

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

Committee on Aging Jointly With The
Committee on Economic Development

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September 20, 2021
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HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 1)

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

Hon. Paul Vallone
Chairperson for Committee on
Economic Development

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Eric Dinowitz
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A P P E A R A N C E S

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez,
Commissioner of the Department for the Aging

Edgar Yu,
Chief of Staff of the Department for the Aging

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Jose Mercado
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Kate MacKenzie,
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Carlyn Cowen,
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Jeremy Kaplan,
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A P P E A R A N C E S (Continued)

Rachel Sherrow,
Associate Executive Director at Citymeals on
Wheels

Shubhra Datta,
Program Manager at India Home, Inc.

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[AUTOMATED]: Recording in Progress.

SERGEANT LEONARDO: Pc recording is underway.

SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Cloud recording is all set.

And, Good morning, and welcome to today's remote New York City Council Hearing of the Committee on Aging Jointly with the Committee on Economic Development.

At this time, would all council members and council staff, please turn on their video?

To minimize disruption, please place electronic devices on vibrate or silent mode.

If you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again that is testimony@council.nyc.gov.

Thank you chairs, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Good morning, I am Council Member Margaret Chin. And, I chair The Committee on Aging. I would like to thank my co-chair, Council Member Paul Vallone, as well as the committee members and staff from both committees, for coming together to hold this virtual hearing.

The goal of our hearing today, is to address an impending crisis regarding the city's various home deliver meal programs and emergency meal deliver programs.

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2 As this pandemic continues in to its fourth or
3 fifth wave, many at risk New Yorkers, an especially
4 homebound seniors, are facing a considerable amount
5 of food insecurity.

6 Estimates from the city's largest food rescue
7 organization, City Harvest, placed the current number
8 of food insecure New Yorkers at 1.5 million people,
9 an increase of nearly 40% over pre-pandemic levels.
10 A lifeline for these individual (SIC), has been The
11 Department for the Aging's longstanding congregate
12 meals, home deliver meal programs, and several
13 emergency food delivery programs that the city
14 established in the early days of the pandemic.

15 These programs collectively offer meals five days
16 a week to the city's most at risk populations.

17 In order to qualify for just this home deliver
18 meal program, seniors need to be 60 years or older,
19 unable to attend meals in person, for health reasons,
20 lack of support system to provide regular meals, and
21 unable to prepare their own meals.

22 The number of seniors needing home deliver meals
23 was increasingly even before the pandemic from
24 roughly 27 thousand seniors, in fiscal year 2019 to
25 around 31 thousand seniors in fiscal year 2020.

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2 We do not have the data for the increase in just
3 this home deliver meals during fiscal year 2021.

4 But, it stands to reason that there would be... Have
5 been a significant increase during the worst months
6 of the pandemic.

7 What we do know; however, is that somewhere
8 between 25 thousand and 60 thousand seniors
9 participated in the GetFoodNYC program -- A one
10 billion dollar initiative primarily funding emergency
11 food distribution programs to those who do not
12 qualify for just those deliver meals.

13 Unfortunately, it seems as though GetFoodNYC is
14 expiring at the end of this month. And, what
15 concerns the committee today, is what is going to
16 happen to those tens of thousands of seniors, as well
17 of other GetFoodNYC participants, once the program
18 expires.

19 Just this home delivery program neither has the
20 funding, nor the capacity to accommodate an influx of
21 25 to 60 thousand new senior participants. And, it
22 is unclear what is going to happen to those seniors,
23 let alone the private venders once the GetFoodNYC
24 expires.

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While some of these seniors may return to the congregate meals offerings at the senior centers, as they begin to reopen, many do not feel safe or comfortable doing so while we remain in the grip of this devastating pandemic.

I think it is important for this administration to commit to not letting those who need food to fall out of the system, and for there to be adequate funding to accomplish that before the end of the term.

The committee look forward to getting more concrete answers to our question today from The Department for the Aging and The Mayor's Office of Food Policy.

We also look forward to hearing from seniors and emergency meal service providers who will be impacted by the expiration of the GetFoodNYC program.

I would like to thank the council staff, Legislative Counsel, Alex Paulenoff, Policy Analyst Emily Forgione, and Financial Analyst Daniel Kroop, Julia Haramis, and Aliya Ali for all their hard work in putting together this hearing today.

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2 And, with that said, I will turn the floor over
3 to my co-chair Council Member Vallone for his opening
4 remark, thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Chair Chin, and
6 good morning everyone. Good morning Commissioner
7 Cortés.

8 Uh, I think it's only appropriate, Margaret, that
9 you and I, uh, as you started at Aging Chair, and I
10 was Senior Center Subcommittee Chair, and, uh, along
11 with almost everyone in this panel, we have fought
12 tirelessly for the rights of seniors and increasing
13 the budget. And, now we're in a much better place
14 today then we were when we first started back in
15 2014.

16 Uhm, and... And, I think it's appropriate as
17 Chair of Economic Development, so much has happened,
18 Commissioner, since the pandemic, over the last 18 to
19 24 months, as we transition really from what our jobs
20 were prior to the world shifting to what they are
21 now. And, it really became an all hands on deck
22 scenario for everyone in need.

23 And... And, I think the concerns today are that
24 some of those, and basically the... The one billion
25 dollar federally funded program, uh, GetFoodNYC, is

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coming to a close at the end of this fiscal year.
And... And, I don't really need an opening or
questions to... To just basically focus on, for
everyone today, what will happen? What is your vision
of that transition when that program closes? What
was the role that The Department of Sanitation? Was
it maintaining this new in need folks in New York
City? Uh, what will happen to those contracts -- to
those vendors, to the people who are on that list
receiving meals? And, how can DFTA maintain or keep
that up when we all know that the home delivery meal
budget is just shy of 42 million dollars.

So, there is a big gap there. There's a lot of
concern from Chair Chin and I and our staffs and
everyone on how we're going to transition to prepare
for the ending of that program. How we're gonna make
up for funding; and what happens to the folks that
were newly added to the home delivery meals through
that program versus the preexisting seniors and folks
in need who are already on the home delivery meal.

That really is the crux of our concern today, uh
and how we can hear your vision to guide us through
that. Uhm that really is the 69 thousand dollar

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2 question for those who remember (LAUGHING) the show
3 on what the 69 thousand dollar was reference to.

4 But, for... For... For Margaret and I, that is
5 really what our focus is. And for everyone who's
6 listening in, we're hoping to hear, uh, that the
7 administration has a plan to make that transition
8 will increase the budget, and what will happen to the
9 data that was collected, and... And, the folks that
10 are newly... And... And, you know what? With
11 winter coming, and uncertainty at our doorstep, once
12 again, as to what's gonna happen with the next wave,
13 uhm, we may need to quickly have to transition once
14 again to the folks who are early on this list to
15 getting those home delivery meals once again.

16 Uhm, with that said, I'd like to thank, truly the
17 staff that's been with me from day one. Uhm, my
18 Legislative Counsel, Alex Paulenoff, my former Senior
19 Policy Analyst, uh, who has recently left us for the
20 administration side, and we wish her well, and we
21 miss her already, Emily Forgione; our finance team,
22 Daniel Kroop, Julia Haramis, and Aliya Ali for all of
23 their hard work, as always supporting this hearing
24 and all of the previous hearings together.

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2 With that... That said, I'd like to turn the
3 floor over to our moderator for the day, Committee
4 Counsel, Alex Paulenoff, to go over some of our
5 procedural items. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chairs.

7 Uh, my name is Alex Paulenoff, counsel to the
8 Economic Development Committee of the New York City
9 Council.

10 Before we begin testimony, I want to remind
11 everyone that you will be on mute until you are
12 called upon to testify, at which point you will be
13 unmuted by the host.

14 Members of the administration who are testifying,
15 will not be muted during the question and answer
16 portion of the administration's testimony.

17 I will be calling on panelist to testify, so
18 please listen for your name to be called.

19 The first panelist to give testimony today will
20 be Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Commissioner of the
21 Department for the Aging.

22 The department's Chief of Staff, Edgar Yu, Chief
23 Operating Officer, Michael Ognibene, and Chief
24 Financial Officer, Jose Mercado, who will be
25 available for questioning. The director of the

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2 Mayor's Office for Food Policy, Kate MacKenzie, and
3 Deputy Commissioner Bridget Anderson, will be
4 available for questioning as well.

5 I will call on each of you shortly for the oath,
6 and then again when it is time to begin your
7 testimony.

8 During the hearing, if council members would like
9 to ask a question of the administration or of
10 specific panelist, please use the zoom raise hand
11 function, and I will call on you in order.

12 We will be limiting council member questions to
13 five minutes, which includes the time it takes to
14 answer those questions.

15 Please note that for the ease of this virtual
16 hearing, we will not be allowing a second round of
17 questions for each panelist outside of the committee
18 chairs.

19 All hearing participants should submit written
20 testimony to test@council.nyc.gov if you have not
21 already done so. The deadline for written testimony
22 is 72 hours after the hearing.

23 Before we begin testimony, I will administer the
24 oath to the administration.

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To all members of the administration who will be offering testimony, or will be available for questioning, please raise your right hands.

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I will lead the oath, and then call on each of you, individually, for a response.

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Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

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11

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez?

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I do.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief of Staff Yu?

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CHIEF OF STAFF YU: I do.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief Operating Officer

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Ognibene?

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CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OGNIBENE: Yes, I do.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief Financial Officer

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Mercado?

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CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Yes, I do.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Director MacKenzie?

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DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I do.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Director Anderson?

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR ANDERSON: (12:02 NO RESPONSE)

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Is the Deputy Director on
3 mute?

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR ANDERSON: I do.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

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Thank you all.

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Uh, Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez, you may begin
8 your testimony.

