

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS

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April 28, 2021  
Start: 1:02 p.m.  
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HELD AT: Remote Hearing (Virtual Room 2)

B E F O R E: Ben Kallos  
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Inez Barron  
James Gennaro  
Mark Gjonaj  
Bill Perkins  
Helen Rosenthal  
Diana Ayala

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

Michelle Jackson, Executive Director  
Human Service Council

Catherine Trapani, Executive Director  
Homeless Services United

Nora Moran, Director of Policy and  
Advocacy  
United Neighborhood Houses

David Cohen, Deputy Political Director  
32 BJ

Michael Polenberg, Vice President of  
Governmental Affairs  
Safe Horizons

Nicole McVinua, Director of Policy  
Urban Pathways

Tierra Labrada, Senior Policy Analyst  
Supportive Housing Network of New York

Nadia Chait, Director of Policy and  
Advocacy  
Coalition for Behavioral Health

Molly Krakowski, Senior Director of  
Governmental Affairs  
JASA

Towaki Komatsu, New York City Resident

Charmaine Lathan, member  
32 BJ

Monique Smith, member  
32 BJ

Amber Drummond, member  
32 BJ

Anthony Kenna, member  
32 BJ

Francisco Batista, member  
32 BJ

Shaquille Shepherd, member  
32 BJ

Bernice Carter, member  
32 BJ

Tracey Holmes, member  
32 BJ

Nefertiti Elwoods, member  
32 BJ

Juan Reyes, member  
32 BJ

Raphael Cruz, member  
32 BJ

Quintana Omed [sp?], member  
32 BJ

Terri Batson, member  
32 BJ

Kofe Shutawae [sp?], member  
32 BJ

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sergeants, if we can  
3 begin the records. PC recording is underway.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Recording to the cloud  
5 all set.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Back up is rolling.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sergeant Biondo, take  
8 us away.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon,  
10 everyone, and welcome to today's remote New York City  
11 Council hearing for the Committee on Contracts. At  
12 this time, will all panelists please turn on their  
13 video for verification purposes? To minimize  
14 disruptions, please place all electronic devices to  
15 vibrate or silent mode. If you would like to submit  
16 testimony, please send via email to  
17 [testimony@Council.NYC.gov](mailto:testimony@Council.NYC.gov). Again, that is  
18 [testimony@Council.NYC.gov](mailto:testimony@Council.NYC.gov). Thank you for your  
19 cooperation. Chair Kallos, we are ready to begin.  
20 Chair, you're on mute.

21 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Good afternoon.  
22 Welcome to this virtual hearing of the New York City  
23 Council's Committee on Contracts. My name is Ben  
24 Kallos and I am Chair of this committee. For those  
25 of you who are watching locally, please feel free to

2 participate in the meeting by tweeting me @BenKallos.  
3 Before we dive in to today's hearing, I'd like to  
4 acknowledge that we've been joined by Council member  
5 Gjonaj as well as Council member Ayala. Today, we  
6 will be hearing three bills all geared towards  
7 improving working conditions for the city's  
8 hardworking non-profit human service provider  
9 workers. The first bill, Introduction 1995,  
10 sponsored by Council member Ayala, seeks to improve  
11 the training requirements for security guards  
12 employed to work at our homeless shelters.  
13 Specifically, this bill would require all contracted  
14 shelter operators to ensure that all security guards  
15 working at Department of Homeless Services shelters  
16 receive 40 hours of training after they were hired,  
17 including 10 hours of shelter specific training as  
18 well as an eight hour annual refresher course. The  
19 second bill we are gathering feedback on today comes  
20 from Council member Moya and also relates to security  
21 guards working at homeless shelters. If enacted,  
22 Introduction 2006 would require any entities  
23 operating shelters pursuant to contracts with the  
24 city to pay these security guard workers a prevailing  
25 wage. Finally, legislation we've been working on for

2 quite some time, Introduction 2137, would extend the  
3 prevailing wage measure to all human service workers  
4 providing services pursuant to a city contract. Each  
5 year, the city contracts with human service providers  
6 to deliver a range of social services, including  
7 service for seniors, foster care, after school care,  
8 mental health counseling, shelter, and housing  
9 programs, food assistance, to about 3 million New  
10 Yorkers and yet these workers face their own  
11 financial hardship, as you may have read about.  
12 Wages within non-profit service providers who  
13 contract with the city are devastatingly low and,  
14 sadly, sometimes the service provider workers are so  
15 underpaid that they, themselves, or forced into  
16 relying on the same public assistance programs they  
17 help to provide. [Inaudible 00:03:12], for example,  
18 work closely with the New York Times and Catherin  
19 Trapani and Josh Dean at Human NYC to uncover  
20 numerous stories of homeless shelter workers who are,  
21 themselves, facing closing and unsecured living in  
22 homeless shelter and it's not good enough. For far  
23 too long, these workers have carried out the work of  
24 delivering essential services which, during Covid 19,  
25 were more important than ever without being fairly

2 compensated and it is time to move beyond the  
3 heartfelt thanks and appreciation and even applause  
4 for the workers to a prevailing wage. And what we  
5 are talking about here is it isn't the nonprofits  
6 fault. The city actually sets the wages in the  
7 contracts. The city is actually forcing these wages  
8 down to try to cut costs wherever they can in, so  
9 often, that it is on the backs of our nonprofit  
10 workers. And so the city can and must do better. A  
11 prevailing wage simply must become the standard and,  
12 if we have to enact laws to enforce it, then we will,  
13 which is why we are introducing-- Sorry. Why we are  
14 hearing these bills today. Now, I wanted to also  
15 note that we are still going through a pandemic. We  
16 are seeing incredible financial difficulties. The  
17 city received a lot of support from the federal and  
18 state government. Our human services providers  
19 actually faced a cut during the pandemic and one of  
20 the issues being that we actually just last week  
21 announced restoring that cut to indirect services and  
22 we have to make sure that we keep our nonprofit  
23 providers going. And another big piece of this is  
24 whatever we pass in the Council cannot be unfunded  
25 mandates. We need to baseline this funding in the

2 Council and in the budget to make sure that we can  
3 pay for it. We can't just tell the nonprofit  
4 providers to do more with less which is a frequent  
5 refrain. I would like to thank all the providers  
6 that are joining us today and, before we begin the  
7 testimony, I would like to take a moment to thank the  
8 Contracts Committee staff, our outgoing legislative  
9 counsel, Josh Kingsley, who is filling in while our  
10 returning legislative counsel, Alex Polinov, was on  
11 paternity leave. And I am so grateful that our staff  
12 at the Council is taking we. Here, at the Council, I  
13 believe we offered 12 weeks leave, plus an additional  
14 four weeks which, coupled together, becomes 16 weeks  
15 and I am seeing the Council not that that is, in  
16 fact, the case. I also want to thank our policy  
17 analyst, Leah Scrupiak, who has really been stepping  
18 up. Our financial analyst, Frank Sarno, and finance  
19 unit head, Jon Russell, for all their hard work. I  
20 want to just speak about prevailing wage because  
21 people might not know what it is. I am a labor  
22 lawyer. There are different wages. There is the  
23 minimum wage, federally. That is around seven  
24 dollars. Here in New York City, it's \$15. Not so  
25 around the state of New York. There is a living wage

2 which is something that can be bargained for which  
3 is, theoretically, higher than the minimum wage.  
4 Here in New York City, the living wage is lower than  
5 the minimum wage. And then there is the prevailing  
6 wage. Prevailing wage is determined by state law and  
7 it has the comptroller go to a field to find all the  
8 people who perform a specific task should we then  
9 what would be a bargaining unit or what would be a  
10 title and find out what the salary is in that sector.  
11 Then they say that this is not the prevailing wage is  
12 and that would be what goes into the contracts. In  
13 the alternative, if 50 percent of the people in the  
14 title were represented by a labor union, then what  
15 ever was collectively bargained between all labor  
16 union, the nonprofit providers, and the city in a  
17 three-part negotiation would become the prevailing  
18 wage. This is actually a model for how we were able  
19 to raise wages for specific human service workers  
20 within daycare and we were able to raise wages for  
21 pre-k. And so, that is actually how we were able to  
22 do it. I would like to now turn it over to Council  
23 member Ayala followed by Council member Moya. I will  
24 turn it over to them. Thank you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Good afternoon and  
3 thank you, Chair Kallos. I am Council member Diana  
4 Ayala and I am really happy to be here today. We  
5 will hear my bill, Intro 1995. As was stated earlier  
6 by Council member Kallos, this bill would require  
7 that all Department of Homeless Service shelters  
8 security guards receive upwards of 40 hours of  
9 training after they are hired, including 10 hours of  
10 shelter specific training, as well as an eight hour  
11 refresher training annually thereafter. While strong  
12 training standards are required for security officers  
13 working at city run shelters, security staff at  
14 privately operated shelters are not afforded the same  
15 level of training. In fact, three out of four of  
16 these security officers are not required to be  
17 trained at all. It is imperative that all staff  
18 responsible for protecting residents residing in our  
19 shelters be given the tools that they need to create  
20 a safe and welcoming environment. Security officers  
21 protect some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.  
22 Their work is demanding and, at times, dangerous.  
23 This required training would require the best  
24 possible services to shelter clients so that the  
25 individuals and families who use the system feel safe

2 accessing the services they need to get back on their  
3 feet. We have heard from many dedicated security  
4 officers that they have deep compassion for the  
5 residents that they serve and want access to the  
6 tools that will help them do their jobs most  
7 efficiently. Officers and privately run shelters  
8 face stress not just from conditions in a challenging  
9 work site, but from the risk to their health during  
10 the coronavirus pandemic and also from employment  
11 conditions which place many of them in a position of  
12 economic instability. In this moment in time, when  
13 our city and our country is reckoning with how to  
14 enact racial justice, we must take the opportunity to  
15 look at every aspect of how we serve and support  
16 black and brown communities. The majority of the  
17 city's residents, the majority of people using the  
18 shelter system, and the majority of the security  
19 workforce that serves them are black and brown. In  
20 addition to making shelters safer, this legislation  
21 will offer frontline workers an opportunity to grow  
22 their skills and to create a pathway to advancement  
23 and upward mobility, making these essential jobs  
24 better is a matter of racial and economic justice for  
25 the sake of these workers, for their families, and

2 for the people that they serve. I look forward to  
3 hearing from you all today and to finally getting  
4 this is bill passed. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you, Council  
6 member Ayala. I couldn't have said it better.  
7 Within the human services, 80 percent of our workers  
8 are women and 80 percent of those women are women of  
9 color and, as we saw at the beginning of the  
10 pandemic, so much money was directed at big  
11 corporations and, by creating prevailing wage and  
12 having these training requirements, that should be  
13 putting the money where it needs to go for a worker  
14 led recovery. And not only that, these dollars will  
15 be going right into the pockets of people who will be  
16 spending it in our local economy. I would like to  
17 now turn it over to Francisco Moya who, perhaps, has  
18 the most realistic background. And so, I am hoping  
19 that is him, but it could just be the background for  
20 taking me out.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: It is me. It is  
22 me, Chair. Thank you, Chair Kallos. And thank you,  
23 everyone. I am here to talk about Intro 2006. As we  
24 know, throughout this pandemic, we have seen over and  
25 over again the health and economic disparities, the

