

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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APRIL 30, 2021
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HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING VIRTUAL ROOM 1

B E F O R E: CHAIR DARMA DIAZ

COUNCIL MEMBERS: DARMA DIAZ
LAURIE CUMBO
JAMES F. GENNARO
BEN KALLOS
BRAD S. LANDER
HELEN ROSENTHAL
VANESSA GIBSON
ERIC DINOWITZ

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

PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS
COMMISSIONER CECILE NOEL
ELIZABETH DANK

JENNIFER FRIEDMAN
LANA KHAMASH
HELLEN HUNG
ELLE KAMIHIRA
MICHELLE TURNER
AMY BARASCH
CHARLOTTE KAYSEN
HAYAT BERAT
HAILEY NORLASCO
MOLLY BURKE

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3 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Cloud recording started.

4 SGT. PEREZ: Backup is rolling.

5 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Sergeant Martinez, can
6 you give us the opening, please?

7 SGT. MARTINEZ: Good morning, and welcome
8 to today's remote New York City Council hearing of
9 the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. At this
10 time would all panelists please turn on their video.
11 To minimize disruption, please silence your
12 electronic devices, and if you wish to submit
13 testimony, you may do so via email at the following
14 address: testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again,
15 that's testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you for your
16 cooperation. We are ready to begin.

17 CHAIR DIAZ: Good morning. My name is
18 Darma Diaz. I welcome you all, participants and my
19 colleagues as we begin our conversation on domestic
20 violence and gender base including also COVID-19, and
21 again, thank you all. I, having been a domestic
22 violence survivor, not once, but twice, this hearing
23 is definitely one that has brought challenges to me,
24 but I will do my best to stay in my good space which
25 as a representative and as a Councilwomen, and again,

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just thank you for this opportunity, and I'm glad that I'm here before you today as a survivor and as a warrior. I apologize. It's been a year since the Coronavirus outbreak forced the mayor and the governor to institute stay in place orders. Rather the COVID-19 pandemic has had a global impact which we, in New York City felt more than ever, certain populations were left and continue to be especially vulnerable to many New Yorkers, victims and survivors who were forced to stay home with an abusive partner or family member. This put them at risk, isolated them from their support systems and created additional barriers to accessing survivor services. The Committee held a hearing on this topic a year ago. At the hearing, which was Chinn and my predecessor, the Committee heard about how many government offices that might have provided a safe service and space were closed. As a threat of being exposed to infection itself was both a fear for victim and recognized abusers. How there was an initial drop in calls and DV reports within the first months of the pandemic. DV agencies eventually reported a drop in increase in calls to legal, clinical hotlines. Some service providers have

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reported double, even triple rates than prior years. They're used for various track services and eventually, the State created a texting hotline for DV victims, and the city launched Text 9-1-1, allowing the victims and survivor with more discretion for seeking assistance. At today's hearing, we'll also hear Intro 2131 sponsored by Council Member Hellen Rosenthal, a local law establishing a working group, feasibility study and pilot program using community locations, provide DV survivors access to internet, an activity that can be a lifeline for victims and survivors of DV. Some predators use technology to abuse talk and stalk victims and survivors on physical devices like phones, computers, and GPS trackers, virtual or electronic accounts including email accounts, social profiles, online customer accounts, and institutional, education, and employment accounts, and software or platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Often when a survivor leaves a DV situation, they have to leave all the things behind. At least half of employed DV survivors lose their employment as a result of abuse which contributes to the loss of domestic violence as the leading cause of

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homelessness in the U.S. Survivors often face significant barriers to securing safe and affordable housing and gainful employment. Internet access allows survivors to access programs offering interviews and coaching skills, workshop and housing assistance, and in the time of establishing shelter in place, it is also necessary for Legal Aid and retro court appearances. Before I complete my remarks, I'd like to acknowledge that April is sexual awareness month and two days ago was denim day when we wear denim and protest in solidarity as a survivor in a high-profile rape blamed herself because of the type of jeans she was wearing to come back victim blaming and educate others of sexual violence. Rape and sexual assault like domestic gender-based impact people of genders of all ages and all races, culture and economic backgrounds. In addition, the immediate physical and emotional cause survivors to frequently suffer from severe and long-lasting consequences which can include PTSD, substance abuse, major depression, homelessness, eating disorders, low self esteem and suicide, but the fact of the matter is that victims, survivors are just victims or survivors, not responsible for the violence committed

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against them, but more to the matter that they are survivors. Their stories are real and intense. Today, we will hear from the Mayor's Office to End Domestic Based Violence or ENDGBV and local providers about their efforts to combat domestic and gender-based violence through an unprecedented time in New York City. I'm looking forward to learning specifically about DV shelters. I really, extremely want to hear about DV shelters cause I definitely know a dis-service at this time is being provided. So, please, I ask you to bear with me as I am a survivor, and this conversation today just put me in a good and a bad place. We will also hear from other survivors, brave individuals who have felt that. I'd like to warn you, abusers wage the war on victims, survivors continue to fight the mental war as they regain their confidence, spirit, and reality. We are survivor because we survived what was meant to destroy us. We remain standing after the battle despite hardships and setbacks and realize that it was quite unjust for ourselves, our lives, and our families. So, please support them, support me. Treat them with dignity, compassion, respect. Recognize the strength and courage and the challenges

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2 that we continue to endure and recognize the
3 contributions we're sharing them mind, extremely
4 personal lived experiences in an effort to foster
5 healing and increase public understanding of domestic
6 violence and gender violence in New York City. As a
7 fellow warrior, I know how hard it is to talk about
8 our trauma. It can break and bring us back to the
9 surface. I stand with you and appreciate you. Thank
10 you. I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues. I see
11 Rosenthal, I see Gennaro, Lander, and if I missed
12 anyone, I'll come back and acknowledge you. I'd like
13 to turn it over to Chair Rosenthal.

14 CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Thank you. Let's see,
15 thank you, Council Member Diaz.

16 CHAIR DIAZ: You're welcome.

17 CHAIR ROSENTHAL: You know my heart is
18 with you.

19 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you, I know.

20 CM ROSENTHAL: And I'm so inspired by you
21 and your words and your efforts and your being here
22 today. It's incredibly inspirational to all of us,
23 both survivors and those of us who advocate. So, as
24 an ally, I just want to extend my gratitude to you
25 for being here today and for your leadership. My

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2 name is Hellen Rosenthal. My pronouns are she and
3 her. Again, I want to begin by thanking Chair Diaz
4 for holding this hearing and for including my
5 Legislation. Intro 2131 came out of conversations
6 with domestic violence service providers during the
7 beginning of the COVID pandemic. We were hearing
8 heartbreaking stories about the difficulty of
9 reaching survivors during lockdown, and we were
10 hearing about the lack of technology access, often
11 referred to as the digital divide which continues to
12 impact too many survivors. There are so many
13 approaches that can be taken to address the digital
14 divide, and so many groups of people that could
15 benefit from secure and reliable tech access. DV
16 survivors would benefit, of course, but so would
17 undocumented New Yorkers and homeless New Yorkers. A
18 person also could often be all three. We realize
19 quickly that there is not yet one straight forward
20 solution. Intro 2131 takes the approach of creating a
21 qualified working group, those with lived experiences
22 to conduct a study and design a pilot project. The
23 pilot will enable us to test possible solutions to
24 the digital divide for DV survivors and other
25 vulnerable populations. I'm eager to see this Bill

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2 passed into law and to see the proposals generated by
3 it, and I'm very eager to hear the testimony from our
4 witnesses today. Thank you all for joining us, and
5 for your public testimony. I also want to thank my
6 Legislative Director, Madhuri Shukla and my team for
7 their support as well as the team of the Committee on
8 Women and Gender Equity. Thank you very much.

9 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you. Your leadership
10 on this issue is amazing, is divine, and I can star
11 your tack, your persistence, and thank you for
12 continuing to assist with the Committee. You've
13 definitely been a big sister to me, and I want to
14 thank you for it over and over again. Your work has
15 been amazing. At this time, I want to turn it over
16 to our Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, who will
17 have some remarks.

18 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: Can
19 everyone hear me? Thank you, Chair Diaz. I want to
20 associate myself with Council Member Rosenthal's
21 words in describing your presence here today, and
22 your ability to share your story and the inspiration
23 it's providing to so many people I know who have
24 experienced what you've experienced. I have no idea
25 what it's like, but I want to do all I can to support

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2 those who are suffering. I know so many of us
3 probably wanted to yell, "no need to apologize" when
4 you apologized during your opening. Just thank you
5 so much for the strength and the inspiration ...
6 (crosstalk).

7 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you.

8 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: You
9 raise your leadership on this issue.

10 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you for your advocacy.
11 You've been a voice. Thank you for what you do.

12 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAM: Thank
13 you. As mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams, and
14 I'm the Public Advocate for New York City. Again, I
15 want to thank Chair Diaz and Members of the Committee
16 on Women and Gender Equity for holding this oversight
17 hearing today and for Council Member Rosenthal and
18 her leadership and her Bill. I would also like to
19 thank Commissioner Noel for the work the Mayor's
20 Office to End Domestic and Gender-based Violence has
21 done to help survivors across the city. Domestic
22 abuse and gender-based violence remains a major
23 problem in our city. While Federal laws have been
24 implemented over the past few decades to address the
25 problem, and advocates have concerted efforts to shed

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light on this issue, cases of abuse or violence are still happening in rates that are far too high. In New York City, law enforcement respond to average 680 domestic violence calls every day. In 2019, the overall crime when down by 8.6%, but rape crimes increased by 19%, and although rape crimes decreased by 19.4% in 2020, the change in data does not necessary mean that less of these crimes were taking place, provided that victims were reporting less than they were before the pandemic. These statistics are horrifying and serve as stark reminder of how much more work needs to be done to prevent these crimes from taking place. The COVID-19 has worsened the rates of gender-based violence in our city, and at a Council hearing held by the same Committee last May, Commissioner Noel stated that there has been a decrease in survivor engagement with law enforcement and service providers since mid-March of 2020. The NYPD's Domestic Violence Unit was also in attendance last year and explained that arrests were down 43% and complaints decreased by 36%. Against, this decrease does not necessarily mean that there were less incidences of abuse taking place, but rather victims were not as likely to call a hotline for help

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2 or report an incident as much as they were before.
3 At that time, domestic violence officers were not
4 physically conducting home visits because of the
5 risks posed by the Coronavirus. Given that victims
6 were more likely to be trapped indoors with their
7 abusers during the peak of the pandemic because they
8 could no longer leave their home as frequently as
9 before, and domestic violence officers were not
10 making home visits. Considering that we are in a
11 better state of the pandemic than we were a year, it
12 is essential for the department to tell us what
13 exactly DVOs resumed and when will exactly DVOs
14 resume in-person home visits and how many in-person
15 home visits have been conducted so far. NYPD crime
16 data shows as of March of this year, rape crimes
17 increased by a whopping 30.4% compared to March of
18 2020. This statistic is extremely concerning, and it
19 shows that our city needs to be devoting more efforts
20 to addressing gender-based violence and sex crimes
21 especially during a public health crisis when victims
22 are in dire need to support and assistance. Ensuring
23 access to resources is an important part of the
24 solution to this problem which is why I full support
25 Council Member Rosenthal's Intro 2131. This Bill

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2 would establish a pilot program to use community
3 locations to provide domestic violence survivors with
4 access to the internet. This Legislation would
5 create a working group which would conduct a
6 feasibility study and produce a report. While this
7 initiative is critical to providing resources, I'm
8 curious as to how to survivors are going to know
9 where the community locations that provide internet
10 access are. We want to make sure that they know
11 which location to go to without putting their safety
12 at risk. Perhaps what is most notable about this
13 bill is that six of the seven working group members
14 will be individuals who represent community-based
15 domestic violence organizations. If we want to
16 tackle this problem, we need to enlist the help of
17 our community partners. They have the knowledge and
18 expertise to make certain that initiative appointed
19 by the government will not only be effective but save
20 lives and prevent more people from falling victim to
21 gender-based violence. I want to stress that a
22 solution to this problem is not solely dependent on
23 laws and policies or the NYPD. It is also dependent
24 on all of us. We have to collective change our
25 culture, our mindsets, and our attitudes that

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directly and indirectly contribute to gender-based violence. This change in culture means having honest conversation about how many of us, as men, can hold ourselves accountable when exhibiting traces of toxic masculinity. It means we are teaching our young people about the importance of consent when it comes to sex. It means making survivors feel protected, her and seeing when they come forward to report the violence that was inflicted upon them. I'm looking forward to hearing the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-based Violence and other stakeholders are working towards this change. Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

SGT. PEREZ: Chair person, you're on mute.

CHAIR DIAZ: We'll take care of that. Still working on that (inaudible). Again, I was just thanking the Public Advocate for the support, and as he acknowledged firsthand was that he didn't have an experience that he knew of, yet, like the passion as he spoke, and the eloquence shared with me that he gets it. You know, sometimes we don't have to walk the walk to talk the talk. So, thank you for your kind words and for being part of our hearing today.

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I'd like to turn it over to the moderator, Chloe Rivera at this time.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you, Chair Diaz. My name is Chloe Rivera and I serve as Senior Policy Analyst for the Committee on Women and Gender Equity at the New York City Council. I will be moderating today's hearing on calling on panelist to testify. Before we begin, please remember that everyone will be on mute until I call on you to testify. After you are called on, you will be unmuted by a member of our staff. Note that there will be a few second delay before you're unmuted, and we can hear you. For public testimony, I will call up individuals in panels. Please listen for your name. I will periodically announce the next few panelists. Once I call your name, a member of our staff will unmute you. The Sergeant at Arms will set a clock and give you the go ahead to begin your testimony. All public testimony will be limited to three minutes, two minutes, I apologize. After I all your name, please wait for the Sergeant at Arms to announce that you may begin before starting your testimony. For today's hearing, the first panel will include Representative from the Mayor's Office to End

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Domestic and Gender-based Violence, or ENDGBV,

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followed by Council Member questions and then public

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testimony. For ENDGBV, we will Commissioner Cecile

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Noel, and available for questions and answers, we

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will have Elizabeth Dank, Deputy Commissioner and

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General Counsel to ENDGBV. I will now administer the

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oath to the Administration. When you hear your name,

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please respond once a member of our staff unmutes

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you. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole

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truth, and nothing but the truth before this

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Committee and respond honestly to Council Member

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questions? Commissioner Noel?