9

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Commissioner, if I could
10 just jump in and announce the council members who are
11 present?

12

So, we have Council Members Koo, Rose, Powers,
13 Gjonaj, Dinowitz, and Council Member Brooks - Powers
14 who are joining us, and as additional council members
15 jump in, we'll announce their names.

16

Thank you.

17

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright, good
18 morning, thank you, uh, Chairperson Chin and
19 Chairperson Vallone, and all of the members of the
20 Aging and the Economic, uhm, Development Committee.

21

As you know, I'm Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, and I'm
22 the Commissioner of the Department for the Aging.
23 And, your staff has already introduced the other
24 individuals who are here to prepare to answer
25 questions in purport of this testimony.

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2 I would like to respond to both the, uhm, the
3 overarching question. We believe that we have a very
4 sound transition plan, and we hope that through this
5 testimony we'll be able to address some of the
6 questions and concerns that you expressed in your
7 opening statements.

8 But, first, I would like to give some background
9 information just to level set, because I have never
10 assume that everybody knows exactly what we do and
11 why we do it.

12 So, The Department for the Aging has always
13 worked to eliminate ageism and to ensure the dignity
14 and quality of life of older New Yorkers, the diverse
15 older adult population, and also the support of their
16 caregivers through service, advocacy, and education.

17 We have been deeply committed to helping older
18 adults remain in their home safely and actively
19 engaged in their lives and in their communities.

20 DFTA'S priority became even more critical during
21 this public health crisis. Chief among them, was
22 service combatting food insecurity, also, uhm,
23 maintaining social engagement for tens of thousands
24 of older adults as this was critical, uh, to not...
25 Not only the mental health, but the health of older

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2 adults -- and also securing uninterrupted access to
3 critical services including meals for older homebound
4 individuals.

5 Addressing food insecurity food insecurity is
6 also the foundation and the creation of The Older
7 Americans Act. Through this Older Americans Act,
8 we've supported and funded Congregate Meals at Older
9 Adult Centers and homebound... Uhm, home delivered
10 meals for homebound older adults.

11 These are the two core programs that The
12 Department for the Aging has worked to address food
13 insecurity for older adults for more than 35 years.
14 And, we'll continue to do so long past this pandemic.

15 Prior to the pandemic, as you both stated, on any
16 given weekday throughout the city, approximately 18
17 thousand homebound older adults received a meal -- a
18 home delivered meal -- through the program provided
19 by service providers in the community. This number
20 has remained stable through the present.

21 Unlike older adults who participate in Congregate
22 Meal Service at centers, many older adults receiving
23 home delivered meals, as, uh, Councilwoman Chin
24 clearly stated, these are individuals who are unable
25 to attend Congregate Meal programs, because they are

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2 either ill or frail; they lack formal supports who
3 can help them provide meals; are able to live safely
4 in their homes if meals are provided, or are unable
5 to prepare meals due to the lack of adequate cooking
6 facilities; a lack of knowledge or the skills to
7 prepare meals, or the inability to safely prepare
8 meals, or shop, or cook.

9 These are critical supports to keep individuals
10 at home.

11 The home delivered meals is formally connected to
12 the case management agencies who are responsible to
13 perform in depth assessments of social,
14 psychological, cognitive, and physical well-being in
15 order to assist clients to live independently --
16 That's the goal -- and, to live independently in the
17 community.

18 This is also a pillar of the community care five
19 - year strategic model that we presented to you
20 earlier this year. This further allows older adults
21 to age in place and to avoid institutionalizations.

22 Home delivered meals and case management are
23 integral to making sure that older adults can remain
24 in their community.
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2 Through the network of dedicated home delivered
3 meals provider, DFTA currently delivers roughly 4.3
4 million meals annually to homebound older adults.
5 The provision of meals to an ome bound (SIC)... Uhm,
6 to homebound, older adult helps ensure that their
7 nutritional needs are met in other... In order to
8 promote overall health and the ability to live
9 independently in the community. You'll hear me say
10 that over and over again, because in the study done
11 by AARP, it was overwhelming, I think of 90% of older
12 adults say that they would prefer to stay in their
13 community and in their homes.

14 Following and RFP in 2020, new contracts for home
15 delivered meals programs started in January '21.
16 Through this procurement, all city... All of New
17 York City is served through 22 catchment areas. Each
18 contractor is responsible for delivering meals in a
19 predetermined geographic catchment area.

20 This RFP also allowed for some innovation in home
21 delivered meals -- innovation that we had not seen
22 for a decade.

23 One of the goals of this procurement was to
24 increase the diversity of meal choices. And, this
25 did not... This came as a response to a survey done

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by older adults, who said that they wanted more choice in their food.

Allowing individuals to choose what type of meals they receive, also allows control over when they would eat that meal, regardless of when it was delivered. Since contracts started, in January, we have been doubling now 27%, uh, in the number of frozen meals served, so that people can have their choice of when to do that.

Chilled meals were also added as a choice this year, and to date, 68 thousand have been served. We are happy to see a positive response to this wider range of options.

In addition to home delivered meals, older adults as you all know well, because you visit them frequently, uhm, older adults can access meals as older adult centers throughout the city.

When older adult centers closed for in person gatherings, in March 2020, it was a blow to everyone. But, I am proud to say that DFTA quickly transitioned a congregate meal operations to ensure that center members continued to have access to a daily meal.

Meal service shifted. First, to a grab-and-go model, and the centers, the operators, the community

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2 leaders, immediately mobilized to make sure that
3 older adults would not go hungry. And, then from that
4 grab-and-go model, given the greater restrictions
5 that were imposed on all of us because of this
6 pandemic, it shifted to a centralized delivery meal
7 system. And, that shift was not a long pause. That
8 was an immediate shift. I mean, this pandemic, there
9 was no playbook for it -- We were all learning and
10 go... As we went -- Which eventually merged, with
11 the city's broader food insecurity initiative, which
12 is also gonna pre... Uh, answer questions today,
13 GetFoodNYC.

14 I want to state and clarify that the DFTA grab-
15 and-go model -- service model -- is... Is distinct
16 from the GetFood grab-and-go model, and that...
17 You'll hear more about that, uhm, later.

18 Uhm, as many of you were, and we definitely were,
19 thrilled that on June 14th, the older adult centers
20 were approved to reopen... To reopen following our
21 Department of Mental Health and Hygiene's guidance
22 for in person gatherings, including reduced capacity,
23 uh, at congregate, uh, settings, and, grab... And,
24 or grab-and-go meals. We understand that this was a
25 slow ramp up based on the combination of factors,

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2 including COVID concerns, older adult hesitancy, as
3 well as the complexities of staffing back up after 14
4 to 16 months of, uh, working from home, and
5 establishing a physical plant that was safe to
6 reopen. We appreciated the work that the network has
7 done to ensure that they are able to open the...
8 Open safely and to provide the services needed -- and
9 in compliance with the public health guidelines.

10 As of today, of our, uh, 284, uhm, 98% are of
11 older adults, uh, centers have reopened for in person
12 programming. Over 66... Uh, over 660 thousand
13 congregate and grab-and-go meals have been served at
14 our older adult centers since reopening in June.

15 Through this reopening, older adults have not
16 only gained additional community based access
17 service, but also some of the in person social
18 interactions that we were all missing during this
19 pandemic.

20 When the pandemic first started, DFTA worked with
21 providers to ensure that older adults had... Still
22 had access to meals, rooted in an understanding that
23 many older adults relied on older adult centers for
24 regular meal access. The centers, as I said,
25 earlier, immediately went to grab-and-go, uhm, under

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2 clarified executive order. DFTA quickly pivoted to
3 what I mentioned earlier, which was the DFTA Direct
4 Meals. And, though these meals were directly
5 provided to the home of the centers, this program
6 grew quickly and beyond any capacity that DFTA may
7 have had. And, we knew that all along, and always
8 had a plan to transition when it extended capacity,
9 to either the office of Emergency Services... But,
10 at that time, in May 2020, the mayor established a
11 food czar, and GetFoodNYC was established to address,
12 uh, food insecurity for all New Yorkers.

13 GetFoodNYC consists of several programs,
14 including the Emergency Food Delivery Program, for
15 meals delivered to the home, members of older adult
16 centers who had been receiving meals through DFTA'S
17 direct meals, were transitioned over to the GetFood
18 program at that time.

19 For simplicity of this hearing, I will use the
20 term GetFood interchange... or GetFood
21 interchangeably with the F... Uh, The EFD Program --
22 Emergency Food Delivery Program.

23 As we planned for the, uh, onset, uh, for the
24 sunset frankly, of GetFood this, a uh, end of
25 October, DFTA has been working closely with The

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2 Mayor's Office Of Food Policy and the Housing
3 Recovery Operations, to ensure that all 60+
4 participants who are currently receiving meals
5 through GetFood, can continue to have access to meals
6 if needed.

7 We are pleased that we started this transition
8 immediately to minimize any disruption -- as much
9 disruption as we could -- in meal access.

10 For older adults these options in... Uh, there
11 are three options, and they include: Congregating
12 grab-and-go and local community centers, home
13 delivered meals, for those who are deemed homebound,
14 and a new recovery program for those who are neither
15 homebound or not affiliated with the congregate
16 centers just yet.

17 As we will... As... As always, we will screen
18 and connect the pro... Uh, the programs to the
19 most... Uhm, the persons to the most appropriate
20 program to meet their current me (SIC)... needs.

21 As we look towards the future, our goal is to
22 reengage older adults in the core meal programs that
23 have already existed, such as congregate meals, and
24 when possible, home delivered meals. But, there is a
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2 ... a... a safeguard which is the recovery meal
3 program, which is being established.