2 rising cost-of-living, in the impact on the  
3 communities that were hardest hit by Covid. New York  
4 City's homeless shelter workers know what it is like  
5 to be on the front lines of a crisis and that is why  
6 they signed up. They signed up to care for New  
7 Yorkers who find themselves in a personal state of  
8 emergency. They are the very people who continue to  
9 make sacrifices for countless New Yorkers, especially  
10 throughout this pandemic. For us to work towards the  
11 real recovery from Covid means that we cannot leave  
12 behind those that have suffered the brunt of this  
13 pandemic. How can we help New Yorkers get back on  
14 their feet if they are barely making ends meet? We  
15 cannot accept private contractors taking public  
16 dollars and then paying workers poverty wages without  
17 meaningful benefits. Prevailing wages can mean a  
18 worker doesn't have to work multiple jobs Jamaicans  
19 meet. Prevailing wages can mean that a worker has a  
20 better shot of moving towards a permanent home.  
21 Prevailing wages can mean a step forward to closing  
22 the racial pay gaps. And while this doesn't solve  
23 the issues to address the inequalities, it is a step  
24 in the right direction. It is how we will recover  
25 from this pandemic equitably and with dignity. Amber

2 Drummond, a homeless shelter security guard expressed  
3 that she is just here fighting for an equitable  
4 standard of life that all Americans should have. We  
5 need to be part of this fight and this is one step  
6 closer to doing that. We need to step up for the  
7 respect and the dignity of all workers. I stand with  
8 Amber and I stand with all my brothers and sisters  
9 who are predominantly black and brown serving mostly  
10 black and brown New Yorkers. I want to take this  
11 opportunity to applaud the members of 32 BJ for their  
12 tireless dedication and for their fighting alongside  
13 me and the working class New Yorkers to build a fair  
14 and more equitable city and I want to thank also my  
15 colleagues who have signed on and for those who will  
16 be joining me in hoping to pass this bill. So, thank  
17 you very much, Chair, and thank you for the  
18 opportunity to speak on my bill.

19 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you both very  
20 much. We're going to first hear from Michelle  
21 Jackson at Human Services Council followed by Captain  
22 Trapani at Homeless Services United and Norma Rand at  
23 United Neighborhood Houses. After that, we're going  
24 to hold our questions for those three and, at the  
25 conclusion of the third person's testimony, we will

2 open it up to questions. We will then hear from  
3 David Cohen from 32 BJ, take questions. We will then  
4 hear from SHNNY, Safe Horizons, Urban Pathways, JASA,  
5 and the Coalition for Behavioral Health, take  
6 questions. For those three groups, we will have a  
7 five minute clock on speakers and then, after that,  
8 we have about 20 people signed up to speak and there  
9 will be a two minute clock and we will reserve  
10 questions until those folks have all had a chance to  
11 speak. So there will be five opportunities for folks  
12 to ask questions and bill sponsors will have a 10  
13 minute clock on their questions and all other Council  
14 members will have a five minute clock. And I will  
15 turn it over to committee counsel.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair  
17 Kallos. My name is Alex Polinov, counsel to the  
18 Contracts Committee of the New York City Council.  
19 Before we begin testimony, I would like to remind  
20 everyone that you will be on mute until you are  
21 called upon to testify, at which point you will be  
22 unmuted by the host. I will be calling on panelists  
23 to testify individually, so please listen for your  
24 name to be called. During the hearing, if a Council  
25 member would like to ask a question, please use the

2 zoom raise hand function and I will call on you in  
3 order. As the Chair mentioned, we will be limiting  
4 Council member questions to 10 minutes for the bill  
5 sponsors, which includes the time it takes for the  
6 panelists to answer the questions and five minutes  
7 for the other committee members. Please note that for  
8 the ease of this virtual hearing, there will not be a  
9 second round of questioning outside of questions from  
10 the committee Chair. All hearing participants should  
11 submit their testimony to [testimony@Council.NYC.gov](mailto:testimony@Council.NYC.gov).  
12 Since the administration is not present, we will now  
13 turn directly to public testimony. I would like to  
14 remind everyone that, unlike during our typical  
15 Council hearings, we will be calling on these  
16 individuals one by one to testify. Each panelist, as  
17 the Chair mentioned, will be given 10 minutes to  
18 speak and please begin once the sergeant started the  
19 timer. Council members who have questions for a  
20 particular panelist should use the zoom raise hand  
21 function and, again, we will call on you after the  
22 panelists have completed their testimony. For the  
23 panelists themselves, once your name is called, a  
24 member of our staff will unmute you and the sergeant-  
25 at-arms will set the timer give you the go-ahead to

2 begin. Please wait for the sergeant to make this  
3 announcement before delivering your testimony. We  
4 will now turn to--

5 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Just a quick  
6 clarification. Five minutes for the first panelists  
7 for nonprofits in large organizations and then we  
8 will go back to two minutes for individuals.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great. Thank you,  
10 Chair. As the Chair mentioned, we will turn-- we  
11 will begin testimony with Michelle Jackson followed  
12 by Catherine Trapani and then Nora Moran. Ms.  
13 Jackson, you may begin as soon as the sergeant calls  
14 time.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

16 MICHELLE JACKSON: Great. Thank you so  
17 much. Good afternoon, Chairperson Kallos, members of  
18 the New York City Council Committee on Contracts, and  
19 other Council members who have joined today. My name  
20 is Michelle Jackson. I am the Executive Director of  
21 the Human Services Council, a membership organization  
22 representing over 170 human service organizations in  
23 New York City and they range in services from  
24 childcare to senior services, mental health services,  
25 homeless services, and everything in between. I

2 first really want to thank you Chair Kallos, and that  
3 Council members here today for your work in helping  
4 pass the restoration of indirect funding and  
5 baselining for next year. That is a huge win for the  
6 sector. Council member Kallos, you have been a real  
7 champion for this and we really appreciate your work.  
8 And all of the Council members who really To this  
9 issue alive. It is definitely in the weeds and, but  
10 real important money and you will hear from members  
11 today who will testify also about, you know, how much  
12 that money means to them. So, a huge win for us.  
13 Unfortunately, the cuts to indirect are not the only  
14 crisis that demands an immediate solution in the  
15 human services sector. The need to invest in the  
16 human services workforce is amendments and something  
17 that the Human Services Council and other coalitions  
18 you will hear from today have talked about over the  
19 years city contracts currently pay essential human  
20 services workers poverty wages which is simply an  
21 outrage. Tax dollars, in particular, should not be  
22 asked to fund poverty level wages and there must be a  
23 dedicated effort at the city level to lift all of the  
24 salaries and this is not, by the way, not just a city  
25 issue. It is also a state issue that we are also

2 advocating for at the state level. HSC is in support  
3 of any effort to lift wages of not just human  
4 services workers, but any labor force that is not  
5 paid an equitable wage. The Human Services sector  
6 exists to eliminate poverty and one way to do that is  
7 to pay equitable wages across sectors. The human  
8 services workforce is primarily women and people of  
9 color who do lifesaving work as we have seen in Covid  
10 in our communities and have seen low and stagnant  
11 wages for decades. Establishing a prevailing wage  
12 could be an important vehicle to move to higher and  
13 more appropriate wages established not using current  
14 salary levels, but comparable salary levels in  
15 government and the private sector. The average human  
16 services worker is paid between 20 and 40 percent  
17 less than they would if they were employed by  
18 government or in hospitals or the private sector.  
19 So, while we support the prevailing wage for all  
20 human services workers, we are very-- you know, the  
21 wage schedule would be very important because the  
22 wage schedule only looks that current salaries. It  
23 will just kind of create a system of poverty wages  
24 for the human services workforce. If the city is  
25 ready to make that necessary adjustment and then also

2 fund this on human services contracts, this will be a  
3 huge positive step for human services workers. There  
4 isn't a wage schedule for human services workers.  
5 Government sets the salaries on contracts or doesn't  
6 set them, but certainly doesn't provide enough money  
7 in the contract to pay equitable wages and, in fact,  
8 we've had some providers who have one RFPs with the  
9 city and been told that they pay their workers too  
10 much on certain contracts in those have to be  
11 adjusted and usually downward. So, we are in full  
12 support of a prevailing wage for human services  
13 workers that does holistic we so that we do not  
14 support the bill only for shelter workers or shelter  
15 security guards because we need to have a holistic  
16 view of the human services sector. And we need to  
17 raise wages across all salary lines and staff lines.  
18 If you do want at a time, you create further  
19 disparity and organizations and, if it is also  
20 unfunded, it creates an unfunded mandate on  
21 organizations who are already struggling before  
22 Covid, certainly during Covid more so to make ends  
23 meet. If the city is ready with this prevailing wage  
24 bill to create a schedule that lists the wages of all  
25 human services workers then make the necessary

2 investment to fund this on government contracts--  
3 and, by the way, when you find it on government  
4 contracts, nonprofit still have to come to the table  
5 with their own private fundraising part of city  
6 contracts, but many are willing to make that decision  
7 in order to lift up the wages of their workers. It  
8 is something that they absolutely want to work in  
9 partnership with the city with. So, if the city is  
10 ready to make that necessary investment, it well,  
11 perhaps, be the largest investment nationally in the  
12 sector and would help ensure fair and equitable wages  
13 for essential workers that will uplift our  
14 communities most impacted by Covid 19 and better  
15 prepare our city for the next disaster. Human  
16 services workers were out there from day one keeping  
17 people safe at home and alive and they have not been  
18 rewarded for their work in a meaningful way. We have  
19 seen the disparities of it being a women centered,  
20 people of color centered workforce exacerbated during  
21 Covid and they couldn't stay home while others could  
22 and so, in closing, I just want to, again, thank you,  
23 Chair Kallos, for creating this legislation and for  
24 an important step forward in talking about the

2 importance of the human services workforce and the  
3 need to--

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

5 MICHELLE JACKSON: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.

7 Trapani. Or Ms. Jackson. Excuse me. Unless there  
8 any questions from the members, we will move to the  
9 next panelist.

10 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: We are going to  
11 hold questions until all three are done.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Got it. Okay. In  
13 that case, we will next hear from Catherine Trapani  
14 followed by Nora Moran and then David Cohen. Ms.  
15 Trapani, you may begin once the--

16 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Just one moment. I  
17 just want to acknowledge we have been joined by  
18 Council member Helen Rosenthal who was integral in  
19 getting the indirect to begin with and has been a key  
20 partner since. You may now begin. Sorry.

