narrowly constricted to SSI recipients. So, we
18 just are not closing the gap and we are letting all
19 these horses out of the barn without closing really
20 good deals that are really representing the needs of
21 the older adult population. We have got to do a
22 better job in both collaborating with and also, you
23 know, really like holding the line to make sure
24 people are serving real numbers of seniors.

25

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2 We asked the state how many people are being
3 served under that broadband subsidy from Spectrum,
4 and the State Public Utilities Commission got back to
5 us and said, they don't know because they don't even
6 require them to report on it.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, that's -

8 THOMAS KAMBER: So, we don't have the data. What
9 Beth was saying before about broadband mapping, that
10 bill is kind of a no brainer to get started. We need
11 to know what's going on out there because there is a
12 real gap between what people say the internet looks
13 like and what the real experience is, especially in
14 poor communities. I think Roberts comments are
15 really well taken on that. We have to be much more
16 aggressive and much more urgent around these issues.
17 We knew the problem was going to come before COVID,
18 we didn't solve it and now look at what we are left
19 with.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, no, thank you. Thank
21 you Tom. So, we got to make sure that we - let us
22 know how we can also help you know, push the bill
23 forward and also get the governor to provide more
24 support you know for trainings and -

1
2 BETH FINKEL: Just real quick on that bill that
3 we are talking about it is on the Governor's desk.
4 He has got to sign it by January 31st. So, yes, a
5 letter of support from the New York City Council to
6 ask him to please sign it. Please do, we would
7 appreciate it.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, please send us the
9 information, so that we can get on it right away.
10 Thank you. Chair Holden?

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yes, thank you Chair Chin
12 and thank you panel for an excellent testimony and I
13 also want to thank Tom Kamber from OATS for your
14 wonderful program that I fund in my senior centers.
15 In fact, I go to their graduations when they
16 graduate. When the class graduates, they give them a
17 certificate and you can see that the seniors that
18 have taken the course could be on the iPad or could
19 be on how to use a smart phone but it is like they
20 have been born again almost.

21 Like they suddenly, a new world opened up to them
22 and they are so excited and you know, pre-pandemic I
23 went to every graduation and it was really, it was
24 probably the best money that I invested in the senior
25

1 center because you can see it opens up so many
2 possibilities, new horizons for the seniors and I
3 just wish that the Administration would continue you
4 know, actually expand this program because it is so,
5 so important for our seniors because we are in an
6 online world now. And we haven't done enough and I
7 think your job would be easier if we had universal
8 broadband that the Mayor promised back in 2014.
9

10 THOMAS KAMBER: We are working on it.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: You know, I think that's -
12 you know, because it is expensive and I agree, the
13 franchise agreements that you know hopefully we will
14 get soon and it will expand it and we will have
15 universal broadband and then we can start doing what
16 we are supposed to be doing.

17 THOMAS KAMBER: Thank you and can I mention one
18 more thing, I am sorry. The Senior Planet Website
19 has free classes every day. And so, a lot of those
20 programs Council Member Holden, Chair Holden that you
21 have been attending in person are now available for
22 free online and we have had hundreds and hundreds of
23 people in each of those classes. You know we have
24 Tai Chi today and classes on Zoom for Council Member
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1
2 Chin, so that she can work on her reading technique
3 there. We have a morning stretch. We have got
4 classes in Spanish tomorrow and Fit Fusion. So, all
5 of that stuff is available and they are super highly
6 rated. We have a 92 net promoter score from seniors
7 participating and one critical point though is those
8 programs are open enrollment so you don't have to
9 preregister. The advantage of that is that it
10 reduces friction for people to participate but the
11 negative is that we don't know exactly how many
12 people are non-duplicated repeat visitors.

13 And so, what you were asking Michael Bosnick
14 earlier, while it is really important, it is only a
15 slice of the overall you know environment that people
16 are coming online and we need to balance the pre-
17 registration control and data collection with the
18 openness and friction free approach to just letting
19 everybody come to many of these sessions.

20 So, we have been doing you know, tens of
21 thousands of people over the last few months but it
22 is really important that we keep some of these
23 systems completely open and we will know less but we
24 will serve more people this way.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Tom, we got to get you on
3 the Mayor's vaccine task force.

4 THOMAS KAMBER: I am staying away from that.

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: No, we got to get you on
6 there because somebody has got to represent seniors
7 and actually know how to communicate and know what's
8 available and how to reach them but - and Beth, we
9 might even get you on that because I would -

10 BETH FINKEL: Thank you. That's Tom's place
11 because I agree with you, there is nobody
12 representing seniors and so, Council Member Holden, I
13 really, really appreciate you saying that because I
14 have noticed that also.

15 THOMAS KAMBER: We would be happy to help if we
16 could play a role.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: It's like they left the
18 seniors out in their rollout and they are the first
19 to be vaccinated and they didn't figure it out and
20 it's just - it shows you - You probably, I don't know
21 if there is any seniors on the Mayor's Task Force. I
22 don't know if anybody understands how to talk to
23 them, how to reach them. Certainly Tom and you would
24 and Christian obviously but you know, Beth, I would
25

1
2 like to just get your opinion. Like, how would you
3 solve the situation that we are in now with the not
4 being able to reach the seniors, not being able to
5 educate them. You know like I mentioned, forget
6 about technology for a second because obviously they
7 have a problem, right there is a problem with
8 technology at least for the vast majority of the
9 seniors and we are not going to solve it tomorrow.
10 But let's say we had enough vaccines; how would you
11 get the seniors vaccinated? Do you have any thoughts
12 on that?