4 We are pleased that we've been working closely
5 with OMB on funding to enroll all old... eligible
6 older adults currently on wait lists for home
7 delivered meals over the next few weeks.

8 As such, we know that there will be an increase
9 in home delivered meals clients -- we saw that early
10 in... during the pandemic, and have also engaged, and
11 I've been in constant communication with both the
12 home delivered meals programs and the case management
13 agencies, so that they can assist with the
14 implementation of the new recovery meals program. As
15 such, we know that there will be increased demands
16 placed on home delivered meal providers.

17 Additionally, we know that continuing to strengthen
18 and support the home delivered meal... Uhm, the home
19 delivered meal provider network allows us to easily
20 and quickly increase capacity in case of further
21 emergencies. We continue to work at earnest with OMB
22 to address these needs.

23 In conclusion, I would say, we know that access
24 to meals, as it has been for the last 40 years of
25 DFTA'S existence, is a (INAUDIBLE 00:26:10) of not

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2 just ability and health, but also independence and
3 aging in place. Ensuring older adults have access to
4 meals is the foundation of the work for DFTA. And,
5 we're happy ex... continue to expand this core
6 mission, and to address any emerging emergency needs.

7 I am proud of the work that DFTA has done,
8 especially over the past two years, during these ever
9 changing times. I'm thrilled about the partnership
10 that we have had with the Aging Committee that has
11 made a lot of this work now permanent. We can... As
12 we all continue towards recovery and increased in
13 person service provisions, I value the partnership
14 that we have with our sister agencies; we have worked
15 tirelessly to make sure that this transition is
16 seamless, uhm, and have come up with provisions to
17 ensure that we have, uhm, minimal disruption of
18 service.

19 And, with that, I will thank you very much, and
20 I'm open to questions.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, commissioner
22 Cortés-Vázquez.

23 I will now turn it over to questions from the
24 chairs.

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2 Panelist from the administration, please stay
3 unmuted during this question and answer period.

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And, a reminder to both chairs, you will be in
5 control of muting and unmuting yourself during this
6 question and answer period. Thank you.

7

Uh, Chair Chin, you may begin.

8

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Uh, thank you.

9

Before, uh, I start my question, I'd like to,
10 uhm, mention that we have Council Member Ayala and
11 Council Member Louis.

12

Thank you, Commissioner, for your testimony.

13

Uhm, it's always great to see you.

14

Uhm, Commissioner, from what we heard back in
15 July, there are about 25 thousand seniors/older
16 adults that are still in the GetFood program. And,
17 from your testimony, right now DFTA'S serve, uh, the
18 Home Deliver Meal Program, serve over 30 thousand
19 seniors.

20

So, what is DFTA'S plan working with the
21 administration to transition this group of seniors
22 that is on the GetFood Program in to your home
23 delivery meals for the homebound seniors?

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2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright, so,
3 gonna... I'm gonna take you in... Because, I... I
4 see this as three different buckets.

5 Alright? So, I'll... Can I answer it in to
6 three different buckets, and talk to you about what
7 we've been doing? Alright?

8 So, the first thing that we've doing, uhm, we
9 first... We've been working very closely with, uh,
10 GetFood, uh, NYC in comparing data, client lists, to
11 make sure that we get a full picture of who is...
12 who has been served, who... and who needs to
13 continue to be served.

14 So, the first thing that we've done is did a
15 match between our data, uh, client data base and
16 congregate meals, and the, uh, the city's database.
17 And, once we did that, we started working with the,
18 uhm, the centers. And, I have to say, that the
19 senior center staff and the directors immediately
20 started calling that client base -- which was about
21 eight thousand -- immediately calling them. And,
22 over 60% said, we're ready to get off GetFood, and we
23 want to go back to our senior centers. Alright?

24 And, then we are working with that, you know,
25 get... 1) Finishing the calls, but also getting some

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2 assurance and getting some assistance in place. Uhm,
3 we've also had a very similar process in discussion
4 with the home delivered meals providers.

5 What has been very important is that we knew,
6 from the onset, as you well said, uh... uh,
7 Councilwoman, there were individuals that were home
8 delivered meals clients, and on... on our wait list,
9 but the... we didn't have the capacity at that time
10 to serve them. So, they went on to GetFood as a
11 default program to make sure that their food
12 insecurity was addressed. There were about anywhere
13 between 750 and 800 of those.

14 We worked with the network immediately to talk
15 about their capacity -- could those be absorbed? We
16 were assured and have been very confident that the
17 network, the home delivered meals providers, can have
18 that capacity. And... And, those can be absorbed
19 within their current, uh, operations.

20 That said, you know that our concern is that's
21 going to reach its... its point, you know, its
22 breaking point at some point. Right?

23 And, so, what we're... you're looking at a
24 variety of other things. And, so, that's why we came
25 up with the recovery program.

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2 The recovery program is going to be a program
3 where many of the individuals, who are not ready to
4 get off GetFood, uhm, who's... who's... that's
5 not... I mean, you know, who are not ready to go to
6 the senior centers, but who still want meals
7 delivered; they will get meals through the recovery
8 programs.

9 And, we also had the recovery program as a
10 default for those individual who are provide... who
11 are deemed home delivered meals eligible, and we put
12 them in there, and so we can find a home or provider
13 that can provide them those... their... uh,
14 permanently provide them home delivered meals.

15 And, then there is that entire number of
16 individuals, and it fluctuates, I mean, and...
17 and... And, GetFood will be able to answer those
18 numbers. But, it fluctuates anywhere, and the...
19 And, the... the census changes daily. So, it was,
20 at one point, at its highest point it was 10
21 thousand. And, its lowest point, I think, uh, just
22 last week it was 7 thousand of those individuals who
23 are not affiliated, but who... and, we're surveying
24 them to see if they still need GetFood, and

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2 they're... The recovery program is there to continue
3 services for those individuals.

4 Uhm, and, that's what we're doing to make sure
5 that there is seamless transition. Uhm, in each one
6 us, of those, of those service categories, that older
7 adults usually can, uh, fit.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I think this is the first time
9 we're hearing about this recovery program? Uh...

10 (CROSS-TALK)

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, yeah, it is...

12 (CROSS-TALK)

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Because... (CROSS-TALK)

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I mean, well, that's
15 what they... I don't... I don't know if it's the
16 first time, but I do know that we put it in place,
17 and it's one of the plans that we're expecting to put
18 in place just so that we do not find ourselves with 7
19 thousand older New Yorkers, 60+, without food...

20 Uhm, who are still not feeling food insecure, who are
21 not eligible for home delivered meals, or who are not
22 interested in participating in the senior centers.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: From the number that you have
24 just mentioned, that doesn't seem to be matching the
25 number that... that we have in terms of who is the

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older adults that's in the... in the GetFood Program, and this is such a larger number.

So, you're saying that 8 thousand are seniors that were originally connected to an older adult center?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The number that we're... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: (INAUDIBLE 00:33:66)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: originally...

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Could... Could you say the providers are calling them? So, these are the seniors... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: That... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right, so, the first... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, the first belong to (INAUDIBLE 00:33:44)... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The first number... right. The first... Let me, it... When we first started, uh, we... we transferred 44 thousand people over to GetFood. And, there was a combination, you know, of, uh, was it 44? No, it was 14 thousand.

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2 Uhm, Michael will give you the numbers. That is not
3 my... my strength. Uhm, my strength is program
4 design and program development. Uhm, the, uhm, there
5 was a... a group of individuals that were on GetFood
6 that were clearly associated with the, uh, older
7 adult clubs. And, those were about 8 thousand when
8 we did the match... (CROSS-TALK)

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright? And,
11 anyone else can amplify, if you want, anyone on this
12 panel, uhm, when we did that match, that number of
13 older adults is what, uh, the provider started
14 calling. And, from the feedback that we got, 60
15 per... Uh, about 87% of those calls were done. 60%
16 of those individuals said that they were willing to
17 go back to the senior centers and get off GetFood.
18 So, that's the... the number. And, then, there were
19 about another 800 that we knew from our case
20 management agencies, that immediately went to home
21 delivered meals. This... The... The case
22 management agencies and home delivered meals
23 providers, in conversations, are able to absorb those
24 seamlessly. Alright?

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2 And, now we're looking at about another...
3 anywhere between two thousand and two thousand 500.
4 The number fluctuates everyday as we're making more
5 calls, and people are either deemed non home
6 delivered meals eligible or people are, uhm, re...
7 not willing to be in the program any longer... or not
8 interested in being in the program any longer.

9 That number of calls and arrangements are going
10 on as we... as we speak.

11 And, then, there was this other number, uhm, and
12 any of you can clarify, about anywhere, about 7
13 thousand of people who are unaffiliated, umh, and who
14 were looking at to support in a recovery program.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Are there... it... Part of
16 that 7... (CLEARS THROAT) 7 thousand, is that only,
17 uh, older adults? You're not talking about, uhm...
18 (CROSS-TALK)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, I'm not
20 (INAUDIBLE 0036:05) (CROSS-TALK)... (CROSS-TALK)

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Anybody that's under 60?

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Councilwoman, I'm
23 only talking about 60+. GetFood will be much, uh,
24 will be well prepared to answer, uh, under 60.
25 The... I can only give you the services and the

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2 transition programs that we're putting in place with
3 our network of agencies for the 60+.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, uh, and, somebody raise
5 their hand? Uhm...

6 MICHAEL OGNIBENE: Yeah, this is Michael
7 Ognibene, just to clarify the numbers, the... What
8 we're in... And, uhm, GetFood will be able to
9 confirm this: As of last week, the number of people,
10 60+ still participating in GetFood, is just above 16
11 thousand. So, it's... it's... We've seen it drop
12 considerably over the last few weeks. So, as of last
13 week, what we're solving for is 16,233. Of that
14 number, as the commissioner mentioned, uhm, a good
15 percent, 8 thousand or so, uh, have been called by
16 the.. the, uh, the senior centers. And, we've got
17 about 6 thousand. People are... People are
18 constantly entering and leaving the system. So,
19 we... Each week, we gain some, we lose some. So,
20 there are about 5 thousand or so that we still need
21 to call. But, as... As, uh, Commissioner explained,
22 60% have indicated they will no longer need the
23 GetFood's services after October 15th.