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COMMISSIONER NOEL: I do.

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you, and

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Deputy Commissioner Dank? Deputy Commissioner Dank?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DANK: I'm sorry, I

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do.

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you.

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Commissioner Noel, you may begin presenting your

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testimony when ready.

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COMMISSIONER NOEL: Good morning, Chair

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Diaz and Members of the Committee on Women and Gender

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Equity. I'd just like to take a moment to say, Chair

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Diaz, I want to thank you for sharing your story.

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2 I've been in this field for over 30 years, and I know
3 the power of survivor stories, to heal, to help
4 survivors move forward, so I thank you for sharing
5 that power that you now have to give to others to
6 help them to move on. So, thank you very, very much,
7 and thank you for your role here this morning. I am
8 Cecile Noel, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office to
9 End Domestic and Gender-based Violence. I'm joined
10 by Deputy Commission and General Counsel, Elizabeth
11 Dank. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with
12 you about the impact of COVID-19 on domestic and
13 gender-based violence in New York City. ENDGBV
14 develops policies and programs, provides training and
15 prevention education, conducts research and
16 evaluations, performs community outreach, and
17 operates the New York City Family Justice Centers.
18 We collaborate with city agencies and community
19 stakeholders to ensure access to inclusive services
20 for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence
21 including intimate partner violence and family
22 violence, sexual violence, stalking, human
23 trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence.
24 ENDGBV is an office under the mayor's office and
25 receives administrative and operational support from

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2 several city agencies including support from human
3 resources, information, technology, facilities, and
4 contracts. COVID-19 put into shock focus the
5 vulnerabilities that many people in our city face
6 every day especially domestic and gender-based
7 violence survivors and it continues to highlight the
8 barriers and challenges that we know keep people from
9 seeking help and finding safety. Domestic and
10 gender-based violence is historically under reported,
11 and this has been heightened by the pandemic. Our
12 top priority has been to ensure continuity of
13 services, access to resources and unwavering support
14 to survivors. ENDGBV has taken a variety of steps to
15 provide ongoing and new services to survivors,
16 publicly share information about resources,
17 collaborate closely with non-profit providers,
18 community stakeholders and city agencies and provide
19 prevention education to youth. The New York City
20 Family Justice Centers are operated by ENDGBV,
21 temporarily closed their walk-in locations on March
22 18, 2020 in response to COVID-19. The FJCs quickly
23 pivoted to a remote service model and continued to
24 provide services through the FJC non-profit service
25 providers to domestic and gender-based violence

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survivors via telephone and video appointment. Since March 18th, 2020, services have been provided to 29,587 clients including over 13,785 new clients through the FJC. Of the total client surging this period, 28% used primary language that was not English, and 7% were age 60 and older and 3% were under the age of 18. While it is more challenging to provide services remotely to survivors who are isolated in their home with their abusive partners, the FJCs and non-profit service providers continue to use creative engagement approaches that are developed with survivors and grounded in safety and minimizing risks. We have been encouraged to see the new clients that new clients can identify available resources and reach out safely for assistance. In the summer of 2020, ENDGBV began working with the FJC partners to develop a comprehensive plan for safe reopening of the city's FJCs. Three work groups met regularly for two months to develop a collaborative reopening plan that resulted in the decision to move forward with a phased in reopening of the city's FJCs. In September 2020, the FJC began to offer limited in-person services at the Manhattan FJC by appointment only for clients citywide that could not

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engage in remote services safely or effectively while also continuing to offer services remotely. Services can be accessed in person at the Manhattan Family Justice Center. Our focus primarily on crisis services and include immediate safety planning, connecting a client to case management, legal, or counseling sessions, access to a computer phone, help filing for orders of protection, or appearing in family court remotely and meeting with the NYPD Domestic Violence police officer to file a report and picking up practical assistance items. ENDGBV continued to conduct FJC client satisfaction during the pandemic, while the remote services have been in place and those surveys revealed that 94% of the respondents would recommend the FJCs to others. Our services remotely have been effective. ENDGBV is working closely with partners to develop reopening plans for the other FJCs based on the success of the Manhattan FJCs reopening model and remote services. For the foreseeable future, the centers are planning to offer a hybrid model with a combination of limited in-person appointments and continued remote services. ENDGBV has also been implementing in an innovative new way to support survivors during the pandemic. In

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2 May 2020, ENDGBV partnered with the mayor's fund to
3 advance the City of New York to launch the first ever
4 public/private microgrant initiative to support
5 domestic and gender-based violence survivors
6 experiencing safety, economic, and housing challenges
7 exacerbated by COVID-19. The program was
8 administered by sanctuary for families which
9 leveraged ENDGBV's network of non-profit service
10 providers and distributed \$470,000 in microgrants to
11 support more than 375 survivors. This initiative was
12 part of the Mayor's Fund COVID-19 Emergency Relief
13 Effort, and the microgrants helped to enhance
14 survivor safety and stability during COVID. Almost
15 all of the program's clients were female, 90% were
16 black, indigenous, and people of color, 95% made less
17 than \$40,000 annually and 83% had more than two
18 people in their household, 65% were immigrants.
19 Increasing housing stability was a critical impact of
20 the program with 35% of the grants over 163,000
21 supporting rent, short term housing and other housing
22 needs, and significantly 48% of the clients reported
23 feeling safer after participating in the program, 44%
24 reported that their children felt safer, and 46%
25 reported that their mental health improved. To

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ensure survivors and community stakeholders were aware of the continuity of services during the pandemic, ENDGBV has been working to creatively connect survivors to online resources, particularly the NYC Hope website which provides educational material, comprehensive information on services available to survivors. The NYC Hope resource directory includes information about non-profit service providers based in communities that work with survivors in all five boroughs. In response to COVID-19, the NYC Hope resource directory was updated to include the availability of remote services at community-based organizations. Since March 18th, 2020, the NYC Hope website has had 120,659 visits, an average of 327 per day, and 35,604 new visitors, an average of 96 a day. This is a significant increase in traffic to the website in 2020. Prior to March 18th, NYC Hope average about 90 visits per day and 42 new visitors a day. Survivors are connected to the NYC Hope website, the FJCs, the community-based organizations through several efforts including Notify, NYC texts, and partnership with the NYC Office of Emergency Management, a public service announcement released by Charlene McCray, an online

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campaign which included paid advertising and regular social media posts and a social media tool kit which was shared widely with all city agencies and Council Members to amplify messaging. In addition, ENDGBV worked closely with our partners over the last year to coordinate our efforts, conduct outreach, collaborate on reaching and serving survivors. From April through September 2020, ENDGBV held regular calls with 120 plus non-profit service providers and city staff to provide open lines of communication, identify challenges, troubleshoot issues, and share best practices, achievements, and provide technical assistance. ENDGBV also led a COVID-19 response workgroup that met regularly from May to July 2020 to identify challenges in serving survivors, coordinate public aware efforts, and highlight best practices. The workgroup engaged a diverse group of providers representing multidisciplinary services and including providers serving culturally specific populations as well as representation from both large and small community-based organizations. While the continuity of direct services was a critical response to the pandemic, ENDGBV was also able to implement creative ways to continue prevention efforts with young

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people, particularly while they were in remote schooling at the end of the 2019 and 2020 school year, while many students remained remote during the current school year. Through ENDGBV's early relationship abuse prevention program, or as we call it early RAP, the city's contracted providers day one rising grounds, steps to end family violence and the Urban Resource Institute were able to pivot to conducting online workshops and trainings for young people providing 1145 workshops to 8218 youth across 43 DOE middle schools and 25 different Council Districts. 56% of the DOE middle schools reached are in neighborhoods most impacted by COVID. In addition, through ENDGBV's Healthy Relationship Training Academy, our community educators went viral creating original videos and leading virtual trainings and workshops to stay engaged with young people during an incredibly chaotic and disruptive time for schools and other youth serving organizations. Between March 2020 through April 18th, 2021, the Academy conducted 88 workshops. We have also been focused on expanding our prevention efforts and we are excited to launch a new initiative this year focused on elementary-aged youth through a

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partnership with the mayor's fund and supported by the Jerome H. Hazen Fund to address domestic violence. The ABCs of Healthy Relationships, a project that includes tool kits and guides for adults working with or caring for children in grades K through 5 to help them build foundational skills to develop healthy relationships, first with their friends and later in their intimate partners. The ABCs materials will be available soon through ENDGBV's website and will be shared with DOE educators as well as with families through DOE's parent, university portal and other mechanisms. Now that we are beginning to move past the immediate impact of COVID, we will begin to explore the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on survivors, and we will be continuing to process and analysis. We know that switching to remote services has inspired ENDGBV and other providers to think creatively and innovatively about how reach survivors and deliver services in this new way. We already know that there are some great lessons learned from this experience that will enhance the ways in which we provide services. As we begin to prepare for reopening, integration of new methods of service deliver will be

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an essential piece of that discussion, and it will be critical for us to identify ways to enhance survivor access to mobile devices and the internet. This year, ENDGBV and partnership with the mayor's fund has developed two public/private partnerships to support survivors and minimize the digital divide many have experienced. Through a new initiative with T-Mobile, ENDGBV will distributing 1000 mobile devices to survivors seeking services through the FJCs and through our non-profit service providers. In addition to receiving a free mobile device, survivors will have the option to access discounted mobile plans through T-Mobile and to ensure that survivors are using technology safely through an initiative through Norton Life Lock, ENDGBV will be distributing 2000 free anti-spyware licenses to survivors to secure their devices and reduce spy and malware threats. The city is here for survivors during this crisis and beyond, and we will continue to work to identify best practices and innovate approaches to enhance services, training, and outreach. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Council, our sister agencies, and most importantly, our community partners who have

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2 gone to extraordinary lengths to support survivors
3 during the pandemic. Thank you for the opportunity
4 to appear here today. I welcome the questions that
5 you may have.

6 CHAIR DIAZ: I want to thank you for
7 creativity. It sounds as if you went outside the box
8 and definitely, in times of struggle and need as we
9 have been dealing with COVID and the impacts of it,
10 we needed that. The city needed for individual, for
11 organizations to test new endeavors and see what
12 works. I'm sure you've had some goods and some
13 negatives and I'm glad that you're sharing it all
14 with us. So, I thank you, and the negatives and the
15 shortfalls, I'd like to know what have been the
16 biggest challenges the survivors have been facing and
17 sharing with you and what are you doing to try to
18 meet their needs?

19 COMMISSIONER NOEL: Well, COVID impact
20 for us puts into sharp focus the vulnerabilities that
21 people in our city face every day, especially
22 domestic and gender-based violence survivors and it
23 continues to highlight the barriers and challenges
24 that we know keep people from seeking help in finding
25 safety. We know that switching to remote operations

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2 has inspired ENDGBV and our providers to think more
3 creatively and innovatively and we're very happy with
4 that, and with that, we are learning lessons about
5 how to do this work in new and different spaces. For
6 example, we need robust work plans to help think
7 about how people on the frontlines can switch and
8 really be able to pivot quickly to be able to
9 providing services. Also, we need access to
10 emergency flexible funding to meet the needs of
11 survivors to be able to provide diapers and
12 medication and things like that, and survivors need
13 access to remote services and we're continuing to
14 look at how to that effectively.

15 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you for answering
16 three of my questions. You're making it kind of
17 tough. You're on the mark. Thank you. I have a
18 question about daily operations. Since last year's
19 oversight hearing on domestic violence and COVID-19,
20 in what ways have COVID-19 continued to impact the
21 ENDGBV and the city support for victims and survivors
22 with regards to changes in ENDGBV's day-to-day
23 functions apart from telecommunication, is there a
24 plan sometime for FJC staff to return to work in
25 person?

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COMMISSIONER NOEL: The FJC is beginning with COVID. The FJCs were able to quickly pivot and carry all our services over remotely. We have continued to do our services, do it effectively, do it efficiently for survivors. There has been no interruption in our service. As I said, we have moved forward with opening the Manhattan Family Justice Center for appointment only right now and we are working together with our partners in this space to think about how we scale up and open the other FJCs using the Manhattan Family Justice Center as that model.

CHAIR DIAZ: Do you have any programming service you're providing that have been eliminated?

COMMISSIONER NOEL: No.

CHAIR DIAZ: That you no longer have the need for?

COMMISSIONER NOEL: No, all of our services have continued. We have pivoted all of our programming to this virtual environment, and we've been able to do that very successfully with the partnership of our community-based organizations.

CHAIR DIAZ: I'm going to now turn it over... (crosstalk).

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COMMISSIONER NOEL: I'm going to ask one thing of the moderator ... (crosstalk). I'm sorry, I want to ask one thing of the moderator. As I take question, could you also unmute Liz Dang?

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Of course. Um, Chair Diaz, I'm going to go over some protocol be we proceed.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Please do, thank you.

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: For the record, we've been joined by Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and Council Members Gibson and Kallos. Now, before we return for additional questions from Chair Diaz, I'd like to remind Council Members to use the raise hand function in Zoom to indicate that they have a question for this panel, and now, back to you, Chair Diaz.

CHAIR DIAZ: I'm going to turn it over to Public Advocate for questions and during my second round, I will continue with my questions. I'm going this cause I know that several hearings that are happening today and I want to extend the courtesy to my colleagues so they can also continue to advocate first as meeting continue. I'd like for the Public Advocate to proceed with first round questions.

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: The Public

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Advocate has left the hearing at this time.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Okay, is there any other

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member that has raised their hand and would like to

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ask a question at this time?

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: I don't see any

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hands raised at this time.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Okay.

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: But we will keep

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tracking. I apologize. I see Council Member

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Rosenthal has raised her hand.

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CM ROSENTHAL: Wonderful.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Council Member Rosenthal,

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please, thank you.