13 BETH FINKEL: Well, actually, you know, the Mayor
14 does have a subcommittee for older adults which I am
15 on. It meets every Friday. I was actually on it
16 yesterday because it was on a Thursday. So, I do
17 want to say that and they have made some strides in
18 terms of transportation and some other pieces. I
19 think though that as we keep highlighting here, it's
20 not all about technology. We wish that everybody
21 could use technology but sometimes you have to go
22 back to the old fashioned way of touching people
23 locally with the local community organizers with the
24 neighborhood watch groups. You know with the people
25 who you know have that local ability.

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So, going back to the old fashioned and I am a Community Organizer from way back right, looking at doing it as old fashioned community organizers would do it, some would say you might want to borrow what Stacey did down in Georgia, going door to door that way. I know there is issues around door to door with COVID but I think there is a way that we could do it in a safe way and you know, there is that really old fashioned way of getting the flyers out that connect to people, that connect them to an 800 number that works. That has the capacity and that's really important because the state 800 number had a two hour wait time. It is now down to a 10 minute wait time which some people would still say that's too much but getting those call in centers really up to speed with people who could answer the questions and direct them and hand hold them and go on and go on the sites with them and help them do it.

So, I think that that would be the beginning of that. So, again, the Stacey Abrams[SP?] model. She is pretty good at this you know.

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Or even you know with the Meals on Wheels programs that we have in New York

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City contacting them through that where they deliver the meals and then they have a little flyer saying here is what you know, we are going to do. We are going to be calling you or here, call this number and so forth and so on. You know we have to get creative here. Maybe they are doing that, I don't know but I haven't heard of it.

BETH FINKEL: Well, Meals on Wheels is involved but I think the issue that you bring up about the homebound. You know it's one thing to provide transportation to people who are a little fragile but when you talking about homebound, homebound, that's another issue and also the people who are providing care for those homebound. Because if they are not coming out of a licensed homecare agency, if it is informal or private pay, who knows and with a new strain coming out, you know the contagion is going to just multiply.

So, we really need to make sure that people are getting the vaccine and the people who are coming in close contact with them are. So, thank you so much. This is so important, thank you, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Okay, back to you Co-Chair.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, thank you. I think
3 that's why it is so important that minimally at least
4 in the next senior center RFP that there should be
5 you know, funding available you know, for training
6 and tech support that you know groups like oh, you
7 should be funded by the city. I mean, the Council
8 discretionary funding is extra. It should be
9 baselined in DFTA's budget and I think that's what we
10 have been advocating for. It's like wiht the senior
11 centers and kind of like it should be a no brainer
12 that that should be part of their budget.

13 So, I just want to thank this panel and thank you
14 for all of the great work that you do for our seniors
15 and Christian, looking forward to reading the full
16 report and we did utilize some statistics from your
17 reports because you sent it to our staff quickly but
18 we are going to get the whole version and share it
19 with other Council Members.

20 So, Committee Counsel, can you call the next
21 panel.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, thank you. The next
23 panel will be Melissa Sklarz from Sage Senior Center,
24 Ravi Reddi from Asian American Federation, Shaaranya
25 Pillai from India Home and Mary Archana Fernandez

1 from South Asian Council for Social Services.

2
3 Melissa Sklarz, you may begin when ever you have been
4 given the queue.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 MELISSA SKLARZ: Great, let me set my stop watch.
7 Okay, now we are on the same page. So, my name is
8 Melissa Sklarz, I am the Senior Government Relations
9 Strategist at Sage. Thank you Council Members Holden
10 and Chin for convening the hearing today.

11 Founded in 1978, Sage is the country's first and
12 largest organization dedicated to improving the lives
13 of LGBT older people, leading provider of services
14 and supports for LGBT older people in New York City.

15 LGBT elders are living at the epicenter of the
16 pandemic. Studies show high levels poverty, food
17 and housing insecurity, lower access to health care
18 and supportive services, social isolation, thin
19 support networks and mistrust of government and other
20 institutions based on historical discrimination. All
21 of these are worse for transgender elders and LGBT
22 older people of color.

23 Ending in in-person services and programs has
24 made access to technology crucial if not lifesaving.

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2 Our elders rely on Sage for support in community
3 connection. We have six centers across the city and
4 we continue to modernize with both quantity and
5 quality of services to our elders. Throughout the
6 pandemic, we have shifted capacity and resources to
7 adapt to the new reality and reimagining our service
8 for virtual and telephonic delivery.

9 We have had not had any programming since mid-
10 March, duh, like anyone. To ensure that we have
11 access to community connection, we have worked on
12 reinventing our programming. We have offered more
13 than 100 virtual safe center programs a week
14 attracting hundreds of elders and allies including
15 programs such as Stay Positive for HIV Positive
16 elders and Sage Vets for our Veterans.

17 One of our new programs is Sage Sense, it's a
18 financial wellness app specifically for LGBT elders
19 for financial stability and other Sage connect
20 nationwide network of volunteers to help our New York
21 elders to supplement our in-person centers.

22 So, I want to add my voice to all of the things
23 that have been said today. We are hopeful that
24 Department of Aging will partner to increase access
25 to technology with both purchasing of technology for

1
2 elders, which I am sure access connection to older
3 people.