24 So, the number is 16 thousand.
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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. So, that... We've...
3 Well, we've heard from providers that a lot of them
4 are finding themselves to be short staffed, and part
5 of it is due to the vaccination mandate. And, the
6 need for capital repair, uh, to their home delivered
7 meal vans. So, what is the city... What is it
8 they're doing to provide... to support these, uhm,
9 providers with staff shortage and capital repairs?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uhm, well, staff
11 shortage is a difficult one. What we could do is
12 provide funding for the staff for replacement of
13 staff. And, uhm, early on, we sent a, uh, again, in
14 our constant communication and... and, working with
15 OMB, we were able to send a communication to our
16 networks letting them know to keep informing us as to
17 what their needs were so that we could address those
18 from a budgetary perspective.

19 Jose, do you want to, uh, address when we sent
20 that, uh, email and... when we sent that
21 communication, and, uhm, where we're at?

22 JOSE MERCADO: Uh, yes, good morning Commissioner.
23 Uhm, good morning, Councilman. Uhm, right now, for
24 example, we are... actually have put in the capital
25 requests to replace 44 hot shot vans. Uh, that was

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2 currently in... uhm, the process we're working on
3 right now. So, that's kind of in terms of replacing
4 those vehicles. And, we have... that's a 10 year...
5 Those are... Replacing those vehicles that are over
6 10 years old.

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, but, uh... Uh,
8 Jose, can you address, uhm, the assurance that we
9 gave to providers that as their capacity grew?

10 JOSE MERCADO: Yes, currently, we're basically,
11 uhm, we're adjusting their budgets to reflect the
12 current GetFood transitions right now. So, we're
13 doing that right now. Uhm...

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: (INAUDIBLE 00:39:22) (CROSS-
15 TALK)

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Does that answer
17 your question, Councilwoman?

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, in terms of the, uhm, the
19 funding, right? I mean, there's, uhm, a longstanding
20 issue of funding that's insufficient reimbursement
21 rate. Uhm, and, in the council, we have always, you
22 know, pushed for increasing, uh, the funding, and it
23 is a (BACKGROUND NOISE 00:39:41) priority.

24 Now, the new contact that you have with these
25 home delivered meal program, you increased the rate

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2 to 5 dollars... dollars and... I mean, \$9.58. Uhm,
3 but, the provider has always been pushing for \$11.78.
4 So, has DFTA talked to OMB about increasing the rate?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We've, uhm, we...

6 That, uhm, not the rate for the recovery program.

7 Uh, the recovery program will increase from, uh, the
8 \$5.00 that you figured, up the \$9.58, uhm, as we
9 currently pay home delivered meals programs.

10 We have been talking to OMB, and, uhm, you know,
11 these are constant, you know, very good, productive,
12 uh, conversations about increasing the home delivered
13 meals rate to about \$10.52.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: It's still not... not up to
15 the national average of \$11.00 and... and 78¢.

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And... And, I...

17 You know, I... I don't... I... You know the...

18 The needle was outpaced as the resources. And, that

19 national average does not account for the kind of

20 scale and volume that New Yorker has. And, so;

21 therefore, our, you know, we look at that. We take

22 our volume and our scale. Uh, you can't compare New

23 Yorker to some other cities in Ohio and Indiana or...

24 You know, which are also maybe increasing, uhm, uh,

25 the... the, uhm... And, you know, the... the...

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2 the providers, you know, well intended, well
3 informed, well educated, uh, are pro... You know,
4 and asking for us to come with the national average.
5 Where we... You know, we will look at that in
6 earnest, but I think where we've arrived there was
7 about, uh, a \$10.52. We looked at our highest of
8 costs, our highest of cost providers and... And,
9 went beyond that.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, I think what we're...
11 We're... Can continue to look at that. And, I know
12 that during the budget process, we, you know, now
13 City Council respond, we asked for an increase of
14 16.6 million, and we said, it's home delivered meal
15 programs, and, administration, just say, "Oh, the
16 senior centers gonna be open."

17 We missed the boat. I mean, we're about seniors
18 who don't go to senior centers/adult centers, because
19 they can't. Uhm, so, I think we... (CROSS-TALK)

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, yeah, I...
21 I... (CROSS-TALK)

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We're gonna have to... (CROSS-
23 TALK)

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I... I'm sorry, I
25 have to applaud you, because it's... It's been a

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2 conversation that we've always had, you know, to
3 distinguish the two programs, and the... the... the
4 distinction, in terms of service, our service
5 provision, but also the distinction in cost of both
6 programs. So, and, I always, uh, welcome and
7 appreciate so much your clarity on those two... on
8 those two distinct programs.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, we gonna continue to...
10 to push, because, uhm, the number... I mean, there's
11 gonna be... There's waiting list that you also
12 mentioned earlier. So, we... We have to continue to
13 (BACKGROUND NOISE 00:42:45) continue the push for
14 more funding for the hope of the (00:42:46
15 INAUDIBLE)... Yeah, I'M gonna pass it on to my co-
16 chair, uh, Council Member Vallone, to ask some
17 questions, and then I'll come back later.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Chair Chin.

19 Uh, okay, Commissioner, and to the team there, it
20 ... I guess it's a good start to try to see what
21 vision is gonna be here in this transition.

22 So, let me see if I've got some of this straight.
23 So, the GetFoodNYC federal billion dollar program,
24 that's coming to a close. That was maintained by The
25 Department of Sanitation, correct?

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2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And, they had their own
4 vendors; I think there was 22 vendors providing those
5 meals. And, those... Those vendors and those
6 contracts, that separate from DFTA. So, and that was
7 all part of this federal program. Right? (CROSS-
8 TALK)

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Okay, so, in that transition
11 you've got a separate group of vendors, and I won't
12 get to the three buckets that you outlined yet on the
13 folks that are in that... that are in that group.
14 But, the vendors that were providing those meals for
15 that program, will they continue in any capacity, or
16 will DFTA use your own vendors to provide the
17 difference going forward?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, I'm gonna let
19 GetFood answer the... what's gonna happen with
20 their vendors. They're better prepared for that.

21 But, I... I will... What I will say is that
22 where possible we would rely on, uhm, for the two
23 distinct programs, the home delivered meals and
24 congregate, it's the provider network that has been
25 created and that really knows how to address older

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adult meals. Uhm, for the (INAUDIBLE 00:44:31)...

(CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: For that provider network, Commissioner, that's your existing... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes...

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Contractual provider net...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right. Right, so, then we're looking at... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And, we're basically gonna... We're basically gonna use that group, and I guess with the overflow or the... the merging of some of the new folks... And, only the 60+. I don't even want to get in to the under, because that's not fair to you on... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: on that. But, in the 60+ world, that was part of GetFood. So, your... your existing contract and the vendors... And, that's what Chair Chin was looking at with OMB. Uhm, how are we going to provide for those additional meals in the transition if the budget's not going to be increase to... to absorb those additional people? I mean, that would be... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We're not...

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(CROSS-TALK)

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CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: (INAUDIBLE 00:45:12)...

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(CROSS-TALK)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Great question.

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Great question. Great concern. We all share it.

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And, that's why have continuous, uhm, very

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productive, uhm, conversations with OMB about those

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precise issues.

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Uhm, and then we have this recovery program.

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But, I'm gonna turn it over to GetFood, so that they

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can address the questions around their vendors and

14

that transition.

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CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Sure.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Great, uh, thank

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you Council Member for that question.

18

And, uhm, what I can tell is that overall since,

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uh, April of 2020 when we were brought in to the

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program, we've had, uh, 72 different vendors. Uh,

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which is... Uh, with 77 contracts. Some... There

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are a couple of vendors that had multiple meal types.

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Thirteen... At the very, very beginning, there were

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13 vendors that DFTA was using that we did leverage.

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Uhm, so, with... There was some overlap in the very,

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2 very beginning, but as you know, the program grew
3 very, very quickly, and, so we ended up with many,
4 many more vendors than the original ones that we had,
5 uhm, taking over, uh, from DFTA.

6 So, at this point, our current GetFood contracts,
7 we are, uhm, they will sunset and those contacts will
8 end.

9 And, we have been in... As the commissioner
10 said, we have been in discussions with DFTA about,
11 uhm, our vendors, they have been, you know, pursuing
12 their new program, but the actual contacts that we
13 hold will end.

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, Deputy Commissioner, of
15 those contracts, what was the amount of funding that
16 was used for those 22 different contractors? I think
17 you said up to 77. Uhm, what... How much...

18 (CROSS-TALK)

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Yes...

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Of that budget was used for
21 those contract... vendors?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Let me ex... Let
23 me just pull up our budget here. One second. Uhm...

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2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And, do you have the
3 difference between, I guess, 60+ and everyone else?
4 Because, I'd like to kind of focus... (CROSS-TALK)

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Yeah, of... Of
6 course... (CROSS-TALK)

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Because, I think's it's fair
8 to do to apple to apple... (CROSS-TALK)

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Of course...
10 the... The challenge we have with, uh, measuring
11 60+, is that the... he first half of the... of...
12 In the first half of the pan... pandemic, the way
13 the emergency food program is set up, was to deliver
14 by address. And, so we didn't actually capture
15 people's information. And, so it was only, uh, on
16 October of 2020 that we started to capture those
17 demographics. So, that is just, uh, an unfortunate
18 weakness of, uh, of that part of the program.