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

22 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Thank you so much  
23 and I will never mind pausing to say thank you to  
24 Council member Rosenthal for helping with indirect  
25 and I owe a lot of thanks to you, Chair Kallos. So,

2 thank you very much. My name is Catherine Trapani.  
3 I am the Executive Director at Homeless Services  
4 United and we are a coalition of about 50 nonprofit  
5 agencies surveying homeless and at risk adults and  
6 families in New York City. Every day are member  
7 programs work with thousands of homeless families and  
8 individuals preventing shelter entry whenever  
9 possible and working to and homelessness through  
10 counseling, social services, healthcare, legal  
11 services, and public benefit assistance among many  
12 other support. We are really grateful to you, Chair  
13 Kallos, and members of this committee and the Council  
14 and your commitment to supporting our workforce and  
15 for everyone and everything that you do and your  
16 leadership on homeless issues in general. I think  
17 that we are going to disagree a little bit on the  
18 mechanisms, but on the merits, we are with you. Our  
19 workers work incredibly hard and have been here as  
20 that deserved to be fairly compensated. As Michelle  
21 pointed out in her remarks, a prevailing wage  
22 schedule doesn't actually exist for human services  
23 workers, so we are concerned that this mechanism to  
24 get to the wage parity in equity that we all seek may  
25 not be a viable pathway to get to our shared goals.

2 Homeless Services United supports increasing wages  
3 for all human services workers and frontline staff in  
4 our programs. For decades, the city has paid our  
5 nonprofit workers a fraction of what they pay their  
6 own city employees for the same work and that  
7 absolutely must change. The intention of the Council  
8 to increase wages for nonprofit workers is  
9 commendable and, like I said, we are just so proud of  
10 our staff. We agree that it is time to increase  
11 their pay and wholeheartedly support the mechanism to  
12 do so in your budget response. We should give  
13 everybody equal of at least three percent now and set  
14 aside a fund to reserve for wage increases that can  
15 be applied on a contract by contract basis so that  
16 the wages are actually funded in advance of a mandate  
17 taking place. Sorry. I'm trying to summarize. I  
18 have more detailed remarks and written testimony that  
19 we will be emailing to the Council, but I think like  
20 the point is that, you know, city agencies like DHS  
21 had a model budget process and in that process, they  
22 were supposed to update the rates that shelter  
23 providers were paid in order to provide high quality  
24 service. Throughout the time that we were working on  
25 the model budget, our members repeatedly asked the

2 Department of Homeless Services to look at wages and  
3 we were repeatedly told know. It has been an uphill  
4 battle to get them to adjust salaries at all and to  
5 do so, you've had to prove that a job is vacant for a  
6 certain amount of time or the turnover is abnormally  
7 high and it was just a really inadequate exercise.  
8 So, I think that the Council's proposal to create a  
9 fund to set aside some money restricted to personnel  
10 cost increases and apply it on a contract by contract  
11 basis is the way that we are going to get to know  
12 more equitable wage scale because if you were to pass  
13 a bill that has a mandate for a schedule that doesn't  
14 exist, I just worry that we will never get it done.  
15 So, like we have learned a lot of lessons. I think  
16 the indirect is a good one where the city can make  
17 this promise and say, oh, we're going to do this  
18 thing and then on a whim change their minds and you  
19 are sort of stuck with a mandate and a process for  
20 calculating a rate and then no way to actually pay  
21 for it. And so, when I looked at these bills, I just  
22 had that fear that that would happen again. So, I  
23 think that if we want to pay people, the best way to  
24 do that is to put the fund in the contracts that the  
25 contract level and baseline it and be done. So, that

2 is really the gist of our position. Our workers  
3 deserve the money. We want to see it. But we have  
4 some details in our testimony about some technical  
5 challenges that we have with the bills as presented  
6 that we would urge the Council to address if you  
7 choose to go down this path to make sure that the  
8 commitment that you are making is really real and  
9 viable and something that can actually sustain our  
10 workforce in the long term. So, with that, I will  
11 and my testimony and thank you for your commitment to  
12 our workforce and certainly, you know, answer  
13 questions when the time comes at the end of the  
14 panel.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.  
16 Trapani. We will now hear from Nora Moran, the last  
17 member this panel. At which point, we will turn to  
18 the Council members for questions. Ms. Nora Moran,  
19 you may begin when the sergeants call time.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

21 NORA MORAN: Thank you so much for the  
22 opportunity to testify today. My name is Nora Moran.  
23 I am the director of policy and advocacy at United  
24 Neighborhood Houses. I also want to echo the thanks  
25 that both Michelle and Catherine said about indirect.

2 It's really wonderful that that funding has been  
3 restored and that, you know, community based  
4 organizations are able to be, you know, in a more  
5 sustainable and financial path going forward. So I'm  
6 here to testify today specifically about Intro 2137.  
7 I want to share some comments and perspectives from  
8 the settlement house perspective and from UNH's  
9 perspective. As folks may know, settlement houses  
10 employ nearly 25,000 New Yorkers. These people often  
11 live in the communities and neighborhoods that they  
12 serve. Many of them have gone through and come up  
13 the organizations themselves and now have decided to  
14 commit their career to working there. UNH recently  
15 conducted a study of settlement house employees which  
16 the Fordham University graduate school of social  
17 service where we found that a lot of these workers  
18 see this work as their life's mission. They are very  
19 dedicated to the settlement house model, to the  
20 communities that they serve, but due to chronic  
21 underfunding, many of these employees are subsisting  
22 on wages far below the cost of living in New York  
23 City. Settlement house staff, in our study, reported  
24 that they were, quote, everything from skating by  
25 financially to severely underpaid. They have many

2 financial debts around student debts and loans and,  
3 you know, definitely a struggle with receiving wages  
4 that are below a living wage. And so, you know,  
5 regarding 2137, we absolutely support any effort to  
6 raise wages of human services staff. We stand in  
7 solidarity with the settlement house workforce who  
8 have identified that, you know, low wages are problem  
9 as well as their leadership. And we want to testify  
10 today with comments and suggestions to strengthen  
11 2137 should it move forward. So, the first  
12 recommendation that we would offer is that, you know,  
13 this legislation should have a section that covers  
14 the exact job title that would be covered by the  
15 bill. Right now it doesn't list specific titles.  
16 There's a very broad range of titles in the human  
17 services world. We want to make sure that this  
18 legislation targets those positions that most need a  
19 prevailing wage and most need to be supported with a  
20 prevailing wage. So it would be, you know, great to  
21 have a little bit more detail in the bill that  
22 constitutes that out so that we are really targeting  
23 support to, you know, lower wage frontline workers  
24 who really need this additional support. The second  
25 would be adding language that would really target the

2 requirements of the bill to employees whose salaries  
3 are paid for by city contracts. A lot of, you know,  
4 human service organizations, as you know, provide  
5 services through city contracts as well as state  
6 contracts, funding from the federal government, and  
7 philanthropic funds. So, right now, 2137 does not  
8 specify, you know, that the prevailing wage  
9 requirements would apply just to employees whose  
10 salaries are paid through city contract funds. We  
11 think that, you know, targeting that could help  
12 potentially ease some of the burdens that, you know,  
13 human service organizations might face and also would  
14 make sure that we were not, you know, leading New  
15 York State and the federal government off the hook  
16 for increasing funding for prevailing wages, as well.  
17 We would hope that, you know, if something like this  
18 did pass that there would be companion legislation in  
19 a similar investment made at the state level in order  
20 to make sure that, you know, the state was also  
21 supporting organizations in the right way. And the  
22 final is, you know, obviously that, you know, any  
23 prevailing wages and any higher wages that are set  
24 absolutely need to be paid for. We have seen, over  
25 and over again, that, you know, unfortunately, when

2 times get tough, city government cuts funding to the  
3 human services sector. We just experienced this with  
4 indirect and we certainly would not want a scenario  
5 where there was a mandate to pay a prevailing wage  
6 and no funding in the contract in order to do that.  
7 So, we would like to, you know, see provisions in the  
8 bill that would nullify the line item funding tests  
9 that to that prevailing wage. You know, we would not  
10 want a scenario where, you know, the prevailing wage  
11 was not able to be implemented because there was no  
12 money in the contract and, at the end of the day, you  
13 know, that only hurts the workforce who then would  
14 not be able to have these higher wages. And the  
15 final point that we will just raise is actually one,  
16 you know, relating to the current budget. It is  
17 great that the indirect cost rate initiative was  
18 restored. It's also important to now, you know, look  
19 at the nonprofit workforce and look again at the need  
20 to increase cost-of-living adjustment and include  
21 that in the FY 22 budget and we are asking that the  
22 FY 22 budget include a three percent cola on the  
23 personal services of all human services contracts and  
24 I see my time is up, so thank you.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.  
3 Moran. We will now turn back to Chair Kallos for  
4 questions for the panel.

5 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: I want to thank the  
6 panel for working with us on this legislation to  
7 begin with, working to try to get it as close as  
8 possible. I understand the mandate that this can't  
9 be unfunded. I understand the mandate that it can't  
10 be just a requirement on providers to pay a  
11 prevailing wage in the absence of actually a payment  
12 and I completely support the call. So, I want to  
13 thank you and I think the lack of questions from me  
14 is just because of the fact that we have been working  
15 so well and, with five minutes to testify, we have  
16 gotten very good testimony that we can work with as  
17 well as what you have submitted. Do any other  
18 members have questions who wish to raise their hand?  
19 I would like to acknowledge we been joined by Council  
20 member Barron.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Seeing no  
22 additional questions, Chair, if it is okay with you,  
23 we will move to the next panel.

24 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Yes, please.  
25

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay. Next, we  
3 will hear from David Cohen followed by Michael  
4 Polenberg and Nicole McVinua. Mr. Cohen, you may  
5 begin when the sergeants call time.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

7 DAVID COHEN: Great. Thank you everyone.  
8 My name is David Cohen. I'm the deputy political  
9 director at 32 BJ. I'm just getting my zoom  
10 logistics in order here. I'm reading testimony today  
11 on behalf of 32 BJ president, Kyle Bragg. 32 BJ is  
12 the largest building service union in the country  
13 with 85,000 our members living in New York City Metro  
14 area. 32 BJ strongly supports Intro 1995 and Intro  
15 2006. These two bills provide needed and overdue  
16 reforms and working conditions of security guards  
17 that ensure the safety of the city's contract in  
18 shelter system. It is something that 32 BJ has been  
19 working on for a long time around contracted security  
20 work throughout New York City. Intro 1995 addresses  
21 the need for additional training for shelter security  
22 guards and we thank Council member Ayala for carrying  
23 that bill. And sorry if I didn't say good afternoon  
24 to Chair Kallos and members of the committee. Good  
25 afternoon. I'm trying not to read specifically.