4 We want that in spite of our many programs and
5 services. To many of the programs funded do not
6 adequately meet what is needed today. Changing this
7 need should be a priority of the city. New York
8 needs better broadband and Wi-Fi access in public
9 housing. Millions have been committed to spend for
10 NYCHA and for underserved New Yorkers and universal
11 broadband and this should be included with older
12 adult centers including our Sage centers and we
13 support Governor Cuomo's -

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 MELISSA SKLARZ: Proposal to improve access to
16 telehealth, allow greater flexibility where and how
17 patients use it. Let's see regarding coverage,
18 technology expansion and more professional
19 development.

20 Thank you for the chance to speak here today and
21 thank you for the Council's support of Sage and its
22 programming.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Melissa.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will next hear
25 from Ravi Reddi.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

145

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

RAVI REDDI: Thank you to Committee Chairs
Margaret Chin and Robert Holden for holding this
joint hearing.

I am Ravi Reddi, the Associate Director for
Advocacy and Policy at the Asian American Federation.
Our organization represents a collective voice of
more than 70 member nonprofits serving 1.3 million
Asian New Yorkers. But 13 percent of the city's
senior population now identify as Asian. Among these
seniors, one in four Asian New Yorkers live in
poverty and 72 percent of Asian seniors have limited
English proficiency and comprise more than two-thirds
of the Asian senior population in many neighborhoods
across Brooklyn and Queens.

One in four LEP Asian seniors in the city do not
have access to the internet at home and almost one in
six don't have access to broadband internet at home
either. So, vaccination efforts are highlighting
exactly what we are here to discuss, barriers to
access to technology. So, regarding the vaccine, the
needs of Asian seniors are twofold. Access to
accurate and reliable information on the vaccine

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2 itself and updated information on eligibility
3 requirement and vaccination locations. But while
4 providing online access to information may be
5 expedient, doing so at the expense of in depth
6 community engagement, especially with community-based
7 organizations with significant relationships in these
8 communities puts our most vulnerable at a grave
9 disadvantage.

10 We are encouraged that Council Members and
11 speakers before me are aware of the difficulties of
12 getting a vaccination appointment. The frustration
13 is in our community as well but with the additional
14 layer of resignation, a reflection of yet another
15 system built without us in mind.

16 Access is contingent on simplicity of process but
17 more than anything, access is contingent on
18 engagement. Here our community based organizations
19 see how our elders consume information, engage with
20 who they trust and COVID-19 has dramatically impacted
21 the delivery of just about every other service our
22 seniors need as well. Access to reliable virtual
23 healthcare for example, depends on access to a
24 device, stable internet, often times an in depth
25 knowledge of software applications.

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So, software application interfaces and it is not just our seniors but also service providers who are struggling. Our community agencies are being overwhelmed by demand, at the same time that services of all kinds are needing to shift to technological alternatives like ESL and citizenship classes. The transition to internet based applications is creating bottlenecks on both ends. As strained capacity among small CBO's who need to shift services online while demand remains unchanged or is actually increasing.

The needs aren't changing and the means aren't keeping up. So, here are our recommendations. First and foremost, online registration for vaccine appointments is already excluding Asian seniors. The city must see CBO's who have existing buy in from our senior communities as copilots in the effort, providing messaging and resources to help Asian seniors get the vaccinations they need.

Second, to that end, grant and capacity to support must be made available to avoid interruptions and services deemed essential by our community members from meal delivery to telehealth. Having consistently demonstrated how city funds can be most

1
2 efficiently used, our partners need funding and they
3 need in time technological assistance from funding
4 for tablet distribution to funding for broadband
5 access and CBO's -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Continue.

8 RAVI REDDI: Thank you. Finally, Local Law 30
9 implementation must be fully funded across city
10 agencies falling under its purview. In addition to
11 that, we need to amend contracting processes to allow
12 Asian led nonprofits to more accurately reflect the
13 cultural and language expertise they bring when
14 serving our community members. The needs of our
15 CBO's and the needs of our seniors are systemic and
16 we are seeing that revealed in this crisis.

17 So, we are working on two plans right now. We
18 need immediate help and then we need systemic
19 structural help. So, with that said, we understand
20 that the city and state are facing financial
21 challenges of their own but we have always gotten the
22 most bang for our buck when we have looked to the
23 expertise of community-based organizations like those
24 who will be speaking after me for help.

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

149

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2 On behalf of the Asian American Federation, I
3 want to thank you for giving us the chance to speak
4 and we look forward to working with all of you to
5 make sure we are up to this challenge. Our seniors
6 depend on it. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will
9 hear from Shaaranya Pillai.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 SHAARANYA PILLAI: Thank you to the City Council
12 Committees on Aging and Technology Chair Chin and
13 Chair Holden for providing this opportunity for India
14 Home to testify. My name Shaaranya Pillai, I am
15 Deputy Director at India Home.

16 India Home is the largest senior center program
17 serving South Asian seniors in New York City. During
18 this pandemic, we have continued to be dedicated to
19 culturally competent programs through our home-
20 delivered meals and groceries, Test & Trace community
21 outreach and vaccine awareness in partnership with
22 H+H & DOHMH and extensive virtual senior center
23 programs.

24 Technology has allowed us to reach new heights
25 during this time and attract clients even beyond New

1
2 York City, in other states and countries. We have
3 been able to help ensure through our virtual
4 exercise, yoga, meditation, health nutrition
5 education, civic engagement, ESL, creative Asian
6 programs. The seniors are able to be given enriching
7 programs and are able to stay stimulated and engaged
8 from the safety of their homes. We have also been
9 educating our older adults on the latest health
10 updates through virtual programs and wellness check-
11 up calls consistently over the past few months.