19 However, we have overall, uh, we've... we've
20 spent over 800 million dollars, uh, for, uhm,
21 emergency food. Uhm, we do expect that (INAUDIBLE
22 00:47:42) will... will be reimbursing us for... for
23 the vast majority of that, which is a good thing...
24 uhm, that we delivered, uh, about a 135 million total
25 meals. So, that's between... that's all ages. Uh,

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2 and, I can pull up for you, if you're interested in
3 number of meals, excreta, for, uhm, 60+ for where we
4 know it. Uh, but, like I said, about a hun... 800
5 million dollars overall for the emergency food
6 program.

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, I mean, thank god for
8 that. And, we're... we're all, uh, thankful that
9 that happened. But, I think the... The next step
10 now is, I mean, it sounds like you had a year from
11 last October to this October to find out how many
12 60+. What is your current estimate on how many of
13 those meals were delivered to 60+ in New York City?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Yep. So, we have
15 those numbers. Uh, we currently have, uh, just
16 over... As... As Michael Ognibene mentioned, over
17 16 thousand people, 60+ who are, as of last week,
18 were still receiving meals. Uhm, uh, at least 60...
19 six thousand, maybe so more, were are... People
20 already known to DFTA. But, there were some new
21 customers that were not necessarily known to DFTA.
22 And, so DFTA is doing the work now, as was mentioned,
23 with, uh, partners to understand that demographic and
24 who those people are.

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2 Uhm, so, it is, just as a comparison, right now,
3 as of last week, the people under 60 served by the
4 program was 7,740. So, it is the vast majority of
5 people currently in the GetFood program who are 60+.

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: (BACKGROUND NOISE 00:49:13)

7 So, the data that's been collected, how is that data
8 being disseminated and provided to DFTA so that when
9 the transition, actually not completed, but begins,
10 that they will... (CROSS-TALK)

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Mm-hmm.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: The correct data for the
13 correct data for those 60+?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: So, as... It's
15 a... You know, it's a program that iterates. So, we
16 have a process, uh, a confidential process to share,
17 uh, customer data. And, that's what's being used
18 right now... right now for DFTA and their team to
19 make the phone calls.

20 Uhm, every week we update, uhm, our information
21 so we have a sense of how the numbers are changing.
22 Overall the not... The program continues to shrink.
23 So, these numbers continue to go down, which is a
24 good thing. Uh, where we have fluctuation is just
25 with the test and trace, uh, folks who need to

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quarantine. But, overall, these numbers are continuing to go down.

So, we do not... We... While we have a few new customers, largely our customer base is shrinking.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, it sounds like the phone call part of this is gonna... Is on DFTA'S end. Can you not, prior to their closure of the federal program, also be part of the notification process to these over seniors, some of which who don't get phone calls, or very scared to pick up the phones, are very dubious on this notification process during the transfer.

Uh, I know with my own seniors, as an elder law attorney, the odds of them picking up a phone call from an unknown phone number, and getting that critical information, is slim to none.

Uhm, what is your role in notifying folks that previously received a meal through GetFoodNYC, are we just gonna dump it on the hands of DFTA?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: We have... I will defer to The Mayor's Office of Food Policy for the overall approach. But, I will say the Department of Sanitation is involved in sending letters.

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2 So, we have multiple touchpoints. Uh, where we
3 have an email, we are sending emails. We are sending
4 hard copy letters. Uhm, and then there is an
5 extensive effort to... to do phone calls. But, I
6 will defer to the... the folks that are in charge of
7 that effort, uh, to give you more detail.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, I mean, that's the
9 first time we just heard of that. But, otherwise
10 (INAUDIBLE 00:51:17) of that was just, uh, less than
11 eight thousand. So, 50% of eight thousand were
12 called, so four thousand, all these numbers are based
13 on four thousand phone calls, and we don't even know
14 how many were picked up.

15 So, there is a letter process, and an email, and,
16 a phone call? So... (CROSS-TALK)

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: I think...

18 (CROSS-TALK)

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: How do we know who... who's
20 doing what and who's gonna be responsible for the
21 remaining?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: So, the core...
23 The coordination and the strategy, overall strategy,
24 I would defer to The Mayor's Office of Food Policy to
25 discuss, but what we have been tasked to at San... in

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2 Sanitation, is to ensure there's a hardcopy mailer
3 that goes out to customers about next steps, uhm,
4 where to go for more information, whether you're 60+,
5 or you're under 60, excreta.

6 Uhm, and, like, I said, where we have emails, we
7 are contacting people by email. Uhm, and, then
8 obviously, we are leveraging people's phone numbers.
9 Uh, well, not... (CROSS-TALK)

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: But, so, I guess the good
11 thing is...

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Not... Not
13 Sanitation. So, Sanitation is not doing, uhm, any of
14 the phone calls.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Uh, and I guess the good
16 thing would be, with the success of that, through
17 Sanitation and... Do you know, then, or at least
18 that data, so that maybe that would... would reduce
19 duplication or additional efforts for those who have
20 already confirmed that they wanted to continue or
21 transition or go on. So, does that data then gonna
22 be transferred from Sanitation over to DFTA or OMB or
23 the Mayor's Office?

24 I mean, it... It's... It's just for me, I just
25 don't want to... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Right... (CROSS-
3 TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: reinvent the wheel.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: Correct, we have a
6 process, like I said, each week, where we are
7 updating. So, based on the phone calls -- based on
8 the effort -- we have a better understanding of who
9 is still in the program, and who is still interested
10 in the... in our... or in need of continuing meal
11 service after, uhm, the GetFood Program sunsets.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, when... (CROSS-TALK)

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Chairperson Vallone, can I just
14 interject on the... (CROSS-TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Absolutely, yes... (CROSS-
16 TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: the thing about the... the
18 phone calls? (CROSS-TALK)

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Please do... (CROSS-TALK)

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, are you doing personal
21 phone calls, or is it robocalls?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANDERSON: I will defer again
23 to The Mayor's Office of Food Policy, Kate MacKenzie,
24 to answer those questions about phone calls. So,
25 Kate, I'll hand it over to you... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Sure, sure, thank you.

3 Uhm, good morning, everyone. Uhm, and I
4 certainly want to offer, uhm, my thanks and gratitude
5 to Commissioner, uhm, Cortés, and, I know that she
6 will want to speak also to, uhm, the communications
7 specifically with, uh, individuals known to DFTA.

8 So, uhm, uh, over the course of the pandemic,
9 certainly with GetFood, and now as we begin to
10 transition in to recovery food programs, we've
11 engaged the, uh, the... the expertise, frankly, of
12 the, uhm, Housing Recovery Office, otherwise known as
13 HRO, who was, uhm, certainly instrumental post Sandy
14 in reaching out to all of, uhm, the impacted
15 communities to speak with them to access their needs,
16 uhm, using an asset that they have called Resource
17 Navigators.

18 Those Resource Navigators have been central to
19 the GetFood team, uhm, in managing, uh, customer
20 communications.

21 As we move in to the recovery process, in to the,
22 uhm, the p... the very in... uh, specific, uh,
23 moments to engage with GetFood clients around the
24 appropriate recovery needs, HRO, we started, it's a
25 multi-pronged strategy, initially, uhm, Chair, to

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2 your question, initially it was with robocalls,
3 texts, and, uhm, text and emails. And, then as...
4 And, then, uh, after the first two weeks, we began,
5 uh, using outgoing phone calls to actually speak with
6 individuals. And, again, those Resource Navigators
7 are certainly trained in, uhm, in the communication,
8 the, you know, the time it takes to... to speak with
9 individuals and repeated phone calls, are ongoing.

10 We've, of course, been in, uhm, very regular
11 communications with our... with our strong, uhm,
12 team at DFTA, who also, I think to your point, Chair
13 Vallone, uhm, are... were using, uh, also some of
14 the... the older adult centers to make those calls,
15 because they are known to that population.

16 But, uhm, Commissioner, I'm not sure if you'd
17 like to speak further to that specific process?

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Wait, I... I just heard a
19 lot of... And, I don't have any numbers for what you
20 just said. So, it sound like a multi... (CROSS-
21 TALK)

22 DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: A multi-tiered process to
24 reaching out to the seniors.

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2 How many seniors do we know have been reached,
3 and have confirmed that they want to continue with
4 the... a meal in some capacity, that are over 60+?
5 And, how many seniors have not been contacted?

6 DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Sure... (CROSS-TALK)

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: That was the question, and I
8 still haven't gotten an answer to it.

9 DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: So, to the, uh, specific
10 senior population, I know, uhm, Commissioner, your...
11 your team is... is really owning a... a... a great
12 deal of that.

13 I can speak to the HRO outreach, uhm, and I, uh,
14 let me see if I can get, uh, numbers... (CROSS-TALK)

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Let me answer this
16 Kate... (CROSS-TALK)

17 DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: specific to the seniors. Go
18 ahead Lorraine, yes? (CROSS-TALK)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Comish (SIC)...
20 Council Member Vallone, as I said in my testimony,
21 one of the first things that we did when we heard of
22 this transition was to ask for database so that we
23 could, through a process that we have in the city, is
24 to share and compare databases.

25 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Right.

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2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, so for the, uh,
3 early on... Just this is preliminary numbers, is
4 looking at who were older adults who were identified,
5 that we knew that were in our system -- in our Star
6 Data System. And, we then gave those, uh, that
7 information to our senior centers, who had a very
8 specific touchpoint, which was a call. It was a call
9 to that population that they knew.

10 We also had a similar process with home delivered
11 meals clients with -- those that were known to us.
12 Uhm, and what we're working out now with those that
13 are not known to us. Alright?