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CM ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much, just

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getting the approval to ask questions. One second,

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I'm a little bit double, assuming and doing two

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things at once, never a good idea. Commissioner

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Noel, thank you for everything. Your leadership has

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been extraordinary. Your leadership through this has

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been extraordinary. I have so much respect for you

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and your team and appreciation. I don't know how you

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have been getting through all this, but you've

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managed to get up in the morning every day and come

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2 to work and God bless you all for doing that. It's
3 so hard, and listening to your testimony, it sounds
4 like you've been doing some really phenomenal things,
5 some of which I knew about. I know the microgrants
6 were extraordinary. Sounds like delivering the
7 mobile devices and the spyware is just brilliant. I
8 guess then my concern, I have a couple of concerns
9 and then I would love your feedback on this bill in
10 particular. Let's see, I think the funding for the
11 agency has basically remained flat. Last year, we
12 lost some money on the PS side, but this year, it's
13 back. Is that accurate?

14 COMMISSIONER NOEL: Liz?

15 ELIZABETH DANK: So, we can circle back
16 with you Commissioner Rosenthal to confirm what the
17 budget reflects in this fiscal year. We don't have
18 that available right now.

19 CM ROSENTHAL: Okay, no problem. Great,
20 we couldn't quite confirm it either, so I really
21 appreciate that. I'm wonder is 1000 devices, what do
22 you think the demand is for devices? I mean, again,
23 with a focus on you doing great work and I really, I
24 mean, it's great you're getting devices out, but what
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2 do you think the demand is? Do you think 1000 is
3 meeting demand?

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COMMISSIONER NOEL: Well, we know that
5 the need for devices during COVID was very high, and
6 we believe that this is a wonderful place to begin as
7 a public/private partnership, and with this success
8 of the T-Mobile program, we'll we able to leverage
9 that for other funders or maybe even T-Mobile again.
10 I think it's a great place for us to start, Council
11 Member Rosenthal, and I believe that we will learn a
12 great deal as we roll this out about what the need is
13 how can we really quantify that in a big way, and
14 what are the nuances of that need? Does, you know,
15 how does that look across the spectrum. Those are
16 things that we will be finding out as we do this.

17

CM ROSENTHAL: Yeah, I really hope that,
18 I really, all sounds spot on, and I hope that, you
19 know budget prioritizes what it is you're suggesting
20 and the programs that you've done, again microgrants,
21 I think were just, sounds like were a great success,
22 the devices, a great success. How much of that money
23 has come from private foundations compared to tax
24 payer dollars?

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COMMISSIONER NOEL: The T-Mobile ...

(crosstalk).

CM ROSENTHAL: Yes.

COMMISSIONER NOEL: Which is the one that we're discussing now is a public/private partnership, so it is through the mayor's fund and those are private dollars supporting this, and we are really excited that we can generate interest from private funders about this very critical issue.

CM ROSENTHAL: Yeah, that makes sense. I mean, it's one of those that, you know, can grab the attention of a private donor, I totally understand that. I would also argue that it's pretty basic service that government should also be paying attention to. Was that also the case with microgrants? It was through the public ...

(crosstalk).

COMMISSIONER NOEL: That is correct, correct.

CM ROSENTHAL: Okay.

COMMISSIONER NOEL: That was again through the mayor's fund, public/private partnership that allowed us to do that program.

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CM ROSENTHAL: Right, you know, and just remembering, you gave a shout out to the non-profits doing the amazing work on the ground and I wish I had remembered to say that, so I'm just really glad you have them a short out. It's so true that their work has been extraordinary during this time, and I have the privilege of working with some of them, so I really admire that, and I'm sorry, I'm double Zooming, so maybe I blanked for a second. Do you have any thoughts about this particular idea of putting together a group to, you know, like you always do of people with lived experiences to think harder about the digital divide, you know, and not only the digital divide in the sense of, well, I guess it very much is the digital divide, so giving ... (crosstalk).

SGT. BRADLEY: Time has expired.

CM ROSENTHAL: Access to locations, Chair may I continue for just another minute?

CHAIR DIAZ: Absolutely, take two.

CM ROSENTHAL: Okay, thank you. Yeah, so for those who, you know otherwise can't, I think the idea in the hearing that we had was, or one of the meetings, one of the non-profits suggested, you know,

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2 wouldn't it be great if they could go a library and
3 there were, you know, ways to make it confidential
4 and easy for them, you know, just sort of brain
5 storming ideas, and given that, you know, we're not
6 going to be able to give devices to all who need it
7 or microgrants, you know, right, so, yeah, I was
8 wondering what you thought about the idea of a
9 working group and then just a pilot just to see what
10 might, might work?

11 COMMISSIONER NOEL: Well, you know, as I
12 said before, the digital divide for survivors and
13 their need to access services is quite real, and we
14 are encouraged by everything that we've been doing
15 and what we've been seeing out there in the community
16 and we're committed, and we've been so committed that
17 we've been able to partner with T-Mobile to do this,
18 and so, we're really are moving forward recognizing
19 that it's a real need and so, we're committed to
20 exploring all the ways that we can support survivors,
21 and really reducing the barriers and we welcome the
22 opportunity to discuss this Legislation more with the
23 Council.

24 CM ROSENTHAL: Okay, well, I hope you
25 stay on for the community feedback. We have about a

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2 dozen witnesses who are going to talk about, you
3 know, in support of the Legislation, you know, I
4 don't think anyone is going to deny, you know, no one
5 is talking about the hardship or, that's not a
6 question. You know, I think at the end of the day,
7 the question is resources, and with this idea, the
8 concept was to have it be as minimal burden on your
9 office as possible because I know we are all under
10 resourced, and minimal work for the non-profits who
11 are also, you know, busting at the seams and under
12 resourced. So, just trying to find a space to come
13 up with some ideas, think through a strategy for
14 implementation, implementing just a pilot, much in
15 the way that the microgrants and the tablets are a
16 pilot, right, you know, the T-Mobile, we're touching
17 some people, but as we, and I've seen you and your
18 office do this, document the success of these
19 programs, as you said, it will help lead to more
20 funding rather it be private or public, you know, I'm
21 always a fan of public, but private is good too. So,
22 I really hope that you could support this
23 Legislation. If we hear this afternoon from the
24 advocates that there needs to be tweaks, if you have
25 ideas for tweaks, I really am very interested in it,

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2 but you know, we've been through a pandemic, which
3 obviously no one know, we're all flying blind about
4 it, which limited people's access to technology even
5 more and so, I'm not, you know, I don't know, just
6 this past (inaudible) get us ready for the next type
7 of crazy-ass pandemic, where is it that this pandemic
8 has exposed the digital divide and how very hard it
9 is for many to get access to technology, you know,
10 libraries and community centers are going to be
11 opening up, and so, the answer might not be everyone
12 gets their own. The answer might be increased access
13 at libraries for when people, you know, 98% of our
14 lives have been able to go a library, so anyway, you
15 see what I'm getting at and really would appreciate
16 your support for this and the opportunity to work
17 with you on it.

18 COMMISSIONER NOEL: As I said, we welcome
19 the opportunity to discuss further with you, okay.

20 CM ROSENTHAL: Great, thank you very
21 much. Thank you, Chair.

22 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you. Chloe?

23 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Yes, thank you,
24 Council Member Rosenthal. Just a note for the
25 record, we have also been joined by the Majority

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2 Leader Cumbo and Council Member Dinowitz. At this
3 time, I'd like to remind Council Members if you have
4 a question for the Administration that you may use
5 the raise hand function in Zoom at this time.

6 CHAIR DIAZ: I apologize. I'm on another
7 Committee and they're texting me. Like I said
8 earlier, today is definitely a day that many of
9 colleagues will be jumping in and out in
10 conversation. So, to those of you that are
11 testifying, please do not feel that we're not being
12 respectful of your topic and what you need to share
13 with us, it's just that we're multi-tasking today.
14 Thank you, but I will resume my questions unless
15 there is a colleague who wants to make a statement or
16 have a question. No raised hands?

17 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: I see no other
18 raised hands at this time.

19 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you. My understanding
20 is that some survivors have mentioned that they're in
21 need of assistance in reference to the hotlines,
22 call-in, individuals seeking counseling at the moment
23 to vent for moments of stress. Are you promoting or
24 offering any city-led programs or services related to
25 mental health trauma or stress?

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COMMISSIONER NOEL: As I said earlier, we pivoted to remote services for all of our services which also includes mental health services. We have on staff a psychotherapist and a psychiatrist to work, specifically trained to work with survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, specifically able to understand the co-occurrence, the correlation, the connection between these issues and tailor their interventions to meet that, and of course, the city has a wealth of services through Thrive and NYC Well that survivors can also be connected to, but we do offer those services specially through the Family Justice Center as well.

CHAIR DIAZ: And how about for your staff?

COMMISSIONER NOEL: For our staff, again, and this is really a great point because staff also faced so much stress during this pandemic, and we have engaged in wellness activities and in partnership with our providers. We have something called Wellness Wednesday, which is a wonderful thing that we do for all of our staff that really is about yoga and mindfulness and wellness that is done in partnership with one of our providers which is Exhale

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2 to Inhale, and they do yoga and mindfulness and they
3 work with us to put together this whole program as
4 well as the wealth of resources that's available via
5 EAP and again through Thrive and through NYC Well and
6 that whole network of services are also available to
7 our employees, but their wellness is very important
8 to us and we've been centering that in everything
9 that we've been doing through the pandemic.

10 CHAIR DIAZ: And you mentioned earlier
11 having to add on additional services. Would you be
12 able to give me a dollar amount, a closer dollar
13 amount of financial assistance that you have been
14 given to be able to tweak the processes to be able to
15 provide the services that you have provided?

16 COMMISSIONER NOEL: Liz?

17 ELIZABETH DANK: So, in terms, if you can
18 just clarify. Do you mean additional funding that
19 we've identified cause all of our programs that we're
20 operating (crosstalk) pre-pandemic continue to
21 operate during the pandemic and all of our programs
22 were able to shift to remote operations with very
23 little budgetary impact.

24 CHAIR DIAZ: Impressive. Impressive.
25 Has any of your staff complained about, if there was

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2 any conversation on staff having issues with their
3 own technology or working from home? I would suspect
4 that similarly, as the survivors or those, you know,
5 needing advocacy had struggles. I'm curious to know
6 if your staff is also supported by given a hotspot,
7 what were you able to do for your staff? Having an
8 iPad and working remotely, and understanding is that
9 some agencies and providers to this day, have had
10 hardship where staff is using their personal items to
11 be able to provide services.

12 COMMISSIONER NOEL: I think that we, like
13 all agencies across the city had to pivot very early
14 with our staff as well and had to figure many things
15 out, but what we've been able to do with our staff is
16 provide them with the devices that they need to be
17 able to connect and continue to do the services.

18 CHAIR DIAZ: Okay great. And I'm so data
19 driven, sorry, I'm not sure who would be providing
20 the answers and I know you may not have the answers
21 for me today, so I look forward to receiving the
22 answers in the near future. I'd like to hear back.
23 My understanding is during last year, there were
24 conversations, outcomes, what you projected to what
25 actually rose, and I would like to see, you mentioned

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2 being able to provide these services, I'd to, at some
3 point, see data that actually proves that to me. So,
4 I'm going to start with, do you have the data
5 available for gender violence itself? How many
6 individuals were you able to service, human
7 trafficking is another thing during COVID itself,
8 hotline numbers and service trends, I can stop here.
9 I can go forward and repeat them for you?

10

COMMISSIONER NOEL: We can certainly
11 follow up on any of the data points that you would
12 like since some of them will require that we go back
13 and pull some information, but I think it's also
14 important to recognize that even though we've had to
15 pivot and do that very quickly, we were able to reach
16 from March 18th through April 29, 587 clients with
17 services through our Family Justice Center and we're
18 saying that, you know, over 13,000 of those, 13,785
19 were new clients. That means that our message and
20 the message that help is available is getting out
21 there to survivors and a good chunk of them have
22 never come to us before. A good chunk of them are
23 saying, you know, I've been experiencing this, and I
24 didn't know that help was available, and they saw
25 this and reached out. So, I think that, in itself,

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2 says a great deal about what we've been able to do
3 during a very challenging time for this entire city,
4 country, everyone. So, that speaks, but we can
5 certainly come back to you with specific information
6 around specific data points that we might not have
7 with us this morning.

8 CHAIR DIAZ: Okay, so we will have staff
9 send to you the points, but for the record ...
10 (crosstalk).

11 COMMISSIONER NOEL: That's fine.

12 CHAIR DIAZ: For the record, I would like
13 to acknowledge what we were expecting. We will be
14 expecting to receive data on domestic violence,
15 gender-based violence, human trafficking, COVID-19
16 status, intakes, calls, and visits to the DV website,
17 provided hotline numbers and service trends, provider
18 chat options, trends and the types of calls to the
19 city's DV hotline, demographics of where clients live
20 by zip code and the local precincts, client
21 demographics, ethnic, gender, identity, sexual
22 orientation, trauma informed practices and training
23 for FJC staff as they work with clients remotely.
24 I'd like a two-minute break. If anyone needs a break
25 to get a glass of water or something, we'll resume at

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2 11:10, if that's okay with all? Good morning, I hope
3 you were able to enjoy that two-minute break, get a
4 cup water, a second dose of coffee, for a colleague,
5 if you had to jump off for a second and respond to
6 another hearing, again, I'm being texted from my next
7 hearing. I'd like to go into questions about the
8 quarantine hotels. I'm not sure if many of you have
9 heard my story, but when I was first diagnosed COVID
10 positive on April 2, I chose for my own personal
11 sanity to go into the offered hospitality, the care,
12 as opposed to being at home. I did experience
13 positive and negative. My biggest was needing a warm
14 breakfast and when breakfast was brought to me, it
15 was cold. French toast and frittatas that had just
16 come out the freezer, definitely not a healthy way to
17 start your day. I'm going to continue to advocate for
18 hotel providers to allow for clients to use the
19 microwaves. One of my challenges was nor was there a
20 microwave in my room and there was (inaudible) door,
21 and the door was shutting with drywall screw. I sat
22 on the floor, and I tried to jimmy it as a Brooklyn
23 native cadaver and was unable to. That to me, was
24 extremely stressful, so as you're placing families in
25 hotels, rather it's a shelter need, please advocate

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to see if there's a kitchen in the unit. Some hotels do have kitchenettes and others do not. So, please as you're place families, let's secure that their needs are being met, not just a room over their head, but the elements are also being met.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Chair Diaz, I am very sorry interrupt. There is a technical issue, and we now need to pause for moment so we can fix the stream.