12 While technology has opened up our programs
13 geographically during this pandemic, it has come with
14 its challenges in issues of access and especially for
15 those who have the lowest tech literacy. 100 percent
16 of our clients are immigrants and a sizable portion
17 of our seniors face Low English proficiency and are
18 low income. All factors which impact their ability
19 to accessing and navigating technology.

20 There are over 100 low-income seniors who take
21 part in our home-delivered meal program and 500+
22 seniors who have taken part in our grocery programs
23 regularly but due to a number of barriers, including
24 their lack of access to technological devices, many
25 of them are unable to take part. There are clients

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2 who tend to face issues such as diabetes, high blood
3 pressure and high cholesterol, who would benefit from
4 taking part in our virtual programs such as exercise,
5 yoga and low-impact dance and they continue to
6 express interest but they're unable to join because
7 of the lack of an adequate smartphone or another
8 device.

9 This has also been especially hard for seniors
10 who live alone and do not have supports at home to be
11 able to help them. Furthermore, for those living in
12 family units that depend on their younger
13 grandchildren for their tech devices, the children
14 are oftentimes in school which gets prioritized over
15 the seniors' needs and thus makes the devices
16 unavailable to the seniors during prime hours of
17 programming.

18 Our team has had to use our limited staff and
19 capacity to train not only the older adults but
20 ourselves on new virtual platforms. This has taken a
21 lot of resources to be able to provide the
22 individualized assistance needed for each senior to
23 start using the programs. We are grateful for the
24 more than 21,000 units of virtual programming that we
25 have been able to offer during this time. But we

1
2 need more capacity to be able to support both the
3 training needs for clients and the demands for more
4 of these programs. We have also tirelessly looked
5 for different funding options to help our clients
6 purchase technology, to no avail.

7 As you all know, the public health crisis we are
8 in is ever-evolving. However, the biggest guidance
9 that we have been given in addition to vaccine
10 administration is that it is especially important for
11 our seniors to stay home. Technology is the one way
12 that we can reach them –

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 SHAARANYA PILLAI: Beyond the baseline needs of
15 meals and groceries. Social isolation has lethal
16 consequences in old age and technology is the primary
17 way for us to be able to continue to provide the
18 social cohesion and resources necessary to be able to
19 survive during this pandemic. Even beyond the
20 pandemic, when centers open, we want to be able to
21 continue these virtual programs so seniors don't have
22 to choose between their safety and social
23 connectedness.

24 In order for us to continue to serve in the new
25 normal, we make the following recommendations.

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2 Direct service organizations like ours need more
3 specific funding to support these programs and
4 continue to provide virtual services to help ensure
5 seniors stay at home safely. We need funding to
6 purchase technology such as smartphones and tablets
7 for the most vulnerable seniors who are isolated and
8 unable to access virtual programs and we need the IT
9 support and training from DFTA or the recognition of
10 a need to have this support in-house at our
11 organization.

12 Thank you once again for your time and
13 consideration of our requests.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Finally, we will
16 hear from Mary Archana Fernandez.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 MARY ARCHANA FERNANDEZ: Good Afternoon Council
19 Member Chin, Council Member Holden and other members
20 of the committees on aging and technology. I am Mary
21 Archana Fernandez, Director of Family Support
22 Services at South Asian Council for Social Services
23 SACSS.

24 SACSS is a non-profit community-based
25 organization that works to empower immigrant

1 communities through services in the areas of
2 healthcare access and education, senior support
3 services and food security. We also provide basic
4 and advanced English and computer classes and a
5 Summer Youth Program. All our services are free and
6 provided by staff members who speaks over 15
7 different Asian languages and Spanish and Creole.

9 Each year through our programs, we serve over
10 25,000 clients. As the COVID-19 pandemic spread
11 rampantly through Queens, we were worried about our
12 seniors. Many of whom were isolated even before the
13 pandemic and depended upon community organizations
14 like ours to not only socialize and engage with their
15 peers. But also given their limited English
16 proficiency, they depended upon us, our case workers
17 for assistance with benefits. Some stopping by the
18 office every other day with a document that they
19 needed explained or for help with writing a check to
20 Medicaid Service.

21 They looked forward to sharing their problems and
22 finding solutions in our weekly Hindi and Bengali
23 support groups, or playing Antakshari with friends,
24 watching Hollywood movies and sharing a meal with
25 other seniors with whom they shared a common social

1 and cultural heritage. A lot of my colleague here
2 have spoken about a lack of access, so I want to talk
3 about something that we are hearing from our clients.
4

5 As we moved our programming to a virtual
6 platform, we soon realized that this was a new world
7 for many of our seniors. Especially for those
8 seniors that we serve, many of whom have never had
9 any form of formal education. Have never attended
10 school and do not know to read or write even in their
11 own primary language.

12 One of our seniors mentioned "I feel like I am
13 not a part of this world anymore. Everything is new
14 and I don't know if I can catch up." This was a
15 common sentiment shared by many. Caseworkers and
16 counselors have worked with seniors to teach them to
17 use web-based platforms such as Zoom or Google
18 hangouts. While some, especially those with family
19 members to help them out had a much easier time
20 getting used to this life, many struggled.

21 In our conversation with seniors we found that
22 many of them expressed a disinterest in using
23 technology because of an underlying fear of
24 technology or lack of skills. From our work we have
25 learned that just providing seniors with the

1
2 technology is not going to help. We have to invest
3 in teaching them to use this technology. We have
4 empower them to feel confident and comfortable to use
5 this technology. And while we take on this endeavor
6 on, it is important to recognize that some of our
7 seniors have been experiencing cognitive delays and
8 appropriate training can help to calm those fears and
9 generate interest among seniors and have to also make
10 sure that we provide them with online safety
11 training. Older adults are easy with online scams
12 putting their personal information at risk but with
13 literacy training, they can learn to navigate the
14 internet safely and securely.