14 So, those that were known to us, the case
15 management agencies, (BACKGROUND NOISE 00:56:47) as
16 we're speaking, as the senior, uhm, older adult
17 clubs, as we're speaking, have been reaching out to
18 those clients that we... that are known to us, so
19 that we can have an assessment.

20 I will get back to you the actual number. The
21 last number that I heard about last, uhm, week, was
22 about... We contacted about seven thousand through
23 the senior center network, and about 60% of the, uh,
24 we contacted them, and about something like six

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2 thousand responded. And, of those, 60% said that
3 they were ready to go back to the older adult clubs.

4 I will give you the numbers of the... the actual
5 numbers that we've called, and the numbers that are
6 still to be reached, and that the numbers that have
7 said that they're willing to and ready to transition
8 either to home delivered meals programs permanently,
9 or to a senior... back to their old, uh, senior
10 center. Alright? But, (INAUDIBLE 00:57:41)...

11 (CROSS-TALK)

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Commissioner... (CROSS-
13 TALK)

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: (INAUDIBLE 00:57:40)

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, hang on Miss Chin, I'm
16 just on... I am looking at every word in your
17 testimony, because I always do, and there's not one
18 number. So, in all due respect, when I'm asking a
19 question for numbers, and you're referring to things
20 that you say in you're telling, it is not in there.

21 So, it... It's not a matter of semantics on...
22 on amount of percentage with the numbers. But, we're
23 getting to a point where we're about to transition,
24 and we're gonna lose The Department of Sanitation and
25 the federal assistance of a billion dollars. And,

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2 it's all gonna get wound up handed off to you. So,
3 I'm trying to make sure that you, and DFTA, and your
4 team, like, if I'm in (INAUDIBLE 00:58:14) has
5 exactly what you need, so that we can't say, well,
6 gee I wish that The Mayor's Office or Sanitation, or
7 the federal... before they ended, would have given us
8 that so we could break it down.

9 I don't want anything dropped in your lap that we
10 can't handle. So, then, I want it seamlessly handed
11 over to you, so that you know exactly that number of
12 the amount of seniors at 60+, that were receiving...
13 And, I... I'm really not getting those numbers
14 really from anyone.

15 So, let me Comish (SIC)... Uh, Chair Chin, I
16 know you had something. I just want to jump in to
17 those numbers.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, no, I... I agree with
19 you that... I mean, one of the main things that we
20 don't want any older adults to get lost in to the...
21 in the system... (CROSS-TALK)

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Right? Because... (CROSS-
24 TALK)

25 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I...

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: When you talked about the
3 match, I am very, you know, confident that any
4 seniors that is connected to an older adult center,
5 to the provider network, is gonna get the help...

6 (CROSS-TALK)

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: in the language that they
9 understand. And, they're gonna get connected. What
10 we're concerned about is the seniors who are not
11 connected to the older adult center, uhm, and they
12 signed up for GetFood during the pandemic.

13 We want to make sure... And, we want to... want
14 to know the number. Right? And, make sure that
15 these cent (SIC)... these seniors get connected to
16 the... (CROSS-TALK)

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes... (CROSS-TALK)

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: older adult center. Because, I
19 know during the pandemic, they were helping to make
20 calls to sign people up for GetFood. So, I don't
21 know if they were able to capture, you know, those
22 (SIC) data, or they were given those people that they
23 did help make phone calls for. Or, whether those are
24 the ones that also we'll be able to get connected.

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2 So, we're just... It's that other missing
3 population. Because, you're talking about last week
4 the number was what? Sixteen... 16 thousand?

5 (CROSS-TALK)

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: 16,233 is the number
7 that was cited by both The Deputy Commissioner...

8 (CROSS-TALK)

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, but... (CROSS-TALK)

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: and, Mike... And,
11 confirmed by Michael. Confirmed by Michael...

12 (CROSS-TALK)

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, but then you... you
14 only... DFTA'S only been able to match less than
15 half of that. Okay? Because you mentioned about 80
16 thousand... (CROSS-TALK)

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes... (CROSS-
18 TALK)

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Eight thousand. So... (CROSS-
20 TALK)

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I will (INAUDIBLE
22 01:00:16)... (CROSS-TALK)

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: What's going to happen to the
24 other... Right?

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2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right. Right.

3 Absolutely.

4 First of all, I want... We have common cause
5 here. The common cause is to make sure that this
6 does not get dumped on DFTA. We are working very
7 closely with the mayor's office, uhm, with the Deputy
8 Commissioner on... On... Uhm, of The Sanitation
9 Department, to make sure that we get the information
10 that we need, one, for this individuals that are not
11 known to... to The Department for the Aging. And, I
12 will get those numbers. We will work very closely.
13 We've been asking for that. We're working closely
14 with the mayor's office of, uhm... of, uhm, Food...
15 Food, uhm, Policy to... to do that.

16 Uhm, but we will continue working with the
17 network of agencies that know, uh, the older
18 population. Those that even they referred to
19 GetFood, uh, those that we know we referred to
20 GetFood for home delivered meals, and those that we
21 referred. And, by... By the... By the end of this
22 day, you will get the number as we know it today.
23 Alright?

24 And, I will give you both the number of those
25 calls that have been made to date. And, I'll give

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2 you Friday's date... Uh, calls that have been made.
3 I will give you, uhm, the numbers for home delivered
4 meals and congregate. And, then I will let you know,
5 uh, where we are with the number of unaffiliated...
6 What that number is, and then what's the gap to fill
7 within the next two weeks. Alright?

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: You know, that would be...
9 This... so helpful in fighting with... for you and
10 with you on budget. Right? Because, once we get an
11 idea, even a rough idea, about how many additional 60
12 seniors we're talking about.

13 Clearly the existing budget doesn't take...
14 We're dealing with the preexisting numbers. And,
15 now, all of the sudden, we're talking... So, I'm...
16 I'm just gonna... Last couple, just so I can get my
17 head around it.

18 Commissioner, you were... you were great in
19 outlining the three different groups. Uh, the
20 buckets that you mentioned. There were those that
21 were ready to transition. Uh, there are those that
22 can be absorbed. Uhm, there's those we're reaching
23 out to.

24 But, you mentioned... And, I guess maybe this is
25 for anyone here, uh, there's a third group, and you

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2 said somewhere between seven and ten thousand that
3 may have an eligibility requirement, or the
4 eligibility is... is not going to be there for...
5 do not meet the requirements under the current
6 program.

7 That's all part of the notice. See? It's one
8 thing to get a phone call to let them know it's
9 transitioning. It's another thing for a senior who
10 is now not going... eligible for a meal that they
11 got under this new federal program, but are not
12 eligible under the existing, preexisting DFTA, uh,
13 home delivered meals program.

14 Do we... Do we have an idea or a plan on how
15 we're going to get that information to folks, and how
16 we can help them understand those eligibility
17 requirements?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That is the process
19 that we rely on The Mayor's Office of... For Food
20 Policy. And, it, uh, the, uhm, the Director, uhm,
21 MacKenzie can... Uhm, that the... Director
22 MacKenzie was describing.

23 We are relying on them to provide that
24 information to us, so that we can then put in place
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2 the recovery program for exactly those individuals
3 that you've mentioned.

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CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, we... Before we hand it
5 off to the... To Director MacKenzie, so this
6 recovery program, it sounds interesting. And, I
7 think it's the first we're hearing of it.

8

Can you just maybe flesh that out a little bit
9 on... On what... Who is gonna... Who's... Is the
10 recovery part of... part of DFTA? Is it going to be
11 something new? Is it gonna be to encapsulate these
12 new seniors?

13

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, it... I...
14 DFTA will... will be responsible for the recovery
15 program for the 60+. Alright?

16

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Okay.

17

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, the recovery
18 program is exactly that. It is those individuals who
19 still might find themselves food insecure, who have
20 never participated in an older adult club, and who
21 have no interest in participating in adult... in an
22 older adult club, who have been receiving their meals
23 at home, that who are not deemed eligible for home
24 delivered meals. So, that is that... That category

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was created precisely for those individuals.

Alright?

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: That sounds... That sounds wonderful. And, that sounds like almost an emergency new task force type of thing. Because, it's... It's going to be an unknown. You don't know if it's going to be one person or it's going to be ten thousand people. But, that might be the greatest, uh, safety net you could create -- that type of program.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: To assist that transition...

(CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: But the... But, the... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And, a lot of folks aren't even going to know what group they fall in to.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right, but that... And... And, that's... And, that's where the communication and the coordinated communication is important between the Office of Food Policy and The Department for the Aging, as well as with The Department of Sanitation. And, making sure that we are coordinating our databases and... And, uhm, and working, uhm... uh, together.

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2 But, what I want to say is... And I don't want
3 to give the impression that this is a new program...
4 A new standing program that's gonna be in there
5 indefinitely.

6 This is a transition program for GetFood, uhm,
7 and this recovery.... This recovery program is just
8 a transition program. It is, uh, a time limited
9 program. Alright?

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

11 Chair Chin, uh, if you need me, I... I'll jump
12 in on any other questions. But, I... I'm sure I
13 used all my time.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, no, Commissioner, when...
15 You said, it's a transition program?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: In terms of... Do you have a
18 funding amount that you're looking at? Make sure
19 that you get... (CROSS-TALK)

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We're working...

21 (CROSS-TALK)

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: the money?

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We're working right
24 now with OMB and making sure that we have, uh, the
25 support of the GetFood program and the office... The

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2 Mayor's Office Food Security, to support that program
3 until the duration. And, what we're looking at is
4 a... End date of June, uhm, June. And, uhm...

5 (CROSS-TALK)

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: June?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, yes, we're
8 looking at those numbers, and, uhm, and even looking
9 at some of the GetFood vendors as possible
10 subcontractors for that.