2 Under the current practice, shelter regards may not  
3 receive more than the minimum training required under  
4 law. While the legal minimum might be sufficient for  
5 a typical business, shelter, as we know, is not a  
6 typical business. According to a report by the  
7 Coalition for the Homeless, the primary reason for  
8 homeless persons not returning to the shelter system  
9 was safety. So, the city is commendable outreach  
10 efforts to on housed persons will yield only small  
11 returns along with the city shelters-- excuse me.  
12 Sorry. Will yield only small returns so long as the  
13 city shelters are perceived to be unsafe. With 40  
14 hours of additional training, and that is the  
15 industry standard, the city shelter guards will be  
16 able to provide a more secure environment for shelter  
17 residents and themselves. Crucially, in addition to  
18 providing more advanced training that is not context  
19 specific, Intro 1995 also requires training  
20 specifically related to the shelter environment and  
21 that is what, you know, we're going to year from  
22 workers later on about the need for the shelters--  
23 the need for this training in the shelters. I know  
24 I'm out of time, so Intro 2006 would require shelter  
25 security guards be paid prevailing wage. Security

2 guards at city run shelters are already paid the  
3 prevailing wage and some security guards all their  
4 wages fall after certain shelters were privatized.  
5 As recently as highlighted in the New York Times  
6 article, the competition among contractors for city  
7 contracts, while perhaps to achieve lower costs, can  
8 also create a race to the bottom on as to worker pay.  
9 And I think we heard from previous panels about the  
10 importance of paying our workers fairly, so, as a  
11 result, those working at security and in shelters may  
12 also be living at a shelter or facing housing  
13 insecurity. So, our shelter system is supposed to  
14 help solve the homelessness crisis, not create  
15 additional homelessness. Paying these workers a  
16 prevailing wage is not oppositional to the goals of  
17 our shelter system, but furtherance of its goals.  
18 So, lastly, these bills should ensure that those  
19 workers that ensure the safety of the shelter  
20 residents in compliance with the city's fire code are  
21 also covered. These workers are also we need of  
22 family sustaining wages. Moreover, many of these  
23 workers provide security services and would benefit  
24 from the additional training. So, we urge members of  
25 the committee and the Council to pass Intro 1995 and

2 Intro 2006. 32 BJ strongly supports them. You're  
3 going to hear from many workers today on why they  
4 need the standard and why we need the training and I  
5 greatly appreciate the committee's time and thank  
6 you, again, to that Chairperson holding this  
7 committee and, if I didn't think we sponsor on Intro  
8 2006, Francisco Moya, also thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you so much.  
10 We have been working with 32 BJ on this issue dating  
11 back to before we had a hearing on Acacia. So, thank  
12 you. I don't have questions just because of how much  
13 work we have been doing on this. Do we have any  
14 questions from Council members? Please feel free to  
15 raise your hands if you do. Seeing nine, we will  
16 thank David Cohen from 32 BJ.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.  
18 We are now going to continue with the next panel.  
19 Next up is Michael Polenberg followed by Nicole  
20 McVinua and then Tiara Labrada. Mr. Polenberg, you  
21 may begin when the sergeants call time.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

23 MICHAEL POLENBERG: Good afternoon,  
24 Chair Kallos and members of the committee. Michael  
25 Polenberg. I am vice president of government affairs

2 for Safe Horizon, the nation's largest nonprofit  
3 victim services organization and I am here to testify  
4 about Intro 2137. We are grateful to the Chair for  
5 recognizing the need to address historically  
6 inadequate wages that so many staff in our sector  
7 receive. The long-standing belief, the reinforced  
8 time and again through contracts that failed to cover  
9 the full cost of service delivery that the efforts of  
10 those who feed shelter and ensure the safety of  
11 vulnerable New Yorkers can be purchased at a discount  
12 must be refuted out right. The fact that the lowest  
13 wages in our sector are so often reserved for our  
14 staff of color is a stark example of the systemic  
15 racism that is built into our contracts. These jobs  
16 are also underpaid because they are seen as women's  
17 work, a reality which compounds the role of  
18 structural racism. At Safe Horizon, our staff have  
19 continued to provide in person direct services  
20 throughout the Covid 19 pandemic to victims of  
21 violence and abuse in our domestic violence shelters,  
22 our five child advocacy centers, and our street work  
23 project for homeless youth. Where in person services  
24 couldn't be offered safely, we quickly pivoted to  
25 offer critical services remotely, including at our 24

2 our hotline, legal services, and many other programs.  
3 There is no question our staff deserve a salary  
4 commensurate with the difficult and complex work  
5 inherent with responding each week to children and  
6 adults with experienced harm. We greatly appreciate  
7 the intent of 2137 and we have a few questions and  
8 concerns about how it will be operationalized, some  
9 of which have already been mentioned so far. You  
10 know, we are worried when we don't see funding  
11 attached to legislation that the administration will  
12 say, fine. We will do this, but we are going to take  
13 away on the indirect cost increase that we fought so  
14 hard to get and that Council member Rosenthal and  
15 others fought so hard to win. We would hate to see  
16 the city decide to pit one of these funding sources  
17 against the other. We are not sure, but in this has  
18 been referenced today, what measures the comptroller  
19 will take to set prevailing wage schedules for our  
20 sector when no such thing exists currently and that  
21 the already low rates will be codified, further  
22 compounding the problem for the foreseeable future.  
23 And the bill considers anyone who works for human  
24 services provider, whether or not they are paid  
25 through by the city contract to be covered by this

2 bill. That means staff covered by state contracts,  
3 federal contracts, or other means. We are not sure  
4 how operational you want would pass on a rate  
5 increase to somebody paid for by estate contract.  
6 So, we urge the Council to consider these and other  
7 questions from stakeholders in our sector. We look  
8 forward to continued discussions. I don't think in  
9 all of-- you know, we have opened staff meetings at  
10 Safe Horizons and quite regularly and I don't think  
11 there is an issue that rises to the forefront as much  
12 as the need to address salary inequities. So, we are  
13 grateful to you, Chair Kallos, and to the full  
14 Counsel for really trying to tackle this complex  
15 issue and I am happy to take any questions. Thank  
16 you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Mr.  
18 Polenberg. Seeing no questions, I will move on to  
19 the next panelist. Nicole McVinua is up next  
20 followed by Tierra Labrada I and then Nadia Chait.  
21 Ms. McVinua, you may begin when the sergeants call  
22 time.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

24 NICHOLE MCVINUA: Good afternoon, Chair  
25 Kallos and members of the committee. My name is

2 Nicole McVinua and I'm the director of policy at  
3 Urban Pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to  
4 provide testimony today. Urban Pathways is a  
5 nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing  
6 provider. We serve single adults through street  
7 outreach, drop-in services, safe havens, extended  
8 stay residences and permanent supportive housing.  
9 Last year, we served over 3900 New Yorkers in need.  
10 Wage equity in the human services sector is a  
11 critical issue. I would echo Mr. Polenberg and that  
12 this is the number one issue that is raised by our  
13 staff. You know, employees working for nonprofit  
14 organizations contracted by the city have their wages  
15 set at much lower rates and receive fewer benefits  
16 since city employees despite providing essential  
17 services on behalf of the city. Wage equity is also  
18 an issue of race and gender equity. 80 percent of  
19 human services workers are people of color and 82  
20 percent are women. Prior to the pandemic, 60 percent  
21 of the workforce qualified for some sort of public  
22 assistance and a recent New York Times article, as  
23 was mentioned earlier, chronicled individuals who  
24 work in our cities homeless shelters while also  
25 living in them themselves. And we simply cannot

2 allow this to go on any longer. It is wrong to  
3 design an industry that puts its own workforce in a  
4 position to require the very services that they  
5 provide. The poverty wages that are provided in our  
6 contracts also make hiring in maintaining employees  
7 extremely difficult and the high turnover rate of our  
8 staff is reaching a level of crisis. And this also  
9 negatively impacts, you know, the people that we  
10 serve because they build relationships with these  
11 folks that are really critical to their success. So,  
12 that is why we are testifying in support of Intro  
13 2137 today. The creation of human services  
14 prevailing wage has the potential to increase wages  
15 to a more appropriate level for the essential work of  
16 the sector, but for this potential to be realized,  
17 there are several factors that need to be considered.  
18 Some have already been mentioned. The prevailing  
19 wage must be based on comparable salary levels in the  
20 government and private sector and not just on the  
21 current low wages of the human services sector that  
22 we see now because we don't want to codify those low  
23 wages. In the sector should be included in creating  
24 the methodology for studying the prevailing wage  
25 schedules and, you know, it also must be backed up by

2 full funding from contracting city agencies on both  
3 our current human services contracts and future human  
4 services contracts going forward and for current  
5 contracts, if this legislation were to pass, it would  
6 be important for amendments to be put in place prior  
7 to the law going into affect as to not place  
8 financial burden on organizations. But, we come into  
9 the comprehensive approach of Intro 2137 and that is  
10 aimed at lifting the entire sector at once and  
11 providing the necessary funding to do so. And with  
12 that, we do not support Intro 2006. Creating a  
13 prevailing wage for shelter security guards alone  
14 would only deepen the wage disparity between  
15 underpaid employees. Currently, our security staff  
16 and our cooks in our maintenance staff are all paid  
17 at similar wages and creating a prevailing wage for  
18 just security staff, we think, would really just deep  
19 in the disparity. And Intro 2006 also fails to  
20 provide a funding mechanism. So, you know, we would  
21 like to see 2137, you know, move forward. That would  
22 also accomplish the goal of raising shelter security  
23 guard wages while also uplifting the whole sector.  
24 And we would also like to comment on Intro 1995  
25 Which requires additional training for DHS security

2 guards. We would like to recommend that the proposed  
3 additional training requirements be provided by an  
4 organization and instructors with expertise in social  
5 services and/or mental health rather than by a  
6 security guard training school and instructors with  
7 security guard or law enforcement experience which is  
8 what is currently indicated in the bill. We believe  
9 that the additional training needed by security  
10 guards working with people experiencing homelessness  
11 are in de-escalation, recognizing symptoms of mental  
12 health disorders and trauma, communicating with  
13 people in crisis. And we think this type of training  
14 would be better provided by social service and mental  
15 health experts rather than, you know, folks in law  
16 enforcement. So, we would like to recommend that  
17 that change implemented into Intro 1995. And to  
18 conclude, we would like to thank Chair Kallos, and  
19 Council member Rosenthal and other members of the  
20 Contracts Committee for championing the full funding  
21 of the indirect cost rate initiative. We really  
22 appreciate that and we look forward to ensuring--  
23 working with you further to ensure that our workforce  
24 is--

2 NICOLE MCVINUA: Thank you very much for  
3 your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. We're  
5 going to hold questions. Next up, we have SHNNY,  
6 JASA, and the Coalition for Behavioral Health, at  
7 which point, we will open up for Council member  
8 questions.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.  
10 So, first up is Tierra Labrada followed by Nadia  
11 Chait and then Molly Krakowski. Ms. Labrada, you can  
12 begin when the sergeants call time.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

14 TIERRA LABRADA: Hi. Thank you so much.  
15 Good afternoon, everybody. Good afternoon, Chair  
16 Kallos and all of the members of the City Council  
17 Contracts Committee. It's going to be hard to say  
18 anything different than what all of my colleagues  
19 have said before me. I think, you know, we are all  
20 feeling the same way. So I'm just going to jump in  
21 my testimony. My name is Tierra Labrada. I'm the  
22 senior policy analyst at the Supportive Housing  
23 Network of New York. The network is a membership  
24 organization representing the nonprofit developers  
25 and operators of supportive housing, their staff, and