15 We also want to make sure that as our seniors – I
16 see that –

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: You can continue.

19 MARY ARCHANA FERNANDEZ: My last point is that a
20 lot of seniors have been telling us that this has
21 affected their self-esteem. Not being able to get on
22 the internet or do things and that is one of the
23 reasons that a lot of them are experiencing symptoms
24 of depression, mood swings. So, we have to make sure
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2 that we make this technology friendly for them and
3 easier for them to use. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel.
6 Chair, if you have any questions.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: No, I really thank the work of
8 this panel. I mean, we totally agree with you. You
9 know, the need for more funding and support and I
10 think it really highlights the whole training part
11 and the tech support. Because one thing about
12 combating isolation, there is so much you can do. I
13 mean for the seniors, the other thing is really
14 learning something new and that will help wiht
15 dementia and you know, it's lifetime learning.

16 Because my husband is learning Chinese and Korean on
17 the internet and there is just so much we can do and
18 we got to make sure that DFTA has the funding to
19 provide not just the equipment but also provide the
20 technical support and the training.

21 So I really wanted to you know, thank you all for
22 your advocacy. Chair Holden?

23 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yes, and I just want to say
24 this panel is terrific again. I just want to thank
25 all the panelists but what Mary said about that

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senior who said, "I don't feel part of this world anymore" is very moving and it really speaks to our mission. As people in obviously in government, we have so much more to do. So, Mary, that was a moving statement and it is so true but I would like to ask this panel generally, what outreach has the city including DFTA, conducted to local groups within your target population?

MARY ARCHANA FERNANDEZ: Well, we don't have a direct contract with DFTA, we are majorly funded by our Council Members. So, we have had no direction or guidance from DFTA as of yet.

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Mary, it could even be beyond DFTA, I am just saying what outreach, has any outreach been in your target population, has the city conducted any outreach to the seniors through local groups in your population?

MARY ARCHANA FERNANDEZ: No, nothing specific. We do have some directions from DOHMH which we translate, which our healthcare access team translates and provides them to our seniors but there is a lot of confusion about vaccines and I just want to share quickly that I had one of my clients who after great difficulty was able to you know get an

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2 appointment to get vaccinated. She went yesterday
3 and then she called me back and said they don't have
4 the vaccine anymore.

5 So, this was you know very disappointing for her
6 and that's my other fear that this is going to
7 motivate and discourage people, seniors from going
8 and getting vaccinated.

9 SHAARANYA PILLAI: And I can speak on uhm, you
10 know the guidance from Department for the Aging, we
11 are also working with the Test and Trace Campaign as
12 well. So, we are getting this advice on both ends
13 from the city to direct through that the vaccine
14 navigator portal but similarly, we have been having a
15 lot of these sites that were being referred to in
16 which they are all booked up. The vaccines are not
17 available, there are shortages. So, it is very
18 frustrating and we are trying to walk our seniors
19 through this process and to be coming at this and we
20 have been reaching out to DFTA and asking to you
21 know, directly work with us. We have the space; can
22 we please you know be a hub to be able to support the
23 vaccine.

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So, we are continuously trying to make that happen and it has been communicated to us because of the vaccine, you know, the storage needs that they are not directly working with CBO's but as far as we know Moderna vaccine doesn't have that requirement, so we can definitely, we have the space to be able to provide it and if there is anyway that we can set up a vaccination hub at our center, we really would like that because our seniors need it and as you said earlier Chair Chin, you know, they know where our center is. They will come and we will be able to facilitate that and if there were any help on that we definitely would appreciate that.

RAVI REDDI: And going off of what Mary Archana said, I think there are no Asian American primary contractors on any contracts. We have only been in subcontracting capacities and especially when you hear about the work being done and how efficiently we are spending what little money we are getting, it would make sense, especially when we are in financial straights that there is more primacy given to you know, specialty organizations who actually have the expertise to provide these direct services, like you have heard.

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2 So, it is still kind of mind boggling that we
3 have only been in subcontractor positions. This is
4 an opportunity to change that.

5 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, that's what we are
7 looking for in the new RFP. I mean, at least with
8 the senior center because I know India Home is one of
9 the ten you know, centers that served immigrant
10 population that's funded by the Council and we want
11 to make sure that you get you know, a city contract
12 so you can be an official senior center.

13 SHAARANYA PILLAI: Thank you, yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Okay, thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel. We
16 have one more panel remaining. A reminder to any
17 Council Members who are still attending the hearing,
18 if you have any questions for the following panel,
19 please use the Zoom raise hand function and I will
20 call you in the order that you have raised your hand.

21 Additionally, if have missed anyone during the
22 course of this hearing that would like to testify,
23 please also use the Zoom raise hand function and we
24 will call you in the order your hand is raised.

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2 The final panel will be Kerly Serrano from
3 Sunnyside Community Services Senior Center, Alexander
4 Ryley from Legal Aid Society and Beth L. Williams
5 from Project Guardianship. Kerly, you may begin when
6 you are given the signal.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 KERLY SERRANO: Hi, my name is as you said, Kerly
9 Serrano. I am the Director of Older Adults at
10 Sunnyside Community Services. Thank you for the
11 opportunity to present here.