CHAIR DIAZ: Okay, thank you.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you. Okay, sorry about that. I believe all is back on track.

CHAIR DIAZ: Great. It's 2020, its technology, we're live, it's real, but as New Yorkers, we work it out and we move forward. I'd like to go back to my question about shelters and quarantining hotels. Has ENDGBV or any of it's affiliates been tracking survivors who have self-identified, are in DV shelters, non-DV specific shelters and of the city's quarantine hotels, describe current DV shelter capacity, how many DV survivors are currently residing in non-DV specific

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shelters, do you have that number? We need to unmute the Commissioner.

MICHELLE OTIS: Chair, we need to pause again for one moment for technical difficulties. Thank you.

CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you.

MICHELLE OTIS: Okay, Chair, Chloe, looks like we're ready to go.

CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you. I'm not seeing the Commissioner. Is she on?

COMMISSIONER NOEL: I am on. I am on.

CHAIR DIAZ: Okay.

COMMISSIONER NOEL: So, Council Member, I'd like to go back a little bit because I think it's important just to share. You asked a lot of technical questions about the level of data, but we do have some that I'd like to share with you. All right, and so, if we take a look at some demographic data from our FJCs during COVID-19, as I said before, we saw 29,587 clients during that time, and this is from March 18th, and 13,785 were new clients. Of that, I think that it's important to note, 52% of the clients came from the zips codes most impacted by COVID. 82.4% reported being victims of intimate

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2 partner violence. 17.4% reported being a victim of
3 gender-base violence which includes non-IPV including
4 family violence, non-IPV sexual violence, non-IVP
5 elder abuse, and what we have is another, you know,
6 0.2% reported being trafficking victims. 28% the
7 primary language used was not English. I think
8 that's important, so we do have a high percentage of
9 non-English speakers who use our Family Justice
10 Centers. We have a good portion who are speaking
11 Spanish and Mandarin, and Bengali. 7% of our clients
12 are 60 years and older. We have 12% that are males,
13 so we know that intimate partner violence affects
14 more than just women, so we have men coming in to
15 receive our services also, and so these are just some
16 of the statistics that I think that you mentioned
17 that we have here today, and I did want to just also
18 tell you that for the hotline services, the volume
19 for the DV hotline increased by 17% during the
20 pandemic, and that was from March 16th, 2020 to the
21 same time, March 16th, 2021. So, when compared year
22 over year, that increased. The call volume in June
23 of 2020 was 40% higher than in June 2019, and the
24 call volume from March 2021 was 37% higher than it
25 was from March 2019. So, again, I just, some of your

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other questions, we would need to go back and take a look at that, you know, and look at those numbers, but we were able to pull some of those numbers during the break and are able to give you that as well, and so now, to your other question about shelter. Services from the FJC and our services generally are available to anyone, any survivor, a survivor in shelter, a survivor in a DHS shelter, a survivor in a DV shelter, and survivors in the community, so our services provided through the FJCs are available to anyone. It doesn't matter where you are, but it's also important to recognize that we do not oversee the shelter system. That is DSS. We advocate where possible for survivors when they come to use for services and they are in shelter, we do our best to advocate with the shelter provider with the system that oversees that particular shelter to address whatever the needs of that client may be, but we don't oversee the day-to-day operations of those facilities. We certainly can and do provide services when clients seek out our service and they are housed in those places, and we advocate on their behalf where we can. So, in terms of those systems and

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2 questions that involve the actual administration of
3 those systems, you would need to go to DSS.

4 CHAIR DIAZ: Okay, but I have another
5 questions.

6 COMMISSIONER NOEL: Sure.

7 CHAIR DIAZ: How do you confirm the
8 shelter system? My experience has been that when
9 families move in from the DV system into general
10 population, that relationship is disengaged, and the
11 families are on their own. Is that the case or is
12 that just from my experience?

13 COMMISSIONER NOEL: I think that again
14 those questions are best answered by DSS who
15 administers those system but recognize that there are
16 two shelter systems. There's a DHS shelter system
17 and a DV shelter system. I don't know what your
18 experience was when you say general population versus
19 not. The DV shelter system has emergency (inaudible)
20 and you've got a DHS that has vast numbers of family
21 shelters as well as single shelters as well as
22 hotels.

23 CHAIR DIAZ: Okay, when I say general
24 population, is what I'm saying is for someone that is
25 not a DV victim or was not identified as a DV victim.

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I guess, what I'm trying to learn is once one has been receiving the specific care for the four months, if they're lucky, for six months, cause I have read where there are cases, once the families are under DV specific services and guidance, and the family goes into a standard shelter, which I called general population, their relationship ceases to exist and is turned over to the case manager in the new shelter where they are to assure their families receive services.

COMMISSIONER NOEL: I think that that is often the case because that shelter is now housing the family, but again, these questions are best discussed with DSS who operates or administers both systems, but I can assure you that every effort is made to ensure that families are connected to the service that they might need. The services offered in shelter or maybe out of shelter.

CHAIR DIAZ: Okay, thank you. I'm going to apologize to all, but I have another hearing on General Welfare. I'm going to jump into that hearing for my statement, and I'll be back. I'm turning the hearing over to my colleague Lander. Are you ready

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to resume responsibilities? There you go. Yes, he is. Thank you very much.

CM LANDER: My apologies, I'm on two, I'm on the hearing twice and I have to turn off my other Zoom. All right. Can you hear me, okay?

COMMISSIONER NOEL: Yes.

CM LANDER: Okay, Commissioner, thank you for your testimony and I just want to acknowledge that it's, in this hearing especially, humbling to try to fill the shoes of our Chair, Chair Diaz, and I want to echo what the Public Advocate said at the beginning of his testimony, speaking to the importance of allies being here to show up for survivors and stand with this system, and be humble and understanding, you know, what we do and don't know. So, I just appreciate doing that and I appreciate Commissioner, the work that you are here describing. All right, so, let me, Council, should I continue with the lines of questions here or should we move forward to listen to the folks that have joined us for this hearing?

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Earlier, I saw someone raise their hands for questions for the

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Administration? Council member Rosenthal, do you still have any questions?

CM LANDER: Chloe, I can't hear you.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: I said Council, never mind, not available anymore. I believe you can continue with the line of questioning or, Council Member Lander, can you hear me?

CM LANDER: Oh, sorry. That was on my end and not on yours. I apologize. I fixed that.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Okay.

CM LANDER: I had fix it, but not my volume.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: All right, you may continue with questions.

CM LANDER: Okay, one second. I need to get to those questions. Okay, with my apologized, I just lost my thread in the script we have here, and I have found this back and forth really useful, and I appreciate your point, Commissioner that a number of the questions we have about folk's experiences in the shelter system and moving through it will need to follow up on with DSS, so I think that will be a, you know, we've had a lot of conversations with them, and I look forward to more. I guess maybe ask, just

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following up on the question that implicit in what

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the Public Advocate and I have said, if there is a

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message to folks who are looking to be better up

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standers, who are looking to participate in spreading

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the word and listening to and paying attention

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signals and thinking about what's going on in our

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communities as different as they are on our blocks,

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in our synagogues and churches and mosques, how can

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we do that better?

11

COMMISSIONER NOEL: It begins by first

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knowing the resources that are available in your

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community, in your city. It begins by really, I

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think, spending a little time seeing what's available

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on NYC Hope and understanding what really is intimate

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partner violence and how it really affects survivors

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that could be your neighbor living in your community

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and recognize that we need to approach survivors

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without judgement and understand that we need to be

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guided by what they need, but we first need to be

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aware of what resources are available and that's the

22

first step to actually reaching out and saying help

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is available to someone that you might see.

24

CM LANDER: Sorry, and can you just tell

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me a little bit, I guess, in terms of resources for

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2 community members, what are some of the resources
3 that you have?

4

COMMISSIONER NOEL: Well, certainly we
5 have the Family Justice Centers which, right now, are
6 appointment only, but we are still providing services
7 remotely. We are still helping survivors navigate
8 their safety issues, provide case management and
9 counseling. There are also community-based providers
10 that are housed within communities that are listed on
11 our NYC Hope website that you can share so someone
12 doesn't have to go halfway across the city. The
13 providers are in their community and it's important
14 that if you look at our NYC Hope website, connecting
15 with those service providers so that survivors can
16 feel like there's someone who knows me, knows my
17 community, understands my culture, they are
18 culturally specific that can relate and be able to
19 deliver the services most comprehensively.

20

CM LANDER: Thank you. It looks like
21 Chair Diaz may be back.

22

CHAIR DIAZ: You did a wonderful job.

23

CM LANDER: Well, Chair, I do just want
24 to add my voice to the other members who are praising
25 your leadership of this Committee and of this hearing

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2 especially. It takes courage to be vulnerable to
3 speak about things that are really, extremely
4 difficult and then, but it provides a kind of
5 leadership which is really the most powerful way that
6 we move forward, so I'm honored to be a member of
7 this Committee under your leadership. I want to
8 thank you for this hearing. I feel pushed to show up
9 better on it as a result, and I'll say thank you.

10 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you. It's important
11 to know that there's strong men, like yourself, that
12 can identify and know that you're needed, you know,
13 as I was preparing again for the conversation today,
14 I was hoping that individuals would be able to
15 understand that and sometimes we have employees or we
16 have friends that don't show up somewhere, and you
17 know, the reason why they show up. I'm going to take
18 this moment to share, being that you said that, I'd
19 like to share what it was that I took my life back.
20 When my husband, whose now is deceased, my youngest
21 sister, my baby who is a military vet who had come
22 back from Iraq and it was an engagement party, and I
23 told her I couldn't go. I stood in my window, and at
24 that moment said no. As my husband went to sleep and
25 tears were coming down my eyes, I said, I'm taking my

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2 life back. I'm going to go back to work, I'm going
3 to go to school, and I'm happy that, so he passed
4 like three months after that, but I'm glad that I was
5 able to find the strength within myself and to start
6 my journey and having a conversation my abuser and
7 letting him know enough was enough. You know, I
8 called the cab, and I went to sister's and I
9 celebrated and he figured out where I was and he
10 said, "Why did you leave? I would have taken you",
11 and I went on, and I'm glad it wasn't a
12 confrontational moment. He understood that I was
13 tired and enough was enough and at that point, he was
14 suffering from a medical illness, but he was still
15 mean and he was cruel, and as I was trying to learn
16 about his system and his body and what was happening
17 to him, and I went to the local library, I must have
18 had 10 books, and I wanted to learn and he was my
19 husband, he was my partner, my daughter's father and
20 then he said, "Are you're celebrating my death?" I
21 said no. I wanted to, even in my own pain that he
22 was causing me, I wanted to understand him and his
23 pain and knowing that he was going die of an illness
24 with his liver and we know what it comes to, and I
25 was still trying to advocate for him and be somewhat

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2 compassionate, he used that against me, but I, you
3 know, I guess at this point, I can thank my baby
4 sister, Jessie for going onto the military and coming
5 back and being my anchor because by love for my baby
6 sister allowed me to say no more and enough is
7 enough, and my family, and as I move on to my
8 questioning, my family saw bruises on my body, on my
9 arms. I remember specifically one day, they said
10 you're rough, you're tough, stop moving furniture
11 around, no, that was a beating that I had survived
12 and those were the marks of it, and it's okay, it's
13 okay. I'm talking about it, but it's real, go ahead,
14 sir.

15 CM LANDER: No, go ahead, please finish.

16 CHAIR DIAZ: No, no, and stress to say
17 that we need to be a little more mindful, all right,
18 when someone says, when you see a bruise on someone,
19 hmm, look for other reasons, as during COVID, as
20 people are isolating and we know that a lot of trauma
21 has escalated during that, let's call that extra
22 person, and try to listen to them as if they were
23 family, (inaudible) you know, look at their attire.
24 All right. Do they look sloppy? Is there something
25 different? Some of us survive because we do, my

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family didn't truly know what I had experienced, so

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we were going through his burial process and went to

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the funeral parlor and they were glorifying him, and

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I said, it's time for me to tell you the truth. This

6

is my experience, and my family could just apologize

7

because they didn't know it, but I didn't want to

8

endanger my family anymore, and we'll go back, it's a

9

story.

10

CM LANDER: Chair Diaz, you've made

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yourself a powerful witness at this hearing, and I

12

don't know if you even heard the question that I

13

asked the Commissioner cause you were on the other

14

hearing, but the question I asked is how can allies,

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family members, neighbors do more to pay attention,

16

to listen, to show up, and without even knowing that

17

was the question I've asked, you've given very

18

powerful witness testimony about what it means, you

19

know, not just a neighbor, not just somebody across

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the street, but just to pay attention within own

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families and dig a little deeper to be aware and to

22

be able to show up for people and it could be life-

23

saving, so, you're witness and your example and what

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you've done since that time to become a leader and be

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here Chairing this Committee is the kind of example

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2 that we need in New York to move past this crisis and
3 rise to something better. So, thank you for
4 answering my question that you didn't even hear I
5 asked, but thanks even more for your powerful witness
6 and testimony and example.

7

CHAIR DIAZ: And men get abused too. In
8 a full transparency, men are more mental than
9 physical, but for the dads out there that are trying
10 to stay in the lives of their children, do know that,
11 as a Chair of this Committee, I am mindful of your
12 hurt and your pain. So, thank you, thank you. I'll
13 see to the questions, and we'll go back. Thank you
14 again for the opportunity. I'd like to go have a
15 conversation. Due to the outreach for the
16 transgender community, have we had specific outreach
17 that has been done and then of course, the LGBTQ,
18 which I want to start with anything specific that's
19 been done for transgender.

20

COMMISSIONER NOEL: We agree that, oh,
21 thank you. Am I on? Can you hear me?