2 tenants therein. I want to thank you for the  
3 opportunity to submit comment today regarding Intro  
4 2137. For years, the network and our partners have  
5 called on the city Council and the administration to  
6 recognize the deep wage inequities on city funded  
7 contracts in supportive housing and the nonprofit  
8 human service sector more broadly. Our women led  
9 workforce has carried the cost of economic and equity  
10 for far too long and deserves bold, systemic change  
11 to address this problem. We are happy that the  
12 Council and Chair Kallos and so many others are  
13 behind us, but given historical precedents, there are  
14 some of our members who are hesitant to support this  
15 legislation for fear that, once again, the city will  
16 demand compliance without appropriate compensation.  
17 However, we are optimistic that this is a step in the  
18 right direction, provided that there are  
19 clarifications in the bill language and continued  
20 partnership between our sector and the city. With  
21 that, we do want to express our support for Intro  
22 2137, but noting the following: we would like to see  
23 the term the human service workforce, quote unquote,  
24 defined and expanded to include building workers who  
25 may not fall under city contracts. We would like to

2 be coalitions the nonprofit community to be active  
3 participants in the process as the comptroller sets  
4 the wage schedule and, like many of my colleagues  
5 said before me, making sure that the wage schedule is  
6 not based on current wages so we do not codify those  
7 low wages. Again, fully funding the mandate, we want  
8 Intro 2137 to be fully funded. With historically  
9 underfunded contracts, there is really no room in our  
10 provider budget to cover the cost up front and so the  
11 bill should stipulate that the city must have all  
12 necessary contract amendments in place before that  
13 increased wages are paid out. Also, I think it is  
14 important to note that state contracts would not be  
15 included in this and a lot of our providers, some  
16 within even the same residences, have staff who are  
17 funded under city contracts and some who are funded  
18 on the state. So, we would like to see the city  
19 really advocate at the state level to ensure that  
20 these inequities get addressed there, too. With  
21 regards to Intro 2006, like Nicole said right before  
22 me and Catherine before, we don't want to support a  
23 standalone bill that only raises wages for one type  
24 of worker. Shelter staff, including security and  
25 other building workers should be included under Intro

2 2137. And, with that, I am done. I thank you for  
3 the opportunity and we look forward to ensure proper  
4 compensation for our workforce. Thank you so much.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.  
6 Labrada. Next, we will hear from Nadia Chait  
7 followed by Molly Krakowski and then Towaki Komatsu.  
8 Ms. Chait, you may begin when the sergeants call  
9 time.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

11 NADIA CHAIT: Good afternoon, Chair Kallos  
12 and members of the Council and thank you for the  
13 opportunity to testify today. I'm Nadia Chait, the  
14 director of policy and advocacy at the Coalition for  
15 behavioral health. We have about 100 community based  
16 mental health and substance use providers as our  
17 members who collectively serve over 600,000 New  
18 Yorkers. And this has been a year where their  
19 services are in demand more than ever before and  
20 where they are dealing with a society that has  
21 experienced such amendments trauma and yet we know  
22 that our workforce, you know, as all of the other  
23 coalitions have mentioned today that the workforce  
24 that is handling these problems is deeply underpaid  
25 and that, as we have asked them to not only deal with

2 Covid in their own lives, but the help all of New  
3 York through this message pandemic and that were  
4 asking them to do this for some claps instead of a  
5 living wage and instead of truly thanking them by  
6 compensating them appropriately. So, we strongly  
7 support the efforts to raise the wages for that  
8 sector. You know, it's a critical issue and, for our  
9 sector, our low wages contribute to a substantial  
10 vacancy crisis and turnover crisis. We operate with  
11 about 20 percent vacancy in most programs and 40  
12 percent annual turnover. Yesterday, the city  
13 announced plans to hire new social workers for  
14 schools which is wonderful and my members are also  
15 now deeply concerned that the city moving to expand  
16 mental health services will actually result in a  
17 contraction because we know that the city will pay  
18 far more for these positions than our members are  
19 able to provide. And so, they will lose capacity in  
20 the community. So, we very much appreciate the  
21 attention to this issue and the acknowledgment that  
22 the low wages are not coming from the nonprofits  
23 themselves, but are coming from the city and the  
24 rates that the city sets and contracts. But I would  
25 mirror many of the concerns that other folks have

2 raised in terms of just really ensuring sufficient  
3 funding for this and that this is adequately funded  
4 across the board on contracts. We are concerned  
5 about how this would apply to work at covered-- to  
6 employees at covered employers but who don't work on  
7 city contracts. In our sector, much of the funding  
8 comes through Medicaid-- as well as some funding  
9 from commercial insurance and state contracts and  
10 while all of those staff, of course, should receive a  
11 higher wage, we want to make sure that this is  
12 adequately funded to allow that or not encompassing  
13 of those wage streams. And then I would certainly  
14 agree with all of my colleagues concerns that we want  
15 to make sure that a prevailing wage scale would not  
16 codify the current low wages of the sector. And so,  
17 we would want to ensure that, in the development of  
18 the wage scale that we would look to the wages that  
19 the city pays its own employees as well as, in our  
20 case, the wages of, you know, hospitals and managed-  
21 care companies and other organizations in the private  
22 sector to ensure the wage scale that does not codify  
23 low wages. But, again, we really appreciate that  
24 Council's attention to this issue and the work that  
25 you all put it on indirects. You know, it is

2 wonderful to have Council members who really  
3 understand the difficulties of our sector and the  
4 challenges that we face and are looking to support  
5 our workforce. Thank you so much.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.  
7 Chait. We will next hear from Molly Krakowski  
8 followed by Towaki Komatsu. Ms. Krakowski, you can  
9 begin when the sergeants call time.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

11 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Hi. Good afternoon. My  
12 name is Molly Krakowski. I am the senior director of  
13 government affairs at JASA. I would like to thank  
14 Council member Kallos and the members of the  
15 committee for the opportunity to testify today. We  
16 really welcome the opportunity to share some of our  
17 concerns regarding Intro 2137. JASA is a nonprofit  
18 organization serving older adults across New York  
19 City. We have over 40,000 individuals that we serve  
20 and programs in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, and  
21 Queens with a wide range of services. The intent of  
22 Intro 2137 which seeks to establish prevailing wage  
23 requirements for city contracted human services  
24 workers is a very positive event, unfortunately, JASA  
25 cannot support the legislation as it is currently

2 written. The human service provider community will  
3 attest to the remarkable workforce providing critical  
4 services to the most vulnerable while simultaneously  
5 burdened in their own minds with inadequate wages.  
6 For years, JASA and our colleagues in the nonprofit  
7 sector have urged the city to increase contract  
8 funding to provide appropriate salaries and salary  
9 parity across and within city agencies, as well as to  
10 institute an annual cost-of-living adjustment for the  
11 contracted workers. For example, throughout the  
12 pandemic, these individuals have worked the critical  
13 front line in the field traveling to the client homes  
14 and to work sites in order to ensure the safety of  
15 our clients. We have continuously asked to the  
16 administration to recognize our staff as essential  
17 workers and compensate them appropriately. In  
18 failing to provide funds to compensate essential  
19 social service workers who are predominantly women of  
20 color and immigrants, the city contributes to the  
21 very problems of inequality and financial insecurity  
22 that we seek to address. JASA recognizes that  
23 Council member Kallos and the sponsors of Intro 2137  
24 have the very best intentions for the human services  
25 employees, however, as it is written, Intro 2137

2 leaves the financial burden in the hands of the  
3 nonprofit providers and there is just no way that the  
4 human services community can absorb the cost of the  
5 prevailing wage. The financial obligation lies  
6 exclusively with the administration. While there may  
7 be temptations to pass a prevailing wage and work out  
8 the details later, and unfunded mandate to pay  
9 prevailing wage will devastate our chronically  
10 underfunded budget. Each year, agencies must  
11 supplement government contracts with private and  
12 philanthropic dollars to make up for the gaps in our  
13 program budgets. JASA turns to the New York City  
14 Council annually to help and help you do through  
15 discretionary funds and Council initiatives, adding  
16 nearly one and a half million dollars to our budget  
17 and we still have a gap. And while this week we  
18 learned that the administration will follow through  
19 on its promise to pay contracted agencies the  
20 approved indirect rate and we're very grateful for  
21 that and those are for services in FY 21 and FY 22,  
22 it's important to recognize that it took two years of  
23 advocacy to see the promised funds from FY 20 put  
24 into the executive budget. JASA is appreciative of  
25 the support of the Council for the human services

2 workforce and we will eagerly support future  
3 legislation for decreased wages in the human services  
4 contracts once the language makes it clear that the  
5 city is responsible for the funding and we look  
6 forward to your leadership on this issue when we  
7 thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony  
8 and look forward to working and continuing to work  
9 with the city Council and the administration as a  
10 valued partner. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. We are  
12 going to conclude this group of people that we were  
13 holding questions. We are going to ask any Council  
14 members who have questions to raise their hand before  
15 we move to the next group of testimony. I just want  
16 to echo the sentiments. I agree that we do have  
17 contracts where there are city and state funding  
18 sources and that, if we did a prevailing wage at the  
19 city level, we would need to immediately go to Albany  
20 and perhaps even contemporaneously get all of them to  
21 agree to manage the city, although I will say that it  
22 becomes a little bit of a chicken and egg scenario  
23 and conversations with some providers, if we get the  
24 prevailing wage here, it may be easier to get it up  
25 there. And then, in the same guys as the fact that

2 we are considering doing prevailing wage for the  
3 security workers, I believe that-- I'm not sure  
4 anyone is questioning whether or not that would be  
5 funded or if it would be an unfunded mandate, but, in  
6 the same way as being security workers would have to  
7 be funded, the same thing goes with any mandate with  
8 the prevailing wage. In terms of that concern about  
9 being walked into the low wages because the statute  
10 for the state requires a survey of existing working  
11 conditions, I hear that sentiment completely and hope  
12 that there is a way through bargaining and, if there  
13 are other solutions, I will be reviewing the  
14 testimony to try to find that. I'm seeing if there  
15 are any other questions or remarks. Seeing none, I  
16 want to thank the representatives for so many of our  
17 cities nonprofits and many of you represent coalition  
18 groups that represent all of them, perhaps even  
19 overlap. So, I want to thank you all for coming out.  
20 Please stay in touch because I believe that a lot of  
21 this legislation is moving quickly and I want to make  
22 sure that we make sure that your voices are heard as  
23 part of the budget conversation. I am now going to  
24 call, and we are going to have a two minute clock.  
25 We have Towaki Komatsu who are seen at a number of

2 hearings I'm always happy to welcome him. I wanted  
3 to make sure that we brought him up as an individual  
4 before we bring up the next panel which will be  
5 considerably longer. You will have two minutes.  
6 Chairs you wish and thank you for joining us and  
7 coming to so many city Council hearings.

8 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Hi. Can you hear me?