12 Our center as other centers have been providing
13 crucial support to older adults in New York City
14 during this pandemic. We have been providing support
15 calls, assistance, guidance to our older New Yorkers
16 and striving to ensure food security, medical access
17 and mental health connections. Currently, we have
18 pivoted to assist with access to correct inaccurate
19 information about vaccines and assisting and securing
20 vaccine appointments which have been mute. All the
21 while, we are also offering virtual activities as
22 they relate to physical, mental support services.

23 The pandemic has resulted in older adults
24 becoming isolated and lonely and we know that this
25 isolation and loneliness negatively impacts older

1 adults mental health and overall physical wellbeing.
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3 The lack of connection to family, friends, social
4 network, decreases their sense of belonging and being
5 and increases health risk factors. We are providing
6 older adults with exercise classes, nutrition
7 classes, arts, entertainment, mental health support
8 services, medical education and even celebrate
9 holidays together and other important events.

10 As you can see, I have some pictures of some of
11 our activities that we have and we try to engage the
12 older adults in trying to remain connected. However,
13 during this pandemic, many systematic deficiencies
14 have been highlighted but a huge resource deficiency
15 is technology. We need resources in order to be
16 technology efficient. Action needs to be taken to
17 assist our older adults in remaining connected with
18 their family, friends and community.

19 At this point, technological resources are vital
20 in order to secure safe, medical access and access to
21 benefit. Seniors and staff who are making
22 concessions as to how they help and it is unfair to
23 make that choice. We need to coordinate an effort to
24 cross umbrella organizations, government and
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2 community partners to share resources and advance
3 best practices. The need to secure a COVID vaccine
4 is an example of how technology is crucial in
5 accessing medical care.

6 But it also highlights the disparity that is
7 caused by the lack of technological resources
8 particularly in the immigrant and lower income
9 population. We need assistance in securing resources
10 that allow older adults remaining connected virtually
11 such as equipment and web access, and education. So,
12 technology does come with a huge cost. There is talk
13 about the \$15 benefit however, when an older adult is
14 struggling to meet the cost of living, they need to
15 choose, do you eat? Do you buy medication? Do you
16 pay the rent? Internet access is not going to be one
17 of those choices.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 KERLY SERRANO: Oh, so sorry, one second. It is
20 time. So, we need to of course the challenge is
21 obtaining internet safely. Requiring equipment
22 access and as everybody else is saying, the resources
23 or support virtual programming for the centers and
24 the clients. We need to access those resources in
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2 order to be able to continue providing that
3 connection that is needed. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
5 from Alexander Ryley.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 ALEXANDER RYLEY: Thank you very much to the
8 Committee's for holding this hearing and I won't read
9 verbatim from my prepared testimony which I will be
10 submitting shortly but the reason that I am here
11 today is to talk about something that has not been
12 mentioned thus far in today's hearing, which is the
13 phenomenon of seniors participating in legal
14 proceedings remotely. And this is something that we
15 are very concerned about for various reasons.

16 So, most of the core proceedings in New York City
17 have been moving forward during the pandemic to the
18 extent that they have been remotely via Zoom or
19 Microsoft teams but these platforms have very serious
20 limitations in terms of due process rights. For
21 example, judges are less able to assess witnesses
22 credibility, judges have difficulty evaluating a
23 witnesses wellbeing or level of understanding. The
24 tech doesn't always work properly. Litigants whose
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1 first language is in English have to work with an
2 interpreter, you can imagine how difficult that can
3 be.
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5 So, this is difficult for any litigant but
6 especially for older people who as has been
7 previously discussed, are effected by what's known as
8 the access and skills divide. They don't have the
9 tech, they don't have the knowledge, the facility.
10 So, we at the Legal Aid Society believe that older
11 people should not be forced to defend themselves in
12 court until physically or remotely until court houses
13 have fully and safely reopened but the courts are
14 clearly determined to move forward to the extend that
15 the government will allow.

16 So, given that, we urge the city to furnish
17 devices and training and ongoing support as I think
18 it was Mr. Gonzalez and Ms. Fernandez highlighted
19 before, the need for tech support for seniors, so
20 that seniors can effectively participate. We have
21 been working with Columbia Law Schools technology and
22 law clinic to create what we call a justice tablet to
23 be used in these remote proceedings but that's only
24 part of the solution as I just mentioned, training
25 and support is necessary.

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A colleague of mine prepared some of the testimony that I am submitting describing the work that she had to do to prepare a client of ours for her virtual trial in housing court a couple of months ago and it was hours and hours of work from square one trying to teach somebody who had never touched a computer before, how to participate in a remote hearing. And it involved creating visuals and signs to be able to hold up during a court proceeding. Unfortunately this person had the aptitude and had a grandson who came in from out of state to be with her

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ALEXANDER RILEY: During the proceeding but you know, you can just imagine how challenging this is. Just one last point, earlier in the pandemic, housing court judges were telling us oh, you know, the city, the Department for the Aging is going to be providing this service. They are going to be providing the tech and the training and so forth for these proceedings. That turned out to be completely untrue. We don't know where they got that idea. So, at the moment, this is falling entirely on providers,

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2 legal services providers and we don't have the
3 background in this. We are just kind of making it up
4 as we go along. I think we are doing a good job but
5 we can't do it with any sort of volume. So, we hope
6 that the city will come up with some kind of a
7 solution to this. Thank you, thank you very much.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Finally, we will
9 hear from Beth Williams.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sorry, Beth I think you are
12 still muted.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, she is still muted.