22

CHAIR DIAZ: I can hear you.

23

COMMISSIONER NOEL: We engage with
24 providers serving LGBTQ plus populations regularly at
25 events and workshops. For example, we're doing one

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2 this weekend on Staten Island with the Staten Island
3 Pride Center and we're careful to ensure our
4 messaging in all of our outreach efforts are
5 inclusive. We also do a great deal of work with
6 immigrant and non-English speakers. We collaborate
7 regularly with MOYA and we hold townhalls together
8 last year, and we're planning for this year in Arabic
9 and Creole. We conduct our Cosmetology outreach in
10 immigrant communities and work directly with
11 Consulates and Immigration serving organizations.
12 So, we are very committed. Our partnership includes
13 our community-based network includes many, many
14 providers who are culturally specific orgs.

15 CHAIR DIAZ: Wow, your feedback is
16 amazing, and you're wearing red like me. Red is
17 power color.

18 COMMISSIONER NOEL: Yes, yes.

19 CHAIR DIAZ: I just got to say thank you
20 to all the women that are participating here today
21 and for all the men for supporting the women in our
22 journey. I want to have a conversation in reference
23 to NYPD and your relationship with NYPD. Do you
24 normally get the assistance that is needed, the
25 privacy, I know that can sometimes be somewhat

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difficult for a survivor? Can you please share with me A. Your general relationship with NYPD? Do you think that it could improve, and if so, recommendations on how we can give suggestions?

COMMISSIONER NOEL: We have a wonderful collaborative and great working relationship with NYPD. It's important to note that NYPD domestic violence police officers are part of the compliment of staff that are housed in the Family Justice Center, so they are, in fact, a wonderful partner. We've provided trainings together, we work on tip sheets together, they have been wonderful, they're wonderful allies all the time, wonderful partners all the time, but particularly during COVID, NYPD used our fact sheet around how to engage with survivors who are now at home with an abusive partner. How can they, just from an NYPD standpoint, be cognizant of what might be going on and figure out better ways to help that survivor access services as well. So, in terms of the partnership, we think it's wonderful. It can only get better, and we are about working towards making sure that it stays strong and continues to improve.

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CHAIR DIAZ: I'm interested in knowing other levels of government, particularly the State, how is your relationship with the State? Do you get positive feedback? Are there hiccups? Is there any way you can see that (inaudible) conversations that you're trying to have that are not as positive as you would like for them to be?

COMMISSIONER NOEL: The State Office to Prevent Domestic Violence is our partner agency on the State level, and we work really well with that agency. We've partnered on initiatives during COVID. In fact, they sat in on our provider calls during COVID and we sat in on their provider calls with the bigger State coalition partners and providers. We have looked to them for guidance on certain issues and they have looked to us for guidance on other issues. So, the collaboration between the two offices is really productive and we share information and communicate all the time.

CHAIR DIAZ: Wonderful. My understanding is, as by conversation, that you staff has been able to assist with the court process.

COMMISSIONER NOEL: We have, and folks are able to use our Family Justice Centers to file

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2 for remote orders of protection or to actually appear
3 in family court, and we're also prioritizing working
4 outside of the criminal justice system because we
5 recognize that not everyone wants a criminal justice
6 answer, so we're really looking towards how both we
7 continue with those relationships and continue with
8 those collaborations, but also develop strong
9 relationships outside of the criminal justice system
10 that can address the needs of survivors cause not
11 everyone wants to call the police or wants to go to
12 court.

13 CHAIR DIAZ: And just out of curiosity-
14 sake, I'm sure the answer is no. Have conversations
15 been had to compensate for the extra efforts that
16 you've taken on, where you've jumped into being an
17 extension of what I would say is family court and
18 have you assisted with the documents that needed to
19 be prepared getting more viable, hands-on, and I
20 think, the courts open the 24th, their box will open,
21 how is that conversation looking, if at all?

22 COMMISSIONER NOEL: I'm going to let Liz
23 jump in here, but I think the courts are still
24 primarily virtual for many kinds of cases, but we are
25 also really able with our partner agencies to be able

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2 to help survivors access those systems when and if
3 they need to. Liz, please.

4 ELIZABETH DANK: Sure, so, I'll just add
5 that we've been working closely with the court system
6 since the implementation of their remote filing
7 programming, and we were one of the first
8 jurisdictions in the State to pilot it and through
9 the support of our non-profit providers who are
10 directly providing those services to clients. We've
11 had a really strong collaboration, and I think we
12 were very welcoming of being able to bring those
13 services onsite to the Family Justice Centers and in
14 communities throughout the city. It was a great need
15 that survivors had, and we've been excited to partner
16 with OCA.

17 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you, thank you very
18 much. As I've shared earlier, I worked for the
19 shelter system for 13 years and I'm data driven, and
20 I like to follow the money. Often in conversations,
21 I hear it's not (inaudible) go to DSS or go to HRA,
22 I'm trying to see where the loopholes are, if there's
23 cracks in the system cause to me, that's part of the
24 money. I'd like a breakdown, and it's not going to
25 be today, I understand that, I'm trying to follow the

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2 dollars, and the organizations that you're attached
3 to that receive dollars. How difficult would that be
4 and how soon can I receive that? Also, what I'm
5 looking to do as funds have been restored, if I need
6 to advocate to make sure that funding that was taken
7 away can be put back in, I also want to be able to do
8 that, and I only see being able to do that by having,
9 you know, true data in a timely fashion, thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER NOEL: Well, we can
11 certainly follow up with your office around those
12 issues.

13 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you. Chloe, has
14 anyone raised their hands? Any Members raise their
15 hands?

16 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: At this time,
17 I'd like to remind Council Members to use the raise
18 hand function if you have a question for the
19 Administration. We'll just give them a minute. I
20 see no hands raised at this time.

21 CHAIR DIAZ: Okay, then I'll continue
22 with another budget conversation. My understanding
23 is that there are over 75 providers that still has
24 not received their monies. Have you heard that
25 conversation and do you see light at the end of this

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2 tunnel? I find it difficult for organizations to be
3 strapped.

4 COMMISSIONER NOEL: Okay, ENDGBV has a
5 contract portfolio that lives both with HRA and MOCJ.
6 We do not oversee every single domestic violence
7 contract in the city. We only oversee those
8 contracts that are in our portfolio, but those
9 contracts are also administered by these two
10 entities, HRA and MOCJ. In terms of our own
11 contracts, the contracts that we oversee, we have not
12 heard of any substantial issue. We've addressed many
13 of the early COVID acts with those contracts along
14 with our sister agencies, but if you are aware of a
15 provider that is a contractor of our, meaning on one
16 of our contracts, we'd be happy to take a look at
17 that issue.

18 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you. Thank you for
19 your willingness. In your dream bucket, in the world
20 of fantasy, do you see another way that we can assist
21 victims? Is there someone that's trying to think
22 outside the box, is getting maybe some resistance,
23 you know, do you have, if I were that genie in a
24 bottle and I could expedite something, what would do
25 different?

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COMMISSIONER NOEL: I think, you know,
based on what we've both heard from our partners and
survivors, I think there are a lot of needs out there
that survivors have, but one major one is housing.

6

CHAIR DIAZ: Okay.

7

COMMISSIONER NOEL: Being able to access
housing in ways that make sense. We all that that's
a scarce commodity in New York City and it's also
very challenging for survivors in navigating those
systems. That's a primary one. Thinking about how
survivors can, in fact, just have access to the sort
of flexible funding-kinds of models that support
whatever they might need. Those are some of the
challenges that we hear from both our provider
community as well as survivors out there.

17

CHAIR DIAZ: When it comes to dividing
the housing for DV victims, I'd like to know, do you
have a facility that only services men? How do we
deal, I know it's slim to few that come forward, but
in my shelter experience, I had maybe five men, you
know that were DV and with me, and it was more so
because there wasn't a place where they could go,
it's always been women that were housed in DV
shelters?

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COMMISSIONER NOEL: Again, I think this is a question that would be responded to by DSS, but I think that we also need understand that the shelter system that exists right now for domestic violence survivors is a shelter system that service survivors and their children. So, if you are a survivor and you have children, be that male or female, you could be housed in one of those facilities, survivors and their children, their families, all right ... (crosstalk).

CHAIR DIAZ: I understand that and it's complex. That's scary to me, being a survivor to have a man next door to me or that I have to exchange with in the common area, so hopefully that's something that we can change. I understand that DSS/HRA, it isn't foreign to you, but I hope that we can work and next year, we'll have this conversation, it's changed. You know, there's triggers and for the men as well. If they've been abused by a woman, they could relive the situation, but I know it's bigger and it's deeper than that. I'm going to start to turning over, or if there's anyone else, if my colleagues have no questions, I'd like to begin to hear from those who are here to advocate either for

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2 themselves or the non-profits that have signed up as
3 well. Chloe, can you remind everyone of our role
4 today?

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you, Chair

Diaz. We have concluded the Administration's

testimony and will now turn to public testimony.

First, I would like to remind everyone that I will

call up individuals in panels. Once your name is

called, a member of our staff will unmute, and you

may begin your testimony once the Sergeant at Arms

sets the clocks and gives you the cue. All testimony

will be limited to two minutes. Remember that there

is a few second delay when you are unmute before we

can hear you. Please wait for the Sergeant at Arms

to announce that you may begin before starting your

testimony. The first panel of testimony in order of

speaking will be the Honorable Judy Harris Kluger

from Sanctuary for Families, Lana Khamash from the

Arab American Family Support Center, and Hellen Hung

from the Korean American Family Service Center. I

will now call on the Honorable Kluger. You may begin

when ready.

SGT. BRADLEY: Your time will begin now.

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JENNIFER FRIEDMAN: Good morning. My

name is Jennifer Friedman. I'm the Director of

Sanctuary for Families, Family Law Practices in the

Bronx and Manhattan Family Justice Centers. I'm

appearing today on behalf the Honorable Judy Kluger,

Executive Director of Sanctuary for Families. We are

New York City's largest provider of comprehensive

services and outreach exclusively for survivors of

domestic violence and sex trafficking. We are so

grateful for the opportunity to testify today with

special thanks to Chairperson Diaz and personally,

Chairperson Diaz for your bravery and candor and I

appreciate you're being warrior. I love that term.

I'm going to adopt it as we continue to assist our

clients who are survivors.

CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you.

JENNIFER FRIEDMAN: The Council has

recognized that gender violence is a serious public

health crisis in its own right exacerbated by the

pandemic. Today I am pleased to report on the rapid,

highly efficient crisis response of the mayor's

officer ENDGBV and the New York City Family Justice

Centers in the past year in the past year. As a long

time FGC partner agency providing many services,

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2 adult and children's counseling, family law and
3 immigration legal services, and economic stability
4 services at the centers, the FJCs, we were profoundly
5 grateful for ENDGBV leadership in this unprecedented
6 time. We want to commend Commissioner Noel, key
7 staff including Jennifer Decarly (SP?) and Denise
8 Jenkins (SP?) for their fast, effective transition of
9 FJC services and coordination of the government and
10 non-profit partners at the beginning of the pandemic.
11 ENDGBV also deserves praise for their sustained
12 efforts, my apologies. My pages went out of order,
13 not nearly keeping FJC services functioning
14 efficiently, but coordinating advocacy to improve
15 other systems that were not working as well.

16 SGT. BRADLEY: Time has expired.

17 JENNIFER FRIEDMAN: So, I understand my
18 time expired. Do I have one second to close?

19 CHAIR DIAZ: You have 60 seconds.

20 JENNIFER FRIEDMAN: Okay, I just want to
21 add that one of the biggest challenges that we face
22 was the family courts really being quite inaccessible
23 to our clients throughout much of the pandemic. They
24 are opening back up. They have made great strides.
25 Much of the work that had been the work of the family

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2 courts including drafting petitions was offloaded to
3 non-profits such as Sanctuary and Safe Horizon and
4 others. The Family Justice Centers did a phenomenal
5 job helping to coordinate this influx, this kind of
6 tidal wave of new cases that came into the FJCs, but
7 we did want to point out that that has been a
8 tremendous challenge for survivors throughout the
9 pandemic and we also would be happy to speak about
10 the reopening of the FJCs. We look forward to that.
11 We appreciate the FJCs and ENDGBV coordination of
12 that in a safe way and in a way that enables us to
13 continue hybrid which we have been providing. Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIR DIAZ: You're welcome. Thank you
16 for your testimony and I want to share with you that
17 late yesterday afternoon, I received an email from
18 one of your clients asking me for housing assistance.
19 You know, she made a very good statement. She was
20 linked to a unit, and because the countertop, I think
21 it's not six inches long, the unit is being denied to
22 her, and she stated clearly that she was living in a
23 unit with no counterspace. So, definitely, I emailed
24 the Commissioner, emailed the managing agent that
25 she's working with that is willing to work with the

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2 family and I'll get back to you on that, but just
3 know that any case that comes through my office, I'm
4 going to look at and I will be hands on. Housing is
5 a human right. I've been homeless. It was a month,
6 but it was enough displacement, and there's no reason
7 why we should not be able to accommodate, especially
8 when a developer, a managing agent is going to take
9 in one of our families. I'll share with you after
10 this, a conference, a hearing where the family is,
11 but I do want you to know that I take my cases
12 seriously and my staff knows that. Thank you.

13 JENNIFER FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

14 CHAIR DIAZ: Back to you Chloe.

15 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for
16 your testimony. Next, we'll hear from Lana Khamash.