9 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: We can.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

11 TOWAKI KOMATSU: The agenda for this  
12 hearing is to, I guess, determination whether to  
13 raise the wages for security workers in shelters.  
14 Yesterday, I visited the headquarters of Urban  
15 Pathways. I gave them a copy of the motion that I  
16 gave to the Second Circuit yesterday for  
17 authorization to file a motion in excess of their  
18 page limits meaning I have a deadline of May 10 to  
19 submit a motion by. I also have an oral arguments.  
20 With the Appellate Division first apartment on May 10  
21 against HRA. So, I've had conversations with Mr.  
22 Kallos previously, as well as Ms. Rosenthal. I was  
23 assaulted in want of Urban Pathways facilities only  
24 because of the fact that HRA and Urban Pathways  
25 jointly committed a criminal bait and switch with

2 regards to an apartment lease agreement. That was  
3 after an attempted assault. I had a conversation  
4 with the Bronx DA last month. That phone call was  
5 recorded on audio. He told me that he subpoenaed one  
6 of Urban Pathways' workers to testify at trial. That  
7 worker did not appear. Bronx criminal court judge,  
8 Corey Weston, was aware of that and did not compel  
9 that person to appear. So, I guess, with regards to  
10 today's hearing and the fact that we are still in a  
11 pandemic, why the heck are you guys considering  
12 giving Urban Pathways more funding whatsoever when  
13 people are being assaulted in the facilities when  
14 that assault has severe repercussions that I have  
15 discussed with you previously? I also got discovery  
16 [inaudible 01:01:26] by federal lawsuit against the  
17 city on February 1st. I think we have subpoena  
18 power. I read something recently about subpoenaing  
19 records. Do you want to issue a subpoena to the New  
20 York City law department to get you what I got on  
21 February 1st? Because judge Gabriel Gorenstein won't  
22 let me talk about that due to a confidentiality order  
23 that he issued on January 15th of this year. He used  
24 to be the general counsel of HRA in the 1990s. so,  
25 thing about it. I've had litigation against HRA

2 since 2016 and then, when I get to federal court, I  
3 have to go against its former general counsel. So,  
4 like I said, with regards to--

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

6 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Close out, can you issue  
7 that subpoena to get those records and then see what  
8 all this has been about?

9 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you for  
10 testifying. Thank you for your work and I'm so sorry  
11 for what you went through. Subpoenas are an act of  
12 last resort. I can request certain documents. And  
13 as with any time we see you-- or I see you and you  
14 share something that is as disturbing as you have  
15 shared, I will follow my mandatory reporting  
16 requirements and share with the Department of  
17 Investigations which I also know you have not been  
18 thrilled with them, either. But thank you for  
19 joining us. I'd like to-- we now have about 15 to  
20 20 folks who will be testifying. Because of the fact  
21 that everything is remote, my understanding is that  
22 they already the space that is a rowboat with  
23 telecasting capabilities and videoconferencing, but  
24 it seems like it might be impractical for us to try  
25 to call people individually as folks will be all on

2 one camera. So, I believe we have about 15 people.  
3 We are doing a two minute limit per speaker, but for  
4 the sake of convenience, we are just going to run one  
5 30 minute clock for everyone present on the 32 BJ  
6 team zoom. So, if that works, if we can get the  
7 camera on and let the audio on from the 32 BJ zoom--  
8 and does that sound satisfactory to folks that 32 BJ  
9 team zoom? Can we unmute them, please?

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: One moment, Chair.  
11 We are trying to unmute them. We should note,  
12 though, to the folks at 32 BJ, for each person who  
13 speaks individually, to please state your name before  
14 you begin speaking.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Good afternoon.

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

17 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Let's hold the  
18 clock while we work out the technical difficulty for  
19 a moment.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yep. Got you.

21 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: And we will leave  
22 them unmuted while they figure that out. Sorry. You  
23 are currently muted. We're asking you to unmute.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: 32 BJ, you need to  
25 unmute when we give you the request. There you go.

2 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible 01:04:56]

3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Major echo.

4 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: There is a second  
5 32 BJ team zoom which we have just asked to unmute.  
6 And it seems as though we've lost that-- You are  
7 currently unmuted in your main zoom.

8 CHARMAIN LATHAN: Good afternoon.

9 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Perfect. We will  
10 start the clock. Please hold.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

12 CHARMAIN LATHAN: My name is Charmain  
13 Lathan. I am a shelter security guard at Travel and  
14 Family Shelter. I have been working as a shelter  
15 security guard for over a year and I strongly support  
16 Intros 1995 and 2006 which would raise up standards  
17 for workers like me. I love working in the shelter  
18 system. I have been in the client's shoe until  
19 November 2020. I was living in a homeless shelter  
20 with myself and my three daughters. I was working  
21 full time as a shelter security guard, but I still  
22 had no way of affording a place of my own for me and  
23 my children. It wasn't until I received the public  
24 housing voucher that I was able to move out into an  
25 apartment in Harlem. The reality of private shelter

2 jobs are clear. We still have to rely on public  
3 housing or other government services to simply afford  
4 a living and put a roof over our heads. We don't get  
5 paid enough and we do not have the necessity-- the  
6 necessary health benefits to sustain ourselves,  
7 either. I was on Medicaid when I had to have a  
8 hysterectomy. We work in stressful environments and  
9 perform jobs that are, at times, very dangerous but  
10 when it comes to having the wages and the benefits to  
11 sustain ourselves, we are only a few dollars away  
12 from many of the clients that we serve. Just because  
13 I was fortunate enough to get a housing voucher  
14 doesn't mean I am living a comfortable life. My  
15 youngest daughter, who is 16, has dreams of going to  
16 college. If we had good paying jobs and higher  
17 salaries, I could save up some money to put towards  
18 her education. I am barely able to pay all of my  
19 bills on time. Every paycheck can be the difference  
20 between going-- Sorry. Could be the difference  
21 between going into the shelter system or holding on  
22 to my apartment. Security guards protect the welfare  
23 of our shelter neighbors and staff and allow vital  
24 social services to be provided in a fake environment.  
25 The city shelter system is the largest in the

2 country. Security guards working at shelters managed  
3 by private operations under contracts with the city  
4 are currently excluded from the prevailing wage law  
5 and are not covered by the same training  
6 requirements. Without these standards, there is  
7 nothing to ensure that privately run shelters are  
8 providing decent wages, benefits, and training  
9 opportunities to security workers. I ask the Council  
10 to pass these bills without delay. The Safety in our  
11 Shelters Acts will make a real difference in my life  
12 and the lives of my three daughters. I know what it  
13 feels like to be homeless. In order to help these  
14 who are living in shelters, I need the training to  
15 address critical situations and the safety net of  
16 living wages and health insurance. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: The clock is  
18 running if the next person can please join us.  
19 Please start.

20 MONIQUE SMITH: Yes. Hi. My name is  
21 Monique Smith. I am a shelter security guard at  
22 Manhattan Times Square Family shelter. I've been  
23 working as a shelter security guard for three years.  
24 I strongly support Intros 1995 and 2006 which will  
25 raise up standards for workers like me. When I was

2 pregnant, I moved out of my parent's house. I was in  
3 a shelter system until I received my first apartment.  
4 Currently, I live with my 10 year old daughter in a  
5 one bedroom apartment in public housing. I make  
6 16.50 an hour and this isn't enough to sustain a life  
7 in New York City. I rely on Medicaid for healthcare.  
8 Through 2020, the Covid 19 pandemic has devastated  
9 the city I call home and it has also pushed our city  
10 to a breaking point. We have been working on the  
11 frontline this entire pandemic. It's time we were  
12 paid a fair wage. Because of my experience, I  
13 understand how important it is for New York City to  
14 improve the standards of the city shelter system and  
15 expand access to permanent affordable housing. But  
16 how can you address homelessness and poverty while  
17 creating jobs that don't allow people to get by in  
18 this city without public assistance? Security guards  
19 are vital to keeping shelters safe and are necessary  
20 for shelters to operate. The city's shelter system  
21 is the largest in the country. We can and should do  
22 better. When we make these jobs good jobs, we make  
23 shelters safer. We help lift people out of poverty  
24 and depending on social services. All cards working  
25 at any shelter contracted by the city should have

2 access to affordable healthcare and access to real  
3 trading. Guards did not all city contracted shelters  
4 should be provided with decent wages. I asked the  
5 Council to pass this bill without delay. The safety  
6 and our shelters will make a real difference in my  
7 life. I would pay my bills, be able to take care of  
8 my kid. Right now, with the money we have, I cannot  
9 afford anything. I would be able to afford more  
10 school supplies for my child. It would also mean  
11 having access to better training so that shelters  
12 would be safer.

13           AMBER DRUMMOND: Hello, everyone. Thank  
14 you for your attendance and your time. My name is  
15 Amber Drummond. I work and I live in the shelter. I  
16 work in Queens at a shelter by JFK. I work at  
17 Brookville Holiday Inn. So, after long days of work,  
18 I go home-- Well, go to the shelter and I try and  
19 relax and I look for housing and I've been working in  
20 the industry for over two years and I strongly  
21 support 1995/2006 to raise awareness and raise  
22 standards for workers like myself. In addition to  
23 that, it's for a better training. I actually make  
24 16.50 an hour and it is not enough to lift myself out  
25 of the shelter system. And decent wages would mean

2 that I can actually save up enough to move out  
3 somewhere else without any subsidies. As a shelter  
4 officer, we work in dangerous environments, highly  
5 stressful environment. Shelters security officers  
6 protect the welfare of our shelter neighbors and  
7 staff and allow vital services to be provided in a  
8 safe environment. Within the last year, I suffered  
9 multiple injuries at work including an open wound  
10 near my I and a rotator cuff breaking up a fight  
11 between staff and residents. In order to de-escalate  
12 dangerous interactions between clients and to protect  
13 ourselves better, we need access to the real and  
14 continuous training. In addition, we need affordable  
15 healthcare that these bills will provide us. I  
16 cannot remember the last time I went to see a doctor,  
17 even through the pandemic. I rely on teas and herbal  
18 remedies to keep myself while unable to fight another  
19 day. If we cannot keep ourselves healthy and aware  
20 of our environment, we will all fail. So, today, I'm  
21 asking you to support us. In addition, we need  
22 affordable healthcare and the raising of wages.  
23 Security officers at the shelters managed my private  
24 operators under contract with the city are currently  
25 excluded from prevailing wages and are not covered by

2 the same training requirements. Without these  
3 standards, there is nothing to ensure that privately  
4 run shelters are providing decent wages, benefits, or  
5 training opportunities. And, without these  
6 standards, I don't see a way for our shelters to be  
7 safe or for me to get out of the shelter. As private  
8 security officers, we cannot afford to live in New  
9 York City. Many of us work overtime and we still  
10 remain homeless or at risk of losing you know her  
11 home. We are the working poor of the city because  
12 our jobs don't provide our families sustainable  
13 wages, healthcare, or training that we need. I asked  
14 the Council to pass bills without delay. With the  
15 safety and our shelters, can finally afford a place  
16 to call home which is just a tiny home, by the way.  
17 Thank you for your time, guys.