14 BETH WILLIAMS: Sorry about that. Speaking of
15 technological difficulties. My name is Beth Williams
16 and I am the Deputy Director of Legal Services for
17 Project Guardianship, which is formerly a
18 demonstration project of the Vera Institute of
19 Justice. We are a non-profit agency that serves as
20 court-appointed guardian pursuant to Article 81 of
21 the New York State Mental Hygiene Law.

22 In our 15 years of operation, we have served over
23 500 individuals in New York City for whom a judge has
24 determined their functional limitations necessitate
25 the assistance of a guardian of either person,

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2 property or both. The overwhelming majority of our
3 clients are seniors. They reside across all five
4 boroughs of New York City. Generally, they live in
5 one of two places, a nursing facility or at their
6 home in the community.

7 Before the pandemic, we were able visit with each
8 of our clients on a monthly basis regardless of their
9 location. This enabled us to visibly assess their
10 health, affect, social relationships and environment
11 and make fully informed decisions about their course
12 of care. With the onset of the pandemic in March
13 2020, the visitation restrictions in facilities have
14 prevented us, as well as judges, court-appointed
15 counsel and evaluators, from having hands-on access
16 to our senior clients with limited capacity.

17 It is very difficult to holistically monitor the
18 condition of our seniors and to advocate for
19 adjustments to their care when we are unable to see
20 them in person. Due to their functional limitations,
21 many of our clients are unable to use technology to
22 connect with us and the nature of the communications
23 with those who can, do not lend themselves towards
24 monitoring changes in their physical and mental
25 condition.

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2 Because we cannot enter a facility, we are unable
3 to observe the environment in which care is being
4 provided and be watchful for indicators of
5 substandard treatment. It has been our experience
6 that nursing facilities are poorly equipped to
7 provide our clients with access to technology that
8 would enable us to visit them via videoconferencing
9 for example.

10 As such, access to our senior clients living in
11 facilities has mostly been via telephone and for our
12 clients who are unable to use a telephone, the best
13 we can do is have a conversation with care staff
14 about their oftentimes biased perceptions of our
15 clients' well-being. So long as the pandemic
16 continues to spread and access to nursing facilities
17 is denied, we urgently need policies that mandate
18 nursing facilities to provide access through
19 technology to persons under guardianship so that we
20 can ensure that they receive the care that they need
21 and that we are in the best possible position to make
22 decisions on their behalf.

23 For our senior clients who reside in the
24 community, of whom many are homebound, we have
25 limited in-person visitation to all but the most

1
2 necessary of circumstances to help prevent the spread
3 of COVID-19 to these most fragile residents of our
4 city. In most instances, our clients who reside in
5 the community have either full-time or part-time home
6 health aides.

7 While we have had much better success working
8 with home health aides to access our clients at home
9 via videoconferencing technology, there are still
10 barriers such as, the availability of broadband,
11 affordable mobile phones or laptops for our senior
12 clients who are poor and live on fixed incomes.
13 There is also a lack of training of home health aides
14 on how to use the technology and a lack of technical
15 support.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 BETH WILLIAMS: We need funding for data plans
18 and devices for low-income seniors and we need
19 training for home health care providers on how to use
20 technology like video conferencing to assist us in
21 supporting our seniors. We need quick action to
22 ensure that this vulnerable population has meaningful
23 access to technology that will help us assure that
24 our effectiveness through Guardian will not be
25 curtailed precisely when they need it the most.

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2 I thank you for the invitation to testify at this
3 hearing.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony
5 and thank you to this panel. Chair Chin?

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I just, I have a couple
7 of questions. Beth are your programs connected with
8 local nonprofits or community-based organizations
9 that can do some coordination in terms of how to
10 provide the support that you are talking about, like
11 some of the homebound seniors, they get home
12 delivered meals right. So, do they get home
13 delivered meal or say like a way to work with - if
14 they get a home delivered meal to work with the home
15 delivered meal agency to see if they also have some
16 resources to help with what you are talking about?

17 BETH WILLIAMS: Yeah, we do work with a lot of
18 nonprofit organizations and agencies in the
19 community. I know Sage is at the hearing and we have
20 worked with them. Most of our people who reside in
21 the community have home health aides who help prepare
22 meals and we have grocery delivery services that
23 deliver groceries to them, so that nobody has to go
24 out and shop and people who have more resources of
25 course can afford more take out meals.

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2 So, generally our people are provided for in
3 terms of meals but if we are not able to actually see
4 them, it's much harder to assess how well they are
5 doing and to be able to anticipate care changes that
6 might need to happen. And we have had you know,
7 mixed success with nursing facilities and just
8 getting through to them let alone being able to
9 borrow a nurses telephone so that we can use you
10 know, Zoom or Skype to see one of our senior clients
11 in a facility. And our aides have been more
12 responsive for people who are in the community and we
13 have had more success in video conferencing but it is
14 definitely a major issue in getting access to
15 technology for this portion of the senior community
16 that's really extremely vulnerable and fragile and
17 doesn't have you know, resources, skills or ability
18 to do it for themselves.

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I think we should you
20 know, follow up with you more in terms of what DFTA,
21 you know, if DFTA has a program that can work with
22 you. And it is the same thing with you know,
23 Alexander was talking about you know, with the legal
24 cases. There has got be some, maybe the Department
25 for the Aging should have some program resources that

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2 can help seniors who have to you know, go through
3 this to have the training or the equipment and that's
4 something we can go back to DFTA to ask.