11 Uhm, so, that program, as soon as we get more and
12 more information as to the size of that program, and
13 that comes from, uh, Director Mackenzie's, uhm,
14 operation, we will be able to stand that up.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, I'm mean, it sounds
16 like you're...we're not gonna have the same amount of
17 folks, clearly. So, it's just a matter of how many
18 new folks will be eligible to... to now participate
19 in the preexisting DFTA home delivered meal program.

20 Uhm, this recovery program is like a type of a
21 safety net for those that are kind of transitioning
22 in.

23 But, it certainly sounds like we're gonna have to
24 allocate additional funding. And, that... That
25 becomes are challenge number one now as you, uh,

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2 absorb. Uh, and it could be anywhere from one to 16
3 thousand new folks coming in. Uhm, and as we figure
4 that number out, there's definitely gonna be
5 additional need for resources at... at the very
6 minimum, and I think that's where we can partner with
7 you... (CROSS-TALK)

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right (INAUDIBLE
9 01:07:21) (CROSS-TALK)...

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: To champion that budget.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

12 And, the other need that, you know, we've
13 discussed over and over again, is the increased
14 demand of home delivered meals. You know, we know...
15 We know. Uhm, and we're working... we're working,
16 uhm, hand... Arm, uh, hand in arm or whatever the
17 phrase is, with... uh, lockstep with OMB around
18 making sure that we carefully monitor this increase -
19 - in what we know will be people actually deemed hone
20 (SIC)... Uhm, in need of home delivered meals.

21 So, that's one of those other areas that we're
22 looking at with OMB.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And, that's where we can
24 (INAUDIBLE 01:07:57)... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and then... okay...

3 (CROSS-TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yeah, and that's where we
5 can follow up, Margaret, with... Once we have the
6 ascertaining of those numbers, and then with the
7 budget, that would be a great followup to today's
8 hearing with, uh, Commissioner's team as to how many
9 estimated seniors we're talking about and what type
10 of budget increase we will need.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and we'll definitely...
13 There's gonna be a... a big increase with the home
14 delivered meal. Uhm, and, you talked about, there's,
15 you know, there was a waiting list, and then you had
16 to transfer them to the GetFood.

17 And, then, right now with the vaccination rate,
18 uhm, for the older... older adults, the... the...
19 the... the group that is like, 85+. I mean, the
20 vaccination rate is not that high. And, so, they're
21 not gonna be going to the congregate centers. And,
22 they... They're gonna be the one that needs... Will
23 be needing the home delivered meals.

24 So, I think that... that... that number is...
25 it's gonna increase tremendously. And, we just want

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to make sure that there's sufficient funding for that.

But, with this recovery program, who is gonna be responsible for people who are under 60? I know DFTA is... Is GetFood, uhm, Director MacKenzie? So, is it gonna be still under... (CROSS-TALK)

DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: you? Or... (CROSS-TALK)

DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: It'll... It's...

DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: I'M happy to respond to that. Thank you... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm.

DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: for the question.

Uhm, so, as I mentioned, uhm, The Mayor's Office of Food Policy, uhm, advises across city agencies and the administration on issues related to food policy, and we are not operational.

So, we have... For the specific under 60 population, again, we have partnered, uhm, and leveraged the expertise at The Housing Recovery Office to be able to stand up and manage the under 60 population on... in a program, uh, that is in contract negotiations right now, uhm, to provide grocery

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2 credits for individuals under 60, uhm, who are still
3 in need of... of food after GetFood winds down.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so, that's... So, it's
5 not... not HRA or any of those, uh, social services?

6 DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: Correct. And...

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm?

8 DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: For... For this pilot
9 program, I want to underscore that it is a pilot
10 program, the management of that program will run...
11 will fall out under The Housing Recovery Office.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, and, it's gonna go until
13 next June?

14 DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: It should... It... It...
15 It... We... We have, uh, OMB, uh, funding for these
16 recovery programs through the fiscal.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And... And, do you know what's
18 the amount that the OMB have allocated for the
19 recovery program?

20 DIRECTOR MACKENZIE: It... For this... For the
21 pilot of Grocery to Go, uhm, in the executive budget
22 is about, uhm, 6.8 million dollars.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so, uhm, Commissioner,
24 I... To get back to the... The home delivered
25 meals, so, right now, home delivered meals only five

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2 days a week? Right? And, we have, uh, I think Meals
3 on Wheels, uh, do they do weekends? (CROSS-TALK)

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, the Meals on
5 Wheels, which provides a sixth meal for a select
6 population, yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, there a, uhm, a budget
8 request to, uh, accommodate the increase in that
9 pop... Because, that... That population is gonna
10 increase. Also... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We're looking...
12 We're looking at that now. And... And, uhm, looking
13 at the impact of that. And, I haven't... That's all
14 part of the discussion with OMB around, uh, home
15 delivered meals.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, because, I... I know
17 that the discussion has... We have had that
18 discussion before. I mean, there's seven days to a
19 week. And, these seniors are only getting meals five
20 days a week. So, what are they gonna do for the...
21 for the weekend? (CROSS-TALK)

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, so, most of
23 them get... (CROSS-TALK)

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I mean, I know senior...
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2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The sixth meal, and
3 some get a seventh meal. But, yes, you're absolutely
4 right, that has been the dis... the program that
5 we've designed. And, we're looking at the impact of
6 that sixth meal and that occasional seventh meal.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, because, I know that
8 council, we had out... actually had a... a sixth
9 meal unitive, uhm, that we funded the sixth meal
10 program for quite a while. And, we want to make sure
11 that the administration ,you know, continue to look
12 at that -- especially for the more ,you know,
13 older... older adult population and the (BACKGROUND
14 NOISE) frail elderly and that... That's what we...

15 (CROSS-TALK)

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: what's, you know, what's
18 needed.

19 So, I think that... we want to make sure that
20 the budget is in place, because I know that the
21 service provider, and we'll hear from them later, I
22 mean, they've been doing a terrific job... And,
23 with, you know, short notice, and... and, doing all
24 of this calling, and they're the one that's
25 contacting -- connecting the seniors.

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2 We just want to make sure that they have
3 adequate, you know, support. And, I think with
4 the... I don't know if you can share with us, like,
5 the... the recent RFP for the older adult center?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uhm, I can share
7 some very top lines, because it hasn't been
8 finalized.

9 So, if you know, uh, with the... The... The RFP
10 was closed for submissions on June 11th. And, we
11 received a high volume of wonderful applications.
12 We'd been reviewing and scoring those applications
13 internally, and we're working with The Mayor's Office
14 of Contract Services to, uh, finalize the list of
15 those applicants who have been deemed eligible for
16 those contract awards. And, of course the contracts
17 are anticipated to start this fall.

18 Of the current list who have been, uhm, deemed
19 eligible for a contract, I'm pleased say that there
20 will be 31, uh, new nork (SIC)... uh, new older adult
21 clubs, I'm sorry, or NORCS added to the network.

22 So, we have made a commitment of... of, uhm, uh,
23 with the increased funding that you were so, uh,
24 adept at helping us get, uhm, we were able to, uh, we
25 made a commitment of up to 25. And, now we're up to

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2 31, uh, new OAC's or NORCS will be added to the
3 network, which will increase access to services and
4 address a lot of those transportation deserts, uh,
5 that we all know well of.

6 Uhm, and, as you may recall, you know, we're
7 thrilled that we're adding even more. And, I must
8 to... And, I must say that, providers currently
9 deemed eligible will result in a network comprising
10 of 272 older adult clubs -- up from 249. And, 36
11 DFTA funded NORCS up from the, uhm, current level of
12 28.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, you said, just, uh, the
14 contract's gonna start in the fall?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The contracts will
16 start in the fall.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: What... What is that date?
18 You know? Is that October? (CROSS-TALK)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The date... The
20 date... (CROSS-TALK)

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: November?

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, the date,
23 it'll... It will not go beyond November 1st, I can
24 tell you that. The contracts, once we get the
25 approval from The Office of Contract Services,

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negotiations will start immediately with the providers.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That have been deemed... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: eligible.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so you're... You're letting us know that the new contact will start before November 1st?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes. That is my goal, because... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: (INAUDIBLE 01:15:23)... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Our mutual goal!

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Because, we have... We still got funding that... it's the council, we want to make sure that our money is put to good use.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: To support these center (SIC). And, since they're not starting until almost November, then that's what we have to get on...

(CROSS-TALK)

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2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We will be able to,
3 and correct me if I'm wrong, Michael or Jose, we will
4 be able to share list of those who are deemed
5 eligible for contract as soon as Max (SP?) agrees to
6 it, and we engage in contract negotiations.

7 So, uhm, I think some of those are gonna happen
8 concurrently.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

10 Well, let us know as soon as you can. I mean,
11 I... We just want to make sure... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes! I will!

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you... (CROSS-TALK)

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I will, and you will
15 be as... as, uh, as... as pleased as we are.

16 I just... I can't thank you enough. And, uhm,
17 the... the Councilman, enough that, in the last 20
18 years, we've not seen a number of increases, senior
19 centers, and definitely, uh, since the creation of
20 NORCS, we have not been able to see an increase in
21 the NORCS. So, that... We are... that... The fact
22 that we have twenty... 31 new outlets to serve
23 old... this growing older adult populations, and
24 that we're narrowing the gap in our service desert,

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2 it's something that (BACKGROUND NOISE) you leave an
3 incredible legacy.

4 And, so, I... We... The network cannot thank
5 you enough for that.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: No, thank you, Commissioner,
7 we... we're... We're really happy to see, uh, the
8 expansion. And, we just want to make sure that...
9 that they have sufficient, you know, support and
10 funding for that.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Uhm, I'm gonna... (CROSS-TALK)

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: (INAUDIBLE 01:17:08)...
14 (CROSS-TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We're gonna... We're gonna
16 pass on to, uhm, Council Member Dinowitz has a
17 question. I saw his hand.