18 ANTHONY KENNA: Hello. My name is  
19 Anthony Kenna and I am a shelter security guard at  
20 Cliff Hotel. It's the family shelter. I strongly  
21 support Intros 1995 and 2006 because raising the  
22 standards for workers like me is long overdue. I  
23 have been working as a shelter security guard now for  
24 13 years. I went to work through the pandemic on the  
25 front lines commuting for an hour and a half each way

2 on public transit to do my job to help keep shelter  
3 client safe. I asked the Council to take action to  
4 pass these bills. We need this. We need this. The  
5 safety of our shelter acts will make a difference in  
6 my life currently. I am behind on my rent. If I pay  
7 my rent, then I can't buy groceries. Sometimes I  
8 have to make sacrifices. When I am sacrificing on  
9 groceries, I am undernourished, but if I don't pay my  
10 rent, all be further into debt. I have no health  
11 coverage. I have no health coverage and I can't  
12 afford regular visits to maintain my health and take  
13 care of my medical conditions. We deserve to be  
14 basically respected. We deserve the basic respect of  
15 the job that doesn't keep us in poverty. We need the  
16 basic respect of a job that really won't keep us in  
17 poverty and give access to affordable healthcare and  
18 real training. Sometimes I feel like they speak to  
19 us like we are slaves. We deserve to be included  
20 under the prevailing wage law. As New York City  
21 works to make sure that everyone has access to a safe  
22 shelter, the security guards who work to secure the  
23 shelters should not be left out of the picture. Our  
24 work should have the same training requirements as  
25 the guards working in the city-- that the guards

2 working at the city run shelters do. We work with  
3 people suffering from PTSD and other mental health  
4 issues. Please help us to receive the training we  
5 need to better de-escalate situations and provide a  
6 safe environment for our clients.

7 FRANCISCO BATISTA: My name is  
8 Francisco Batista. Thank you for the opportunity to  
9 testify today in support of these two important bills  
10 for shelter and security guards I have worked at  
11 shelter security for 10 years. I currently work for  
12 Acacia at a [inaudible 01:21:33] Women's Shelter in  
13 Long Island City. I also live in Queens with my wife  
14 and nine-year-old daughter. Micro shelters serve the  
15 mentally ill and chemically addicted. Working with  
16 this client population can be demanding on security  
17 staff. We often deal with the difficult and high  
18 right situations like intervening to settle clients  
19 with arguments and protect clients when fights break.  
20 Fortunately, I haven't been injured but sometimes it  
21 feels unsafe and we don't get enough training from  
22 the employers on how to deal with these incidents.  
23 I'm a professional in the security industry and I  
24 know that other jobs aren't like this. I currently  
25 work a second security job in a commercial office

2 building in Manhattan. There, we get all the  
3 training we need for what we are likely to encounter  
4 on site. We understand the protocols and use  
5 logbooks to keep track of incidents and issues when  
6 we do our inspections. This doesn't happen at the  
7 shelter. Prior to working at this shelter site, I  
8 worked at an apartment building used as a temporary  
9 homeless shelter. The contractor there paid the  
10 industry-- paid the wages and benefits. In my  
11 opinion, the security standards were much better. I  
12 took a pay cut when that site was closed down and I  
13 started working and now over \$18 with benefits to  
14 \$16.50 with no benefits. I'm just lucky that I have  
15 health insurance from my other job at the office  
16 building where we have a union. My shelter is always  
17 understaffed. It's no wonder they find it hard to  
18 recruit and retain guards when they don't treat us  
19 like professionals. I've completed qualifications to  
20 be [inaudible 01:23:34] safety director. There needs  
21 to be someone with this credential on the site 24  
22 hours a day, but I don't get paid any extra for it.  
23 In the security industry, the FSLE position is well  
24 respected and considered a good career progression,  
25 but when shelter operators are trying to make savings

2 on the backs of workers, this respect is forgotten.  
3 We need the city to ensure that the shelter security  
4 contractors are privately managed sites and pay the  
5 same prevailing wages and benefits that guards and  
6 FLSE earn at city managed sites. We are the  
7 professionals working to protect vulnerable New  
8 Yorkers. There shouldn't be any difference in our  
9 pay or our abilities to support our families. I urge  
10 your support for Safely in our Shelter Acts. Thank  
11 you.

12                   SHAQUILLE SHEPHERD: Hello. My name is  
13 Shaquille Shepherd and I am a shelter security guard  
14 at Quality Inn Long Island City. I have been  
15 working as a shelter security guard for almost three  
16 years. I strongly support Intros 1995 and 2006 which  
17 will raise up standards for workers like me. I,  
18 myself, and formerly homeless and live with my mother  
19 in a shelter. The pandemic has devastated our  
20 communities but we kept working as essential workers  
21 on the front line. We deserve to be paid a fair  
22 wage. Often, clients would refuse to wear masks and  
23 when I reported the issue, no action was taken, even  
24 though this puts both clients and workers at greater  
25 risk and makes me feel unsafe. As I make my way home

2 on the buss, it takes two hours to get home at night  
3 and I have to wonder if I am bringing Covid back home  
4 to my mother. She is unable to work. She is  
5 disabled. She has a long list of heart problems and  
6 high blood pressure. We got lucky and very fortunate  
7 that we have a section 8 apartment. We split the  
8 rent and sometimes I try to make her comfortable and  
9 help her with food and give her a little extra so  
10 that she has some money left in her pocket. With a  
11 little bit more in wages, I could have more financial  
12 security and I could also pay off my student loans.  
13 We also need access to affordable healthcare and  
14 access to real training. Right now, we are not  
15 excluded from the same training requirements as  
16 guards working at other shelters. We need this, not  
17 just for guards and our families, but also to make  
18 sure we raise standards for shelter security and  
19 safety. Proper protocols will be followed to report  
20 problems when they happen, but a training would help  
21 us prevent fights from happening so that guards would  
22 act faster. Without these standards, there's nothing  
23 to ensure that privately run shelters are providing  
24 decent wages, benefits, and training opportunities to  
25 security workers. I have no health insurance and,

2 under the new legislation, I would be able to get  
3 coverage. The Safety in our Shelter Acts is needed.  
4 Thank you.

5           BERNICE CARTER: Good afternoon. My name  
6 is Bernice Carter. I work as a guard for over three  
7 years. I work in the Bronx. We provide services for  
8 men and women, some disabled, some struggling with  
9 drugs or addiction. I am asking you today to support  
10 the Safety in our Shelter Acts. Improving the  
11 shelter system and jobs of security jobs is personal  
12 to me. I've also been homeless myself only two years  
13 ago. It was the hardest years of my life. I've done  
14 everything as far as continue working and [inaudible  
15 01:27:48]. I also volunteered and took training to  
16 improve such as getting my mental health certificate  
17 just to work better with clients that have mental  
18 health issues. It's important to me that the company  
19 reimburse me for some of my skills that I've learned  
20 to help the shelter. Through my training experience,  
21 I was able to build relationships with clients and  
22 diffuse situations. This helps the shelter run  
23 smoothly and get me home safely at the end of my  
24 shift. Okay. Earning a prevailing wage would make a  
25 massive difference in my life. It will mean a pay

2 increase that will help me pay my bills that  
3 [inaudible 01:28:40] work. I recently have been  
4 positive for Covid in February. My company made me  
5 use my sick time, but I ended up losing income and  
6 falling behind on my rent. It was only because of  
7 the Covid stimulus check that I was able to make it  
8 up. Shelter guards like me are dedicated to  
9 improving our jobs and building good lives for our  
10 families and ourselves. I urge you to give us this  
11 bill and your support so that we have the training,  
12 paid benefits--

13 TRACEY HOLMES: Good afternoon. My name  
14 is Tracey Holmes and I am a shelter security guard at  
15 the Confidence Sunset Men's Shelter. I have been  
16 working as a shelter security guard for almost a  
17 year. I strongly support Intros 1995 and 2006 which  
18 will raise the standards for workers like me.  
19 Through 202, the Covid 19 pandemic has devastated the  
20 city I call home. With so many New Yorkers losing  
21 their lives and many others losing their jobs. It  
22 has also pushed our city to a breaking point. We  
23 have been working on the frontlines through this  
24 entire pandemic raising our lives-- risking our  
25 lives and risking spreading Covid to our families.

2 For much of the pandemic, we came to work day in, day  
3 out without even being given proper PPE. It is time  
4 we were paid a fair wage. It's access for better  
5 training is important to me so that I can handle  
6 different situation that may arise in our day to day  
7 duties. Deescalating training would be helpful  
8 because it teaches you how to respond to issues.  
9 More training makes you a better and more confident  
10 at your job. The clients really just want to know  
11 that you are listening and we want to be able to help  
12 them feel safe and get the help they need. I ask the  
13 Council to pass these bills without delay. The  
14 Safety of our Shelters Acts will make a real  
15 difference in my mind. I don't have health insurance  
16 and I have to pay for my medication out of pocket  
17 because I have to ration the medication I take for my  
18 high blood pressure because I am unable to afford it.  
19 I have not been back to the doctor in a while because  
20 it is so expensive. I really need to be seen. This  
21 bill would help me and my family and lift up our  
22 communities. Thank you.

23                   NEFERTITI ELWOODS:        Good afternoon,  
24 Chairperson Kallos and committee members. My name is  
25 Nefertiti Elwoods. I have worked in shelter security

2 for four years and currently work in Acacia's network  
3 shelter in Long Island City. Thank you for the  
4 opportunity to testify before the committee in  
5 support of the Safety in our Shelters Acts. Passing  
6 these bills [inaudible 01:32:23] will be lifechanging  
7 for me. I support my mother which stretches me  
8 financially. I've currently racked up on my rent  
9 when I am not looking after [inaudible 01:32:34]. I  
10 also have a number of health conditions: asthma,  
11 bronchitis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and  
12 migraine headaches. I've also been referred to a  
13 cardiologist. Getting paid the prevailing wage and  
14 having access to all the health insurance will make  
15 an enormous difference. I've overcome struggles  
16 before. I've been homeless myself due to domestic  
17 violence. Surviving in the city on low wages is  
18 another struggle. I'm asking committee members and  
19 the Council to do your part and make the struggle a  
20 little bit easier. Please give these bills your  
21 support and, when they come up for a vote, do  
22 everything in your power to pass them into law.  
23 Thank you for listening.

24 JUAN REYES: Good afternoon, everybody.

25 My name is Juan Reyes. I'm a security officer at the

2 Acacia shelter in the South Bronx. I'm here today to  
3 testify in support of the Safety in our Shelter Acts.  
4 I have worked at the shelter security for over 10  
5 years. It's clear to me that we cannot improve the  
6 security standards in our shelters if we don't  
7 improve the training and employment standards of  
8 security guards. Shelters are challenging places to  
9 work. Clients accessing shelter are often unstable  
10 and experiencing mental health conditions. There is,  
11 unfortunately, the risk of confrontation and  
12 violence. I have personally been pushed and  
13 threatened. I have also seen colleagues pushed and  
14 shelters vandalized. I often feel unsafe on the job.  
15 We are understaffed and lack equipment like metal  
16 scanners. Guards should have more specialized  
17 training, particularly how to diffuse and de-escalate  
18 situations. Having better trained guards who feel  
19 safe around the jobs could help reduce turnover and  
20 solve the chronic guard shortage we experience.  
21 Better wages and benefits would also help to recruit  
22 and retain guards. It's not right that we work in  
23 the same high risk environment as guards at city  
24 manage sites, but are guaranteed the same wages and  
25 benefits. Receiving the prevailing wage would make a

2 huge difference to my family's life. We have been  
3 through a lot of instabilities. My wife has recently  
4 at a homeless shelter herself. We are renting an  
5 apartment now in the South Bronx, but are living  
6 paycheck to paycheck. I worked two jobs. I would  
7 love to be able to buy things for my three kids then  
8 moved to a better apartment. I have health  
9 insurance, the Metro Plus, that I pay out-of-pocket.  
10 Under the prevailing wage standards, my employer  
11 would have to pay my benefit supplements that would  
12 cover quality full family healthcare insurance. This  
13 could be life changing for my family. My wife  
14 recently had Covid. We need the confidence that our  
15 medical costs are covered and we can get the care and  
16 medicine we need.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

18 JUAN REYES: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. How  
20 many more speakers do we have so we know how much  
21 time to add to the clock?