17 SGT. BRADLEY: Your time will begin.

18 LANA KHAMASH: Good morning. I'd like to
19 begin by thanking Committee Chair Diaz for her
20 personal testimony as well as the Committee on Women
21 and Gender Equity, the Mayor's Office to End Domestic
22 and Gender-based Violence and the entire New York
23 City Council for holding this important oversight
24 hearing. My name is Lana Khamash. I'm Priority Area
25 Specialist at the Arab American Family Support

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2 Center. I'm honored to testify today on behalf of
3 marginalized immigrant and refugee communities
4 throughout New York City. At the Arab American
5 Family Support Center, we've dedicated ourselves to
6 creating an inclusive safe haven for immigrants and
7 refugees since 1994. Our organization serves all
8 growing need, but with 26 years of experience, we've
9 gained cultural and linguistic competency serving New
10 York's growing Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and
11 South Asian communities. The Arab American Family
12 Support Center has remained open during COVID-19
13 offering uninterrupted service delivery throughout
14 the crisis. However, COVID-19 has created additional
15 barriers for our organization and the community
16 members we serve. For survivors of domestic and
17 gender-based violence, social distancing directives
18 to remain home can be frightening and dangerous. In
19 fact, since the beginning of the public health
20 crisis, the Arab American Family Support Center has
21 witnessed a 40% increase in demand for our anti-
22 violence program. Our agency supported over 1400
23 survivors of domestic violence in 2020, but in
24 addition to an increase in demand, AFSC has witnessed
25 an increase in cases that are high-risk and high-

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intensive where in the increase of stress that

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individuals are feeling as a result of COVID-19, ends

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up creating misplaced aggression towards partners and

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spouses. So, at our organization, we define high-

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risk clients as individuals who cases involved one or

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more factors notably the proportion of high-risk

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clients we serve which was at approximately 3% in

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March 2020 has increased to about 17% today, and at

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the peak of the pandemic sat at around 46%.

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Particularly now that most Family Justice Center

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buildings remain closed to visitors ... (crosstalk).

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SGT. BRADLEY: Your time has expired.

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LANA KHAMASH: All right, just to close

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quickly, we just request that the city prioritize

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funding for citywide support services for survivors

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of GBV, particularly the immigrant survivors of

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domestic initiatives. Thank you for your time.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you for your

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testimony. I particularly, within my District, we

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definitely had a concentration, which I'm proud, of

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Muslim, Arabs and I'd like to know, as I continue to

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invest the funds and try to get my colleagues to fall

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in line with my thoughts and share the need, can you

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share with, if not today, you know, via email later

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on, the data, if you have any, for the 37th District,

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I'd like to know what the numbers are?

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LANA KHAMASH: I can definitely follow up with your office via email with the specific numbers.

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We have them all broken down.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Wonderful, thank you.

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LANA KHAMASH: Thank you.

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for your testimony. Next, we will hear from Hellen Hung from the Korean American Family Service Center.

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SGT. BRADLEY: Your time will begin.

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HELLEN HUNG: Thank you, Chair Darma Diaz, Council Member Brad Lander and Members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity, Mayor's Office to End Gender-based Violence as well as the New York City Council for giving us the opportunity to testify today. My name is Hellen Hung, and I'm the Director of Development and Communications at the Korean American Family Service Center. KAFSC provides social services to immigrant survivors and their children who are affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. All our programs and services are offered in a culturally and linguistic appropriate setting. 98% of our clients

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are immigrants, 98% are women, and 100% of our staff members are immigrants themselves or children of immigrant parents and over 95% of our client's first language is not English, and they come from low-income backgrounds. KAFSC is proud to be an on-site partner at the Queens Family Justice Center and we have worked with QFJC as an on-site and off-site partner for more than 10 years. We are also grateful for the partnership with Safe Horizon, Mayor's Office to ENDGBV, and Commissioner Noel, and our Executive Director, Chia Fischer (SP?) is also an appointed member of the Mayor's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee. In 2020, all of our best practices and expertise were challenged and stretched in ways we could never have imagined. We never closed our doors to the public and within the first few months of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic turned our world upside down. Our 24-hour hotline saw 300% increase in call volume within the first six weeks of New York State on pause with 88% being related to domestic violence and sexual assault and child abuse. In 2019, we received a total of 2119 on our hotline. We saw that number up ended in the first six months of 2020. We served almost 2000 survivors of domestic

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violence and sexual assault and provided almost 40,000 services related to domestic violence and sexual assault last year in 2020. At the Korean American Family Service Center, we saw an upward trend in the severity of abuse and also children as primary victims of abuse. Our frontline essential workers met the increased need and provided in-person crisis intervention, counseling, case management and other support services ... (crosstalk).

SGT. BRADLEY: You time has expired.

HELLEN HUNG: In a culturally and linguistically setting. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with all of you to establish an effective system for all our immigrants and immigrant survivors. Thank you.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for your testimony. I would just like to remind everyone that you may send your written testimony in full to testimony@council.nyc.gov, again, that's testimony@council.nyc.gov. We will review all testimony in full and add it to the public record. At this time, before I turn to Chair Diaz for her questions, I'd like to remind Council Members to use

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2 their raise hand function in Zoom to indicate that
3 you have a question for this panel. Chair Diaz.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Well, at this time, I don't
5 have a specific question; although, I'd like share
6 with Lana and also with Ms. Hung that prior to me
7 coming on as a Council Member, I worked for New York
8 State (inaudible) and grew a love and a passion for
9 seeking resources for individuals that were in need
10 and that grew to me founding a (inaudible)
11 organization within my District. I share that to say
12 that although I'm obviously not of your community,
13 I'm not Muslim, I'm not Bangladesh, I'm not Korean, I
14 believe in equity and I believe in going after where
15 there's need, but I just want you to know that I'm
16 here for you. I feel your pain, and I'm proud to say
17 that 10 years ago, I knew enough to be part of the
18 conversation and be part of the fight and the
19 struggle. I thank you for presenting today and
20 again, I just want to say there's many Council
21 Members that are here for you. Thank you. Thank you
22 again for your testimonies.

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HELLEN HUNG: Thank you.

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25 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Seeing no
Council Member questions, we will turn to the next

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2 panel. In order of speaking, we will have Elle
3 Kamihira, Michelle Turner, and Amy Barasch. Elle,
4 you may begin when the Sergeant gives you the cue.

5 SGT. BRADLEY: Your time will begin.

6 ELLE KAMIHIRA: Dear Members of the New
7 York City Council Committee on Women and Gender
8 Equity. I'm honored to give testimony today. My
9 name is Elle Kamihira. I'm here as a survivor,
10 activist, and also documentary film maker working on
11 attracting issues around violence against women. I
12 deeply appreciate the network of services for
13 survivors and help extended to women and children
14 being victimized by male violence in New York,
15 especially as COVID has exacerbated the desperate
16 state of affairs. Today, though, I would like to
17 report for what's being done in Connecticut where
18 about a dozen women a year are murdered by their male
19 partners or exes and the numbers in New York are
20 similar. I'm talking about Jennifer's law, a law
21 named after two women murdered by their abusive
22 husbands. The Bill seeks to expand the definition of
23 domestic violence from an incidence-based crime to a
24 patterned crime over time to include cohesive
25 control and a full range of tactics used by abusers

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2 to control their victims such as stopping,
3 monitoring, intimidation, restriction of resources,
4 isolation, etc. The Bill was passed by the Judiciary
5 Committee and is now in front of the full General
6 Assembly for a vote. Jennifer's law is part of
7 worldwide trend to modernize domestic violence law to
8 reflect what abuse actually is. From my own lived
9 experience as a survivor and through my research, I
10 know that physical violence is the tip of the iceberg
11 of domestic abuse. The vast amount of abuse is non-
12 physical and it's never isolated incidents, but
13 rather a continuum of targeted destruction across all
14 aspects of life. There is also a strong correlation
15 between cores of control and homicide which is why I
16 would strongly encourage the powers that be in New
17 York City to join Connecticut, California, Hawaii,
18 the UK, Scotland, and many other countries to turn
19 their attention to creating a legal framework through
20 which we can stop men from abusing and controlling
21 their female partners instead of only focusing on
22 helping the women after the fact. We spend a lot of
23 money and effort on services to victims, but we
24 actually have not been able to reduce women killed by
25 male partners, and as I said before, COVID has

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2 exposed a desperately large population of women
3 trapped in those situations. Currently, a very tiny
4 percentage of offenders are charged, even a tinier
5 percentage see jailtime, yet we accept that women
6 have to leave their homes, go into hiding,
7 essentially getting imprisoned themselves having to
8 abandon their lives and often disrupting work, and
9 you know, we talk about the shelter to poverty
10 pipeline. To my mind, we have to turn attention to
11 abusers and create real life consequences for them,
12 perhaps removing him from the home instead and figure
13 out how we need to intervene in what is a highly
14 predictable and therefore preventable course of
15 behavior. Thank you.

16 CHAIR DIAZ: I thank you. Thank you for
17 being a warrior and advocating. You know, often, it
18 makes a big deal to know that for voices that are not
19 being heard or that fear to be heard, if we have
20 warriors banding together to fight the fight, but
21 thank you, and thank you also for being diligent and
22 going outside the box and looking to other states to
23 see what they're doing and assisting us in trying to
24 change what we do here in New York City. Again,
25 thank you.

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ELLE KAMIHIRA: Thank you.

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MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for your testimony. I'd just like to make a couple of notes before we move on. We'll be adding Charlotte Kaysen after Amy Barasch, and as a point of clarification, can we unmute Michelle Turner? Are you testifying at the same time? Should we unmute Amy Barasch at the same time? Could you clarify, Ms. Turner?

MICHELLE TURNER: Yes, I'm unmute, and I don't know how this thing works, but you gotta do what you, I don't know, I'm just there to testify.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Okay, thank you.

AMY BARASCH: Let me clarify that Ms. Turner is going to testify first, and then I will follow her.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for the clarification. Michelle, you may begin when the Sergeant gives you the cue.

SGT. BRADLEY: Your time will begin now.

MICHELLE TURNER: Okay, good afternoon everyone. My name is Michelle Turner, and I am a survivor. I'm an immigrant here in New York and from this time I've been living here, I am a mom. I have

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2 an autistic child. It's been hard for me. The
3 system has not put out enough effort to help me any
4 way. I am struggling with my child. All I can hear
5 is like go to shelter and it's not, I don't want to
6 go to the shelter. I want to feel like a woman. I
7 want to feel like what I normally feel, and I've been
8 hearing so much bad things about the shelter, but I
9 get my work permit and I've been working, it expired.
10 I sent it back to get a new work permit. It takes
11 almost a year. I've been reaching out, saying that I
12 can't survive without this work permit. Nobody, no
13 one, I have no response, nothing at all. I've been
14 struggling with my child. I'm all alone, I'm a
15 single mom. There's a lot of women that I have to
16 counseling my own. I've been hurting and I have to
17 be counseling a lot of women to know that no killing,
18 no taking your own life, don't give up, because I've
19 been through it. I've been through it, and I was
20 pregnant during my hurt. I was pregnant. I could
21 have lost my child, so I've been telling women my
22 age, younger than me, I've become a counselor. I
23 have to be talking to women, telling them, hold on,
24 better is coming. I would like for the city to put
25 more effort because there's people out there that are

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2 hurting and I'm talking from the heart. They are
3 hurting and when I listen everyone telling me what
4 they're going through, it hurts my heart knowing that
5 I am hurting too, and I have to be doing this all
6 alone by myself with my autistic child, and I'm going
7 to continue doing this.

8 CHAIR DIAZ: I want you to stay
9 encouraged. Please do. As I said, prior to becoming
10 a Council Member, I worked for the shelter system,
11 and I had a mom who came in from Ecuador. She met
12 her husband there, he was a New York City resident,
13 he brought her here, and the moment she got to the
14 door with her son, his mom had an issue and that led
15 her to being in shelter. She was in shelter for five
16 years. As I was leaving shelter, she was leaving
17 into a permanent home. One of the battles that we
18 dealt with was her work permit, and her employer
19 refusing to give her the extension. So, I'll make it
20 my business to help you get a copy of the order that
21 was given to anyone that was waiting for work permit
22 to be able to show the letter that came in to support
23 individuals in your situation to continue to be
24 employed. So, it is my understanding is you give
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them your work permit with the document that says you applied prior to COVID and (crosstalk).

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MICHELLE TURNER: I gave them all that.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Your employer is supposed to accept that document and allow you to gain employment if you were employed and you lost it. Again, feel free, it's a federal issue, but I'm willing to help you navigate the process if you hit a road block.

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MICHELLE TURNER: Yeah. I just got it back still. I got it back the other day.

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CHAIR DIAZ: You did? Good for you.

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MICHELLE TURNER: I just got it back, but I'm still out of work. I'm still suffering.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Okay.

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MICHELLE TURNER: I can get no daycare for my baby. Nothing.

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CHAIR DIAZ: I want you to know that Councilwoman Diaz is here to serve. I cannot guarantee that you're going to find employment, but I'd like to help you in your process in the pursuit of gaining employment. My staff is more than willing to assist ... (crosstalk).

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MICHELLE TURNER: Well, I have

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employment. I work with an agency, but I can't go to

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work because ... (crosstalk).

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CHAIR DIAZ: Right.

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MICHELLE TURNER: There's no daycare for

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the baby and they're telling me that, some daycares

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are telling me a bunch of money. I'm not working

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now. I'm going to school, I'm going to Center for

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Family, that's the school I'm going to now. So, I

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can't do nothing. The baby is stuck with me, no

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daycare, I can't pay daycare, I'm getting only food

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stamps, that's the only help. They're kicking ...

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(crosstalk).

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CHAIR DIAZ: How old is your child?

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MICHELLE TURNER: He's three. He's three

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years old.

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CHAIR DIAZ: And you have no daycare, no

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daycare subsidy?

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MICHELLE TURNER: They cut him off of the

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daycare.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Okay, I'm interested in your

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situation. After the hearing, let's reconnect on

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Monday and to see if there's any way that my office

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can advocate for you because what you're telling is

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2 questionable as to why you're not being provided
3 childcare services for your child. I'd like to look
4 into your situation a little further if you would
5 allow me.

6 MICHELLE TURNER: Yes, I will. I need the
7 help. Thank you.

8 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you, you're welcome.
9 Yes, Chloe.

10 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for
11 your testimony. Next, we will hear from Amy Barasch
12 of Her Justice.