5 BETH WILLIAMS: We would appreciate that. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah. Chair Holden?

8 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Yes, thank you Chair Chin.
9 Just again, great panel and you know what Alexander
10 was saying, there are so many hurdles that this
11 pandemic has created and that is a monumental one
12 just in the courts and then having people especially
13 seniors, maneuver the technology. You know, my heart
14 goes out to you guys who are on the frontlines there.
15 You have your work cut out for you and we appreciate
16 all the work you do.

17 I just want to do a shout out to Kerly Serrano at
18 Sunnyside Community Service Senior Center. All the
19 great work you do servicing my district, parts of my
20 district and I have had experience with you guys and
21 wonderful, wonderful organization. I just want to
22 ask a question. Did DFTA reach out to you for
23 reallocating funds for technology in your center? And
24 then one other question, the second part of the
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2 question, could you help with the rollout of the
3 vaccine? Could Sunnyside, if you were asked, help
4 with the – because you do the Meals on Wheels, you do
5 visit seniors that are shut in. Could you help with
6 that push?

7 KERLY SERRANO: Thank you and thank you. You
8 know, we were in terms of technology, no we were not
9 reached out by DFTA in terms of allocating funds for
10 that. You know, we generally have to do that push
11 for can we do this with our funds. With regard to
12 the actual – our organization did receive a survey to
13 see if we would be eligible to participate in
14 providing vaccine and that was responded by of course
15 our Executive Director Judy Stanwell. So, I think
16 you know that you know, we certainly approached the
17 Commissioner about, that Judy approached the
18 Commissioner about that and I think that discussions
19 are in place for that and I think discussions are in
20 place for that. So there was a survey that was sent
21 out and on top of that I think also Judy reached out
22 to the Commissioner in order to discuss that. She is
23 out of town.

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You have been asking about like one thing that we could do and you know I think something that would be very helpful because you expressed this very eloquently about the hardship in trying to get a vaccine. I have been spending hours and hours and hours trying to get vaccines for my seniors. It is impossible. One of the things that would be very helpful like much like that food that we have access to that Get Food dashboard, if they could develop something like that where we have access to be able to schedule for our seniors because yes, we have to create emails. Every time we go into the DOH website or the New York State website, we have to keep putting the information over and over again. So, if we have access to that and support for that or at least in that way if they don't want to do it at the senior center but we had access to scheduling appointments for the seniors other than going through that general website. It would be so crucial and helpful to us because right now, we are reaching out. We are trying to educate people.

For me, we have a huge Latin population. They did have a forum on Wednesday, it was all in English,

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so anyone that spoke Spanish would not be able to benefit from that information. So, for us it is really like helping those populations get the correct information and not hear it from other people and [INAUDIBLE 2:26:36] from them.

CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: And I think what will come out of this hearing and I don't want to speak for Chair Chin but I know, you know she is on the same page. We are going to petition the Mayor's Office to use senior centers for the vaccine to help out whether like you said, scheduling it because the seniors, many of them can't do it. And even if they could do it, you have to have some stamina to go through all the steps where I almost gave up a few times. And yes, I am a senior but I have a technology background and I was challenged. Certainly with the patience on the site for four hours but Kerly, I want to thank you for all again and we do have to take advantage of our senior centers and use them to really roll out this vaccine and the fact that we haven't seen that yet from the Administration is really disturbing.

But thank you Chair and thank you panel, wonderful panel. Thanks again.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, I wanted to really thank the panel. I know the survey that DFTA was talking about earlier, I mean they just – and they were saying only 100 of the 249 senior centers can qualify. That's impossible right. You can just help them prepare. I know that when we did the hearing with the Health last week, you know, they talk about the vaccine not being stable, whatever, refrigeration. Those things could be worked out.

So, I think we are going to work together to push the city at the Vaccine Command Center to really work on that and I think we are looking at like some of the vulnerable, vulnerable population where it's guardianship, people with housing court issue, we got to figure out a way to make sure that resources are available so that these seniors are protected.

So, I think we will work with you Alex and Beth, please you know, like I know we will read your whole testimony but definitely reach out to our office and see how we can you know help the situation improve.

And I just also wanted to you know thank everyone who came today. Thank Chair Holden for holding this hearing with me. I think it is so important. Thank

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2 you to all of the advocates who have joined today and
3 all the staff and all the Sergeants for helping to
4 make this hearing go smoothly. And Chair Holden,
5 anything else?

6 CHAIRPERSON HOLDEN: Well, I just again want to
7 thank you for holding the hearing and it's good to
8 partner with you. We have to do this more often. We
9 have a lot of work to do going forward, so we expect
10 to do this again. The sooner the better because I
11 think we touched upon so many issues and we have to
12 get busy now to solve this with legislation and
13 hearings and just shining a light on all of the
14 hurdles that have been set up here for our seniors
15 during the pandemic and the fact that they are
16 isolated and I can say, I haven't seen my mom really
17 in a year. And so, I know what we are going through,
18 you know she knows what we are going through and the
19 only thing I can do with her is do face time and
20 that's a poor substitute and she gets frustrated
21 with obviously the technology. She is going to be 97
22 in April and now she has COVID, so everything comes -
23 you know all the families have been affected by this.

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COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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So, we really need to solve this and at least get to a point where we are making it easier for the seniors not tougher. So, thank you all for participating in this hearing and thanks really, big thanks to my Co-Chair and to Committee Counsel. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, thank you to all the staff. So, the hearing is adjourned, thank you.
[GAVEL].

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date February 15, 2021