22 UNIDENTIFIED: 10 minutes.

23 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Okay. We will add  
24 10 minutes. Thank you.

2                   RAPHAEL CRUZ:        Good afternoon, Chairman  
3                   Kallos and committee members. My name is Raphael  
4                   Cruz and I'm here today to ask for support for Safety  
5                   in our Shelters Act. I have been a security guard in  
6                   the shelter system for a couple years and I currently  
7                   work for Security USA in the Harlem YMCA shelter  
8                   system. We need to put security guard standards in  
9                   our shelters. By ensuring that guards in the  
10                  industry standard wages and benefits and receive more  
11                  specialized training, this bill will make a big  
12                  different. Shelter systems are a dangerous place to  
13                  work. We are the first line of defense, but we're  
14                  undertrained. On a daily basis, we encounter risk,  
15                  clients, weapons, hazards, and different things that  
16                  we have to go through that normally other shelters  
17                  don't. Training is the key. In order to encounter--  
18                  excuse me. Training is the key in order for guards  
19                  to know what to do. I see new workers put on the job  
20                  without being given the proper training. When this  
21                  happens, everyone is less safe and new guards  
22                  themselves and other guards like me. I am a fire  
23                  safety director, coordinator at the shelter. This is  
24                  an important job, but I am. Last then workers who  
25                  get the prevailing wages. I also did not get

2 vacations or time off and our work standards are  
3 different while doing the same role at the shelter  
4 than in the city. I am married and I have a 13-year-  
5 old daughter. Getting paid the prevailing wage on  
6 benefit supplements would make a huge difference to  
7 us. I currently have my wife's health insurance plan  
8 through her job. Having meaningful benefits provided  
9 by the employer would not only mean my family has  
10 more options when it comes to our insurance coverage,  
11 but it also means contributions towards our  
12 retirement plans. I urge you to pass these bills.  
13 Our work is crucial to keeping the shelter system  
14 safe. We need to get of our jobs and our lives the  
15 value they desire. Thank you.

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Good afternoon,  
17 Chairperson and committee members. Thank you for the  
18 opportunity to testify today. My name is [inaudible  
19 01:38:33]. I work as a guard in the shelter system  
20 over three years and I work for [inaudible 01:38:41][  
21 Security Services at the shelter in the Bronx managed  
22 by Community Life. Guard working in [inaudible  
23 01:38:52] need better benefits and training. That is  
24 what is exactly [inaudible 01:39:06] today would give  
25 us. Shelter can be a high risk location for a guard

2 to work. The most dangerous situations I have  
3 encountered was when a client attempted to hit me  
4 with a fire extinguisher. All guards need adequate  
5 training to deal with volatile situations so they can  
6 be de-escalated. Therefore, shelter can be made safe  
7 for all residents and staff. We also need to be paid  
8 fairly for the work we do in the risk we deal with.  
9 The [inaudible 01:40:02] for equitable is a  
10 [inaudible 01:40:05] in America equity and fairness.  
11 Vast of Americans support equity, regardless of  
12 gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic level and  
13 is frequently identified as a top quality, especially  
14 for those who face sharp pay disparities. [inaudible  
15 01:40:45] at all levels. Voluntary action by private  
16 employees should be accompanied, but they are not  
17 suited office from legal petition [inaudible  
18 01:41:09] enforcement all institutions at [inaudible  
19 1:41:15]. To make the promise of equity for  
20 equitable, it must be more than voluntary option.  
21 That is why we need this bill. We need the power of  
22 law to ensure that security guards working in the  
23 shelter system for private providers are paid fairly  
24 for their work and can [inaudible 01:41:54] their  
25 rights. [Inaudible 1:42:01] in University. If I

2 earn the prevailing wages of [inaudible 01:42:11], it  
3 will mean I will be able to save money to send to  
4 them. Passing this law would also mean [inaudible  
5 01:42:24] affordable quality health insurance. Right  
6 now, I have no insurance. I cannot afford the city  
7 that it costs to take up the employee's plan.  
8 Please, support this law and reform that can help  
9 [inaudible 01:42:52] for workers.

10 QUINTANA OMED: Hello. My name is  
11 Quintana Omed and I'm a shelter security guard at  
12 Crystal Place. I have been working as a shelter  
13 security guard for almost 8 years. I strongly  
14 support Intros 1995 and 2006 which will raise up  
15 standards for workers like me. Through 2020, the  
16 Covid 19 pandemic has devastated the city I call  
17 home. So many people have lost their lives. We've  
18 been working on the front lines through this entire  
19 pandemic and our communities are in crisis. It is  
20 time we are paid a fair wage. Safe shelters are  
21 essential in New York City. Security guards play a  
22 vital role in providing a safe haven to people in  
23 need. Quality jobs for shelter security guards must  
24 be part of the picture. I know how important this is  
25 because I was a client in the shelter system myself.

2 In 2012, when I give birth to my son, we lost our  
3 apartment because our landlord was selling the  
4 building and wanted to get rid of all the tenants. I  
5 had to live in a shelter for six months. My mother  
6 was eligible for section 8 as a military veteran, so  
7 we eventually were able to move in with her. I have  
8 a second job as a medical assistant. I work more  
9 than the full-time hours on the day shift at the  
10 clinic in overnight at the shelter. I need a job so  
11 that I can make enough money to not have to work  
12 overnights so that I can stay home with my eight-  
13 year-old son. My mother is planning on moving and  
14 won't be able to watch them at night. Sometimes I  
15 get called from his school and I have to leave work  
16 because my mother, who has her own medical issues,  
17 cannot watch him. He has ADHD and I wish I was able  
18 to be there for him more instead of having to work  
19 two jobs. We also need to have affordable healthcare  
20 and access to the real training. Security guards  
21 working at shelters managed by private operators  
22 under contract with the city are currently excluded  
23 from the prevailing wage law and are not covered by  
24 the same training requirements as guards working at  
25 city run shelters. Without these standards, there is

2 nothing to ensure that privately run shelters all are  
3 providing decent wages, benefits, and training  
4 opportunities for security workers. I asked the  
5 Council to pass these bills without delay. The  
6 Safety in our Shelters Act will make a real  
7 difference in my life. Currently, I have no health  
8 insurance from my place of employment. I rely on  
9 Medicaid. I would also need having access to better  
10 training to handle difficult situations that  
11 constantly arrive in our day-to-day duties. Thank  
12 you.

13 Hello.

14 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Hold on one moment.  
15 We'll add four minutes to the clock, please. You may  
16 begin.

17 TERRI BATSON: Okay. My name is Terri  
18 Batson. I am 59 years old. I have been working with  
19 the shelter system for two years. I strongly support  
20 the Safety in our Shelter 1995 and 2006, but I fear  
21 we need more like better training and better medical  
22 insurance, better working conditions, and better  
23 paying raises. Especially with my health issues  
24 because I suffer with diabetes, arthritis, glaucoma,  
25 cataracts in both eyes and I am using my own medical

2 insurance and sometimes it's very hard to go see my  
3 doctor right now and sometimes it's very hard for me  
4 to pay for my medication. So, that is why I want  
5 to-- That is why I want the law to pass the bill in  
6 order to get better support in all of that. That's  
7 all it got to say.

8 KOFÉ SHUTAWAE: My name is Kofé  
9 Shutawae. I am a shelter security guard at the Best  
10 Western [inaudible 01:47:51] shelter. I have been  
11 working as a shelter security guard for almost three  
12 years. I strongly support Intro 1995 and 2006 which  
13 will raise up the standards for workers like me.  
14 Currently, I have no health insurance from my place  
15 of employment. I rely on Metro Plus subsidized  
16 healthcare I qualify for. I came here for the  
17 American dream. My wife and my young children are in  
18 Ghana and they rely on me to pay for their rent and  
19 their schooling. I share an apartment currently with  
20 roommates and I want to be able to afford to have a  
21 decent home for them so that they can be here with  
22 me. I work two jobs and still it is not enough. I  
23 came here from Ghana in 2004. I ask the Council to  
24 pass these bills without delay. It is not right  
25 that, because we securely work at the shelter managed

2 by private operators, we should be excluded from the  
3 prevailing wage law. We are paid less and not  
4 covered by same [inaudible 01:49:47] as guards  
5 working at city run shelters, even though these  
6 shelters are also contracted by the city. We need  
7 these standards for ourselves and our family and so  
8 we can assess better--

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

10 KOFE SHUTAWAE: The work we do is  
11 difficult. Almost daily I encounter clients who are  
12 ready to assault me or another client. We need help  
13 to keep the people and ourselves safe. We need  
14 training. We protect the safety of the client in our  
15 community by helping secure the shelter. We work  
16 through one of the most difficult times our city has  
17 faced on the front line of the pandemic. Our work is  
18 [inaudible 01:50:48] for the city to make sure all  
19 New Yorkers can access safe shelter in the time of  
20 need. We need to be fairly compensated for our work.  
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. I  
23 believe that that is all the speakers that we have.  
24 If everyone who read testimony is able to please

2 submit it, the address for submissions-- Committee  
3 counsel?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: It's  
5 [testimony@Council.NYC.gov](mailto:testimony@Council.NYC.gov). Again, that is  
6 [testimony@Council.NYC.gov](mailto:testimony@Council.NYC.gov).

7 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: The record will  
8 remain open for 72 hours after this hearing, so  
9 please consider submitting testimony to  
10 [testimony@Council.NYC.gov](mailto:testimony@Council.NYC.gov). I want to thank everyone  
11 who shared testimony, particularly the workers who  
12 shared a lot of conditions that you are dealing with.  
13 To the extent that you, yourself, or seeing any  
14 conditions of concern or are subject to retaliation  
15 following this hearing, please feel free to reach out  
16 to me directly at [contracts@benkallos.com](mailto:contracts@benkallos.com). We will  
17 work with you. We will work with the Department of  
18 Investigations to ensure that you have safe working  
19 conditions. I want to thank everyone who testified  
20 today. I want to thank our nonprofit providers and  
21 32 BJ and our workers at our homeless shelters. And,  
22 at this point, I would like to ask if there is anyone  
23 else here who wishes to testify today? Seeing none,  
24 I would like to thank everybody. I thank the  
25 committee staff and my staff and I hereby conclude

1 COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS

86

2 this meeting of the City Council Committee on  
3 Contracts.

4 [gavel]

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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 22, 2021