13 SGT. BRADLEY: Your time starts now.

14 AMY BARASCH: Good morning. Thank you,
15 Chair Diaz and the entire Committee on Women and
16 Gender Equity for the opportunity to testify today on
17 the impact COVID has had on victims of domestic
18 violence. The woman from whom you just heard,
19 Michelle Turner is actually a client of Her Justice
20 and I think she also said she has been working with
21 Sanctuary for Families. We would welcome you help,
22 Chair Diaz. If there's anything additional you can
23 do, but as you can hear, even with really dedicated
24 and skilled advocates and attorneys by her side, the
25 challenges remain unfortunately for our victims of

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partner violence. I'm very honored to follow Michelle Turner and I thank her for being willing and brave enough to share her story with the Council this morning. We have submitted written testimony, which is very comprehensive, so with my time today, I just want to highlight two key issues. The inability over the past year to access a vital range of civil legal remedies beyond orders of protection and the lack of public information about the functioning of the family courts. A theme running through both of those issues is the digital divide in our city which has created further barriers for women like our clients trying to seek assistance. When the pandemic hit, the New York City Family Courts closed while in-person court will resume for the first time in late May, up until now, everything has been virtual, and as Commissioner Noel mentioned, many of us have put rooms at the disposal of our clients so that they can appear remotely from our offices since they don't necessarily have access to the equipment or if they have a reliable WIFI. Family courts quickly reopened for requests for orders of protection. They've also opened for matters that they deem essential. Unfortunately, the court's definition of essential

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2 often does not match that of our clients and for a
3 case to be deemed essential and argument must be made
4 to a judge and decisions are ad hoc based on the
5 assessment of each juris. While people with lawyers
6 have been able to file such motions, not all
7 applications are granted and for litigants who are
8 unrepresented, the majority of those who file in
9 family court, that route has been unavailable. While
10 making orders of protection quickly available was a
11 very welcomed move on the part of the courts. That
12 is not the only or often the best solution for many ...
13 (crosstalk).

14 SGT. BRADLEY: You time has expired.

15 CHAIR DIAZ: Please give her an added 60
16 seconds, please.

17 AMY BARASCH: Thank you, chair.

18 Financial support for partners and clear and safe
19 schedules for access to children can often be more
20 critical. For single mothers living in poverty,
21 child support can be a critical source of income for
22 immigrant victims who are not eligible for public
23 benefits or most Federal COVID relief and it may be
24 the only source of income. So-called non-essential
25 child support cases have not been heard since last

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March. In addition, custody, visitation cases have been typically deemed non-essential even though co-parenting with an abusive partner can be very dangerous and COVID complicated this ability for separated parents to make decisions about time with children because of work instability, public health mandates and constantly changing school situations. Finally, while the courts have been adjusting their operations on a regular basis, they do not have a clear and accessible way to communicate those changes to the general public. The lawyers, we get regular memos with disproportionately seen low income unrepresented (inaudible), the community confusion about rather how and when the courts were available with deep and persist. I would encourage the Council to speak with the courts about making sure that that information is regularly and accessibly available for litigants in many languages other than English. This has been a long 14 months with no change in public communication. We're very grateful for City Council's continued support of survivors in New York City and the need for legal support for DV victims is as real and as urgent as ever. We hope that in this moment of recovery, the Council will reaffirm and

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enhance resources to survivors and recognize legal

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services as essential to ensuring that economic

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wellbeing and safety. Thank you very much.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you. I just have one

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question. Being that it's all digital, and most

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folks have been working from home, I'm interested in

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knowing when a case is not going to be heard, how

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much notice are you being given. I know it's

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intense, not only for the attorneys to prepare, but

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for the victims and those that are involved to

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testify or go through the process ... (crosstalk).

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AMY BARASCH: Yeah, so, honestly, Chair,

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it's very sporadic. So, cases that were filed at the

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earlier part of the pandemic, we often didn't even

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get notice about when future court dates were going

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to be held. Some of them are still in limbo when

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other cases that have been filed were recently, we've

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been getting court dates, so I can't give you one

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constant answer unfortunately. It's been very

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chaotic, and we very much appreciate the complexity

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for the court system, but if we are finding it

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chaotic and hard to understand, it's impossible for

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somebody without an attorney really to understand how

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2 to proceed, so the answer is it really varies by
3 county, by case type, and even by judge.

4 CHAIR DIAZ: Wow, I can imagine how
5 difficult it must be for you, as attorneys, as an
6 agency, and then for the victims. Thank you for your
7 testimony and I look forward to reading what you
8 submitted. Thank you.

9 AMY BARASCH: Thank you so much.

10 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for
11 your testimony. Next, and last on this panel, we
12 will hear from Charlotte Kaysen. You may begin once
13 the Sergeant gives you the cue.

14 SGT. BRADLEY: Your time will begin now.

15 CHARLOTTE KAYSEN: Hi. My name is
16 Charlotte Kaysen. I'm speaking on behalf of the New
17 York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault. The
18 Alliance stands in support of INT number 2131 because
19 we recognize the strong intersection between domestic
20 violence, poverty, and lack of internet access. Lack
21 of internet access presents a profound barrier to
22 economic stability and a survivor's path to healing.
23 Further, we recognize that community and internet
24 Center may provide a safe haven for survivors who are
25 enduring technological abuse. We resonant with

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2 community-oriented policies that help shatter the
3 cycle of violence. We believe IPV cannot be
4 addressed without also addressing social factors
5 especially in the context of pandemic that is causing
6 substantial isolation. We recognize technology as a
7 crucial means for survivors to main access to
8 information and formal support networks. We
9 understand domestic violence victims are content with
10 isolation from their support networks which leaves
11 survivors in a more vulnerable position to their
12 abusers. We recognize lack of internet access
13 constrains a survivor's access to vital resources.
14 There's a symbolic relationship between service
15 providers and technology. We recognize that internet
16 access is a key access point in a lifeline to promote
17 help for survivors. We recognize that in the
18 aftermath of an abusive relationship, a survivor may
19 find themselves in a compromised situation contending
20 with sabotaged economic opportunities and debt. A
21 survivor may be navigating the intricacies of the
22 criminal justice system or contending with limited
23 economic options. We recognize that through internet
24 access, a survivor can access vital supports and
25 social service providers which are paramount to serve

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them in their healing and empowerment process. This need is high during this unprecedented crisis where survivor's access to informal and formal support is further limited in consideration of service providers reliance on services. Service providers play a crucial role in recognizing safety concerns and supporting victims who reach out including accessing risks and creating a safety plan to support victims. We recognize that stable access to internet safe guards and protects domestic violence survivors. Furthermore, research and our work on the ground shows us that technology facilitated abuse is pervasive in IPV situations. May I have one more minute?

CHAIR DIAZ: I give you 90 seconds.

CHARLOTTE KAYSEN: Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Technology is often recognized by abusers to intimidate, threaten, and stalk their victims. An abuser may surveil, monitor, or hack their victim's devices without the victim's knowledge. Abuser also wheel technology as a tool to facilitate, coheres, and control. A significant number of IPV survivors say that they have experienced technological surveillance to just having

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2 spyware software installed on their devices by their
3 computers. Community Centers for WIFI may provide a
4 safe and secure method for accessing support for
5 victims for abuser who are monitoring their internet
6 usage. In song, we are in support of community-
7 oriented solutions to domestic violence. We
8 recognize that community WIFI centers may be a
9 tremendous instrument of change. We affirm policies
10 which expand efforts to provide stability and
11 economic prosperity to domestic violence survivors.
12 Too often, domestic violence survivors become trapped
13 and relegated in a cycle of violence and poverty.
14 We're in favor of a policy that expands access to
15 internet and the ability for survivors to thrive.
16 Additionally, a working group program will provide us
17 the opportunity to collect more reliable data on this
18 scope and intersection of domestic violence and
19 factors that gives us the opportunities to identify
20 patterns and windows for social changes, to craft
21 public policies to serve these survivors. In
22 conclusion, we recognize that domestic violence
23 represents a force of tremendous upheaval and trauma.
24 We believe the Bill represents a powerful investment
25 and solution to alleviate the domestic violence

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crisis. We recognize that providing pathways to employment and resources advances the welfare of survivors and their families. We recognize that is a driving force of poverty and displacement. We support a policy that (inaudible) survivors and helps them build independent lives. We believe the laws that were meant to step towards dismantling obstacles which hinders a survivor's path to healing and stability. We recognize that internet access is a critical safety net for survivors. We are supportive of approaches that enable survivors to access the vital community resources needed to address threats to their health and safety. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak in front of you. Once again, I'm on behalf of the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault. Thank you.

CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you. Thank you very much for your testimony. Chloe, do we have any, my understanding is there may be other members that are still live.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Yes.

CHAIR DIAZ: Before we close to today's hearing, I just want to give them an opportunity if

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2 there is a closing statement on their behalf, if they
3 would like to present.

4 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: We actually have
5 one more panel.

6 CHAIR DIAZ: Oh, okay.

7 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: No Council
8 Member questions at this time. Do you have any
9 additional questions for this panel?

10 CHAIR DIAZ: I do not, thank you.

11 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Okay, we will
12 move on to our next, and last panel. First, we will
13 hear from Hayat Berat, and I apologize for any
14 mispronunciations, from the New York Legal Assistance
15 Group, Hailey Nolasco from the Center for Court
16 Innovation, and Molly Burke of LIFT.

17 CHAIR DIAZ: I apologize Hailey.

18 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: You may begin
19 with your testimony once the Sergeant gives you the
20 cue, Hayat Berat.

21 SGT. BRADLEY: Your time will begin now.

22 HAYAT BERAT: Good afternoon, and thank
23 you Chair Diaz, Council Members and staff for the
24 opportunity to testify. My name is Hayat Berat, and
25 I'm Senior Staff and Coordinating Attorney at the New

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York Legal Assistance Group's Domestic Violence Law Unit. As a result of COVID-19, there was an increase in reported domestic violence in New York City which was reflected of what we thought might lag, but the numbers of caller requesting filing orders of protection, more than doubled during COVID-19. To pivot, NYLAG set up dedicated COVID-19 hotlines, partnered to receive and assist survivors in filing orders of protection on the same day and work for the Family Justice Center as a non-contract partner for family law, so, the few resources that are available for survivors of domestic violence, substantially disadvantaged those living in poverty and immigrant communities. Access is one of the most vital lessons learned from this pandemic. The pandemic required creative solutions to respond to client's needs. It would be a shame to lose that which we have learned and implemented. What we did helped. We saw 150% increase in people calling us in order to obtain orders of protection, all of whom we assisted. Further, with remote access to clients with technology, we were able to serve clients who otherwise may be unable to receive services, people who live in homes with abusers and can't take the

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2 time for a full meeting in person safely but can
3 coordinate safe times to speak in 30-minute
4 intervals. People who are in the hospital and cannot
5 come for an appointment at FJCs but can call and have
6 a fully legal consult from the hospital room. In
7 DVLU, we speak over 11 languages, greatly helping us
8 meet client's needs in their preferred language.
9 What we also know is there are large unmet needs for
10 those who still haven't been able to help. We know
11 that there will be a flood of survivors in need of
12 court intervention once courts open up, especially
13 when there is so much financial instability. An
14 increase in sustained long term funding to agency
15 like NYLAG and to expand the FJCs to allow them to
16 contract with more providers like NYLAG to serve more
17 individual is the only way to ensure that we can
18 continue to respond to these intersecting needs of
19 clients and meet the spike in individuals needing
20 services when courts open up. We have and continue
21 to prepare to respond to the long-term crisis to come
22 after this immediate crisis passes. When that time
23 comes, we must be available with appropriate funding
24 to meet this anticipated need ... (crosstalk).

25 SGT. BRADLEY: You time has expired.

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HAYAT BERAT: Or we risk sending survivors back into the arms of their abusers. I want to thank you again for this opportunity.

CHAIR DIAZ: I thank you. Thank you for your service.

HAYAT BERAT: Thank you.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for your testimony. Next, we will hear from Hailey Nolasco.

SGT. BRADLEY: Your time will begin now.

HAILEY NORLASCO: Good Afternoon, Chair Diaz and esteemed Council Member of the Committee of Women and Gender Equity. Name is Hailey Norlasco, my pronouns are she and her, and as someone that has experience IPV, this testimony is extremely meaningful to me. The Center for Court Innovation has greatly supported the vision embraced by the Council to reduce unnecessary and harmful involvement in the criminal legal system and both sustainable community led public safety solutions. The populations we serve are facing a multitude of crises that continue to disproportionately impact black and brown communities. This include intimate partner violence which has been all the more prevalent during

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the COVID-19. The city's current approach to addressing intimate partner violence has supported many in moving towards safety, yet in recent years, we have seen incidents IPV not decreasing, but instead remaining stagnant and even rising in some areas. There is a growing need for community-based approaches which are not relying on the criminal legal responses and these responses are not adequate to address IPV in all cases. For many black and brown communities, relying on criminal legal systems is not an effective or safe option due to the criminalization of survivors of IPV and the current and historical harm these systems have caused. The pandemic has left many New Yorkers more physically isolated dealing with increased stress, trauma, and less access to trusted community partners and credible messengers. This has resulted in less opportunity and security for those who need help and the center's programs work hard to implement virtual services across the city, but we know that many experiencing IPV are not able to access these services virtually due to the lack of private spaces and close living quarters. Models like the center's Rise project reimaging intimacy through social

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2 engagement which directly draws from care violence
3 model and is a part of New York City's crisis
4 management system offering support to end IP-related
5 gun violence. Gun violence has surged over 200% in
6 2020 and as motivated, policy makers and community
7 members have called for real solutions. In New York
8 City, neighborhoods that are experiencing the highest
9 rates of gun violence, also had the highest rate of
10 IPV-related incidents. Additionally, firearm access,
11 once associated with guns, we have a five times risk
12 of IPV-related homicide happening. These are recent
13 cases that magnify the need for more of these ...
14 (crosstalk).

15 SGT. BRADLEY: You time has expired.

16 CHAIR DIAZ: Could you give us 60 more
17 seconds, please? How much more time do you need?

18 HAILEY NORLASCO: I would like 90
19 seconds.

20 CHAIR DIAZ: Okay, I'll give you 90.

21 HAILEY NORLASCO: 90 should do.

22 CHAIR DIAZ: No, I'm sorry. I don't want
23 to rush you through cause I definitely see a need in
24 what you're saying, and I want to be able to absorb
25 it, okay.

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HAILEY NORLASCO: Thank you, I appreciate that so much.

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CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you.

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HAILEY NORLASCO: So, we lift the lives of Rashita Bazi (SP?) and her two daughters in Brownsville, Michelle Thomas (SP?) in Parks Slope (SP?) and Ramona Rodriguez Renoso (SP?) in Washington Heights who all recently lost their lives to intimate partner-related gun violence. So, community-based responses allow organizations like Rise to focus on prevention and address the fact that not everyone who abuses interacts with the criminal justice system, and those mandated responses are limited. Most people experiencing IPV don't call hotlines or services and individuals are more likely to reach out to people actually within their own networks further bridging the digital divide that we've been discussing, the centers also piloting the Public Access Terminal Court Hub, also known as PATCH in Brownsville to offer more direct access service with kiosk for housing and family issues and these services are free and open to the public. This option for survivors is extremely important and we are very happy to be able to pilot this because it's

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2 much needed. In closing, the center has a wealth of
3 experience around domestic violence in Red Hook. Red
4 Hook Cares offers clients and support for survivors
5 of violence and further, the center's gender and
6 family justice team has developed training in
7 partnership with the Administration to best support
8 survivors and also engage people causing harm. So,
9 through collaborating with communities and
10 stakeholders, the center hopes to continue to respond
11 to the challenges and impacts of intimate partner
12 violence and the city can also do this through
13 supporting meaningful community-led programming. We
14 thank the Council for its continued partnership in
15 this work and thank you, Chair.

16 CHAIR DIAZ: I thank you. I'd like to
17 hear a little more about the community-based
18 approach. If I understood correctly, there's a
19 deficiency. Can you let me know more about what you
20 are citing to be a deficiency, like what are you
21 saying? What's the trauma? What are we missing?
22 Can we please unmute Ms. Norlasco? Thank you.

23 HAILEY NORLASCO: Okay, so our community
24 approach, what we have been doing, we have been
25 having community conversations and hoping to change

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2 the norms that allow for intimate partner violence to
3 even exist, right. So, a lot of community-based are
4 offering technical assistance to the violence
5 programs that exist throughout the city, so that's
6 upwards of now, 23 organizations and is now
7 increasing. So, also going in the community and
8 meeting people where they're at. This is not
9 something that folks typically speak about, so we go
10 into the community to really start this conversation,
11 so people know that there is a safe space outside of
12 the current system that exists to get the support
13 they need. For folks that have actually gone through
14 traditional routes to get support dealing with IPV,
15 what we've been hearing is that often times, they're
16 afraid and we could see many reasons why communities
17 of color are afraid to call law enforcement.
18 Sometimes, they don't see the, they may not be
19 feeling like they're being seen or feel protected,
20 and often times, although, very well intentioned,
21 sometimes the current supports that currently exists
22 are meeting all of their needs, so that's what we
23 have been seeing. Also, there's a big gap in working
24 with people that are actually causing the harm which
25 is one of our main focuses, so what we have been

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2 doing is really working with people to offer one-on-
3 one support and group based support as well to really
4 work with this lens of transformative justice to
5 really help people get to that root cause of why
6 they're causing harm because when somebody starts to
7 harm, that's not the first time they may have
8 experienced harm, so really getting to that root
9 cause to actually stop harm from continuing to happen
10 and many people that also have been experiencing
11 these issues, and I think you all allotted to this
12 before as well, Chair, many people just want to know
13 why that people is behaving that way and why they're
14 causing the harm because they want their partner to
15 be better, so they really want that support and often
16 times, they'll really want them to go through the
17 system as well. So, that's a lot of what we've have
18 been seeing on the ground.

19 CHAIR DIAZ: So, I'm (inaudible)
20 conversations and when I had a conversation with the
21 Administration and trying to have a peer violence
22 group within the 37th Council District if you don't
23 have one. What I would call my group is influencers
24 as opposed to interrupters. Do you have an opinion
25 towards that? I'm more about preventing a situation

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2 than reacting to it, so I'd like to know what your
3 thought is, and if you can't answer me now, that's
4 fine, feel free to reach out to me so we have a
5 little coffee and tea and I'd like to pick your brain
6 cause I definitely see a need to prevent situations.
7 Often abusers, is that their intention? You know,
8 it's become their social norm. You know, I'm not
9 making excuses for anyone, but I think it'd be a
10 divine world if we could prevent as many situations
11 as possible and get abusers help. So, if we can,
12 before things escalate. Influencers versus
13 interrupters. That's my question, how does it sound
14 to you?

15 HAILEY NORLASCO: Well, I actually that
16 think that they can actually live together one in the
17 same because if someone is a credible messenger, they
18 can also influence, so you may not always have to be
19 somebody interrupting violence but can be a person
20 that people respect in community and get from the
21 community, represent the community, and you can have
22 these conversations to help influence that change
23 that you're talking about. So, I think there are
24 still ways of interrupting, but like, you can be an
25 interrupter and also be that influencers or you can

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2 be that credible messenger that's just from the
3 community that's starting to have these conversations
4 like we're having at the center about how do we have
5 a healthy relationship, what is toxic masculinity,
6 how do we get to these root issues, you know, to
7 really stop these behaviors that are causing
8 violence, not only in our streets, but also in our
9 homes? So, we're really working on that aspect, and
10 I'll definitely take you up on that café con leche
11 because we could talk about this for a while.

12 CHAIR DIAZ: (Crosstalk). I'd like to.

13 HAILEY NORLASCO: I'm sorry?

14 CHAIR DIAZ: (Crosstalk). I'm glad that
15 you're working with the conversation.

16 HAILEY NORLASCO: Yeah, absolutely
17 because I think there's a lot of synergy that can
18 happen and like recently, like, we give out a lot of
19 public education materials, like, we're really out on
20 the ground, so talking with community members, our
21 prom cards have quotes about what is a healthy
22 relationship look like, what does the intersection of
23 gun violence and intimate partner violence look like,
24 and we use that to start conversations with folks in
25 the community, and you'd be surprised how many people

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2 want to talk about this issue and just never have
3 been able to get the space, and like the other day,
4 we were actually in Brownsville, a lot of members of
5 my team were in Brownsville with some of the other
6 care violence providers and we had went up to an
7 individual that was talking about a DV case that they
8 had in the past and I found a way to start to talk to
9 that individual and that person actually was saying,
10 "Oh wow, I never thought about it this way." You
11 know and that was interesting. You know, sometimes
12 we may think like oh, maybe somebody doesn't want to
13 talk about it. You'd be surprised when you're on the
14 ground speaking to folk how interested people are in
15 this specific issue and how many people want help and
16 just a safe space to talk about it and get the
17 resources that they need.

18 CHAIR DIAZ: I thank you for choosing to
19 do what you do.

20 HAILEY NORLASCO: Thank you.

21 CHAIR DIAZ: Positive vibes and please
22 stay safe.

23 HAILEY NORLASCO: Likewise, thank you.

24 CHAIR DIAZ: Because you're definitely in
25 an underground position and I know it can be

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2 challenging, so again, thank you. Call my office, my
3 schedule and let's have café con leche.

4 HAILEY NORLASCO: Mm-mmm.

5 CHAIR DIAZ: Thank you.

6 MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for
7 your testimony. Before I turn the last witness on
8 this panel, I'd like to ask if we have inadvertently
9 missed anyone else who is here to testify to please
10 use the raise hand function in Zoom and we will call
11 you on another panel. Next, we have Molly Burke of
12 LIFT. You may begin when the Sergeant gives you the
13 cue.

14 SGT. BRADLEY: Your time will begin now.

15 MOLLY BURKE: Good afternoon. Thank you
16 to Chair Diaz for the opportunity to testify and for
17 sharing your story this morning with us. My name is
18 Molly Burke and I am the Bronx Staff Attorney of
19 Legal Information for Families Today, usually called
20 LIFT. I'm here today to tell you about some of our
21 work in domestic violence cases. LIFT is one of the
22 few organizations in New York City that works
23 directly with Pro se litigants. 80% of the thousands
24 of family court litigants are unrepresented for
25 issues fundamental to the wellbeing of children such

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as child support, custody, visitation, and protection in domestic violence cases. The pandemic has had a profound impact on the operations of the family court. The court is operating completely virtually and until recently, was only hearing cases deemed to be emergencies. Although domestic violence cases have been deemed to be emergencies, there is a huge backlog of other cases to be addressed over the next several months or years. Now, in our 25th year of serving New York City's families, LIFT works with litigant to achieve their legal goals during a time of unprecedented crisis. Over the past year, we have provided about 25,000 New York Families with services ranging from quick answers to in depth legal guidance. We served mothers 45% and fathers 39% as well as grandparents and other relatives and nonrelatives. More than 76% are people of color and 14% are monolingual Spanish-speaking. LIFT's legal model is different from other agencies who work on cases of domestic violence. While other agencies have expertise in helping clients get orders of protection and provide essential safety planning services, some survivors do not want to get orders of protection because they do not want to involve the

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police, they are fearful over retaliation from the non-custodial parent, or they are afraid of exposing their immigration status in court. These are the domestic violence clients who come to LIFT. We focus on survivors who have issues related to their children on getting custody, visitation, or child support orders. LIFT also works with families in which there's an interest in maintaining some degree of connection between the children and the person who causes harm. Safety is the most important issue, but even as there are not enough programs for survivors of domestic violence, there are almost ...

SGT. BRADLEY: Time has expired.

CHAIR DIAZ: Please give her another 60 seconds if she needs it, please.

MOLLY BURKE: Thank you, Chair Diaz.

CHAIR DIAZ: You're welcome.

MOLLY BURKE: But even as there are not enough programs for survivors of domestic violence, there are almost no successful programs to address the emotional and psychological issues of people who cause harm. LIFT works with men on a variety of family-related issues and is supportive of the development of these kind of abuse partner

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intervention programs. Currently, I represent LIFT on the Lawyer's Committee Against Domestic Violence which works in New York City and New York State. I'm the Co-Chair of the Legislative sub-committee advocating for policy reform and Legislative change. LIFT also works closely with the Mayor's Office to End Gender-base Violence through the Family Justice Centers where we work once a month in three different boroughs. I would now like to share the story of one of my clients. Akila (SP?) is the custodial mother of her beautiful two-year-old daughter, Megan (SP?). Akila was referred to us after her daughter's father Eddie (SP?) showed up at her apartment and demanded custody of Megan after having been absent from Megan's entire life. Akila had already filed for paternity and child support before the COVID-19 pandemic, and she was confused how Eddie could be simultaneously demanding custody while denying paternity and refusing to provide any financial support. Akila and I discussed her custody rights and Akila determined that she did not want to file for an order of protection or for custody at that time. Instead, we were able to focus on her paternity and child support hearings. After almost a

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year of waiting due to the pandemic, Akila was finally able to establish paternity and now has a temporary order of child support that will be finalized in the coming months. Akila, who came to use terrified of Eddie's power was now able to advocate for herself and her daughter in her hearings against Eddie's hired attorney and through Eddie's repeated attempts to delay the case. Akila's case will be finalized soon, but she knows that should she ever need to return to family court, she now has the right information and an advocate ready to champion her through LIFT. LIFT supports all efforts to increase funding for services related to domestic violence, for the survivors, for the people who cause harm, and particularly for the children who get caught in the cycle of abuse. As the levels of domestic violence has skyrocketed during the pandemic, we hope that New York City Council will continue its long-time commitment to the safety and security for all families and will continue to make this area a high priority for funding and for innovative programming. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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CHAIR DIAZ: I thank you, and I'm hoping you have submitted your testimony today because I want to go back and read it carefully. Your organization seems to have a holistic approach.

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MOLLY BURKE: Yes.

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CHAIR DIAZ: And I'm open to learning more about that because as a functioning society that's not always so functional, it's good to know that we have organizations out there that are thinking outside the box that are maybe taking lift experience and applying that knowledge, you know, as someone, I worked at the VA Human Services, and if I learned anything during my process, was learning to speak to the person in front of me and that's takes stepping outside the box. You know, going from a concept paper, from a book, to actually apply, (inaudible) as they say, and we're dealing with both parties, the moms and the dads, we definitely want to ensure that the little people, the children don't fall through the cracks and that their emotional needs are also being met. So, I thank you again for what sounds as if it's an organization that stretches its limits and goes with thinking outside the box.

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Thank you for your presentation.

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MOLLY BURKE: Thank you.

CHAIR DIAZ: You're welcome.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Thank you for your testimony. I'm going to make one more call for any witness we may have inadvertently missed, and also make a call for Council Members to use the raise hand function in Zoom to indicate that you have a question for this panel. Seeing no hands raised, I will turn back to you, Chair Diaz, if you have any additional questions.

CHAIR DIAZ: No, I do not.

MODERATOR CHLOE RIVERA: Great, so last order of business, I'd like to remind everyone, you may send your written testimony up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing by email it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Chair Diaz, we have concluded public testimony for this hearing.

CHAIR DIAZ: I want to start off by thanking you all for giving me the strength to tell my story this morning. I knew I was going to start my day being somewhat emotional and nervous, but I didn't know how it was going to end. So, thank you for the positive faces and the feedback that you've given to me. It's my junk and it's my message, so

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thank you for creating an environment that allowed me to enter into a not-so-comfort zone and walk away from this hearing proud to have stepped forward and share my story, and I'm hoping that I helped someone today. You know, there are resources available, and we have maybe gained more peers today that would have never thought that they could be an extension or an assistance to someone. I'd like to thank the Commissioner for being a part of the conversation today and I know that some of the questions were not easy. I want to thank my staff, my extended staff, my committee staff, Brenda McKinley (SP?), Chloe Rivera, Monica People (SP?), Carry Cherry (SP?), and Richard for putting this hearing together, it was extremely tough for my committee. When I was diagnosed positive for COVID, the committee worked to make sure that today could be made possible, so thank you all for being a part of my process. Have a wonderful weekend and enjoy your time. I'm looking forward to more deep conversations and positive resolutions. Thank you. Adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 20, 2021