18 Council Member?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yes, hello. Good,
20 uh.... Is it morning still? Yes, good morning. Uh,
21 thank you, uh, Chairperson Vallone and, Chair, uh,
22 Chair Chin.

23 Uhm, I... I actually do want to follow up on
24 some of the questions that... that the Chair had
25 with the RFP.

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2 So, I'm... I'm a little confused. Uhm, when
3 were the older adult centers supposed to start the
4 new contracts? Uhm, because you said they're
5 gonna... (CROSS-TALK)

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The new contracts
7 are supposed to start October 1st.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: But, the goal is to have
9 the RFP done by November 1st?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No later than
11 November 1st. It'll be a rolling, you know, it...
12 Yes, we have to... Because, we have to walk (SIC)...
13 We have to wait for final approval from The Office of
14 Contract Services.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, so, if I'm at...
16 an older adult club or adult center, I'm trying to
17 plan my program and plan my meals, which is primal
18 (SIC)... you know, why we're here. Uhm, how... How
19 am I able to really do that with confidence if I
20 don't... If I... If... If... If my contract's
21 supposed to... If my contract's October 1st...

22 (CROSS-TALK)

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Councilman Dinowitz,
24 yeah, Councilman Dinowitz, one of the things that we
25 did -- precisely because the pandemic never allows us

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2 to plan with certainty -- one of the things that did
3 was we extended the contracts. So, that there is an
4 overlapping period in the current contracts.

5 Alright? So, one of the things... (CROSS-TALK)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, (INAUDIBLE 01:18:38)

7 October... Okay... (CROSS-TALK)

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That was... That
9 was a safeguard that we built in precisely because we
10 knew that there would be no certainty. We never knew
11 what was gonna happen. So, we built in an extension
12 to the current contracts to just make sure that we
13 had a safeguard and a fallback position.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, thank you, and
16 welcome to the committee.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you
18 very... And, when is the... When are those
19 contracts ex... extended until?

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Jose? Uh... Uh,
21 uh, Jose? I'm sorry, the... our Chief Financial
22 Officer can give you those kind of details.

23 Uh, Jose, when are the extensions, uh... What is
24 the term of the extensions?

25 JOSE MERCADO: Uh, June '22.

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright?

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Uhm, next (INAUDIBLE

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01:19:19)... yeah? (CROSS-TALK)

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JOSE MERCADO: June 30 of 2022.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Of? Okay, got it.

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JOSE MERCADO: So, as we... As we basically start

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to reward, we will start transitioning the contracts.

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So, we'll be closing contracts, opening contracts so

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we have this all in place.

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We'll be communicating with our providers as we

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always do. We'll give them enough time to transition

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from the old to new. We'll be reconciling the old

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contracts versus the new contracts. So, there's

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plenty of time, uh, to do all this. Once we, you

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know, once we get the awards out.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thanks, Jose... (CROSS-

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TALK) COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, Council

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Member Dinowitz, uh, continuity of service is key to

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us. And, we know that it's a high priority for you,

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but it's a higher priority for the older adults.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Well, you... It's a

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high priority for me, because it's a high priority

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for my... my constituents.

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely!

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: You know?

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So, uhm, the... the other question I had, it regards vaccinations. Uh, the other thing, Chair...

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(CROSS-TALK)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Mm-hmm?

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Chin mentioned was, you know, especially for the old... older adults older than 85 years old, vaccination rates are very low.

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So, they may not want to go to the center, uhm, to get food. But, I'm... I', concerned about people who are vaccinated who may not want to attend an older adult club, because they don't know the vaccination status.

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Now, what rules or regulations or systems are in place to check vaccination status of older adults, so that... so, that constituents can go in to a center and eat, even with lower capacity, eat... with.. with peace of mind?

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's a great question.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, it's a quest...

It's great question. And, it's a question that we

all have. And, that even The Department of Health,

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2 who is our partner, in determining when is it safe to
3 open, and how much... how much can we open, and what
4 kind of capacity can we have?

5 So, we're in constant communication. Right now,
6 we do not ask for proof of vaccination for, uh,
7 attending a congregate center. So, what we have in
8 lieu of asking for proof of vaccination, is the
9 social distancing requirement, a 25% limited capacity
10 given the physical space, and as well as masking, you
11 know, the four cores. You know, washing your hands,
12 and all, uhm, you know, using sanitizer, wiping down
13 systems, uhm, and making sure that the air is
14 purified.

15 So, all of those things have been in place.
16 Alright?

17 What we're doing currently, and what we're doing
18 with The Department of Health, is looking at two
19 possible options.

20 One, is asking for man... vaccination mandate,
21 uh, for... And, we have a mandate now for staff, uh,
22 for all staff of senior centers. We're asking if for
23 participants.

24 And, then, we're also ,you know, uh, at...
25 Looking at the other option, is asking for a

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2 vaccination... proof of vaccination to participate --
3 as they do in local restaurants.

4 So, The Department of Health is looking at all of
5 those issues. And, we're looking at the... the
6 mandate is very much aligned with what is happening
7 in nursing homes, where all older adults have to be
8 vaccinated to (INAUDIBLE 01:22:26)... (CROSS-TALK)

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: as well as all
11 staff.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Oh.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, so, those
14 are... Those are two things that we're in constant
15 communication with. This is an ever changing, uh,
16 situation. And, this is an every changing virus.
17 Uhm, and... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So... So, I... (CROSS-
19 TALK)

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, it's looking to
21 get worse... (CROSS-TALK)

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I know that... I don't
23 mean to interrupt you, I just need to respect the
24 time, which I am over, but I hope I can... Chair, if
25 I can have an extra minute? (CROSS-TALK)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, sure.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you... (CROSS-
4 TALK)

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm.

6

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Uhm, so... So, uh, I...
Why is there no mandate currently? I... I hear
8 you're looking at it. I hear that it is important,
9 but why is there currently no mandate?

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I will... I will
defer to The Department of Health, given The
Department of Health is our partner in this. And,
uh, in consultation with them, we follow their
guidance.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, because I...
There are a number of seniors who are vaccinated, who
I imagine would go to a restaurant, because they...
they know vaccination is checked. But, they wouldn't
go to their own senior center. Which, I think is a
little... a little backwards. I think they
should... You know, especially with... with older
adults, who we know are more susceptible to the
virus, be... (CROSS-TALK)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Mm-hmm.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: be in a place that they
3 know that they could be safe. Uhm, and right now,
4 with no... with no mandate, it's, uh... I... I...
5 I don't think it's safe.

6 So, uh, and, the other thing is, how do you know
7 the air is pure? You mentioned it... checking to
8 make sure it's... the air is purified. Is every
9 adult center... (CROSS-TALK)

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The... The... The
11 centers... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: provided with air
13 purifiers and ventilations?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The centers, when
15 it was... The centers went through a, uhm, variety
16 of... of... of guidance on getting the physical
17 plants ready for re-opening. And, that happened
18 several months ago.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, and that data
20 is... Is that... Is there data available for that,
21 or is it just... (CROSS-TALK)

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can... We can get
23 you that data.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you.
25 And, Uhm, but just... just to reiterate for the

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2 mandate, it's... It's The Department of Health, it
3 is wholly their decision?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It is The
5 Department... (CROSS-TALK)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: To... To require
7 mandates?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right. We have...
9 The Department of Health and The Doctor of the City
10 of New York determines when it is safe.

11 And, I have utmost respect, because he's been
12 able to keep us pretty safe until now.

13 Uhm, when, uh, what is the guidance, and how we
14 should implement that guidance.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Right, because, just...
16 I... Again, just going back to following up on
17 what... What... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Mm-hmm.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: What Chair Chin said is,
20 do you know how many older adults are getting meals
21 delivered or require meal deliveries because they are
22 too scared, uh, to go to the center, because there is
23 no vaccination mandate? And... And, I guess you
24 don't know... I guess no one will know the reasons
25 people (INAUDIBLE 01:25:04)... (CROSS-TALK)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right (INAUDIBLE
01:25:05)... (CROSS-TALK)
COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: But, uhm, but, uh, thank
you... (CROSS-TALK)
COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Mm-hmm.
COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I... I... I'll...
I'll leave it there. So, I'm a little over... A
little over the minute extension that I asked for.
But, thank you, Chairperson Vallone and Chair Chin.
CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, we'll... We'll...
We'll follow up on that later.
Uhm, Council Member... (CROSS-TALK)
COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah...
CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Brooks-Power
(SIC) has a question. Her hand's raised.
SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Hello? Hi...
(CROSS-TALK)
CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Hi... (CROSS-TALK)
COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Can you hear me?
CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, hi... (CROSS-TALK)
COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Hello. Uhm,
good, uhm, morning everyone, thank you, uhm, to both

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2 of our chairs for pulling today's oversight, uh,
3 meeting together.

4 Uhm, I will start by saying that it would be
5 helpful if we get these testimonies much more in
6 advance. Uhm, I think it's really, uhm, unacceptable
7 to get testimony from our commissioners, uhm, in the
8 midst of the hearing to be able to... to be
9 prepared.

10 But, I did receive a number of calls from
11 providers in my district, uhm, who asked that I, uh,
12 speak up on a couple of things on here.

13 So, I... I... I have about four questions that
14 I will just run off, and then allow, uh, the... the
15 commissioner and staff to be able to respond to.

16 Uhm, so, the first one is how DFTA supporting the
17 current home delivery meal contract. Uhm,
18 understanding that many of the current contractors is
19 struggling to hire drivers, how can the city attract
20 more drivers? Is there a incentive, uhm, in terms of
21 pay or recruitment that the city can allocate to
22 assist in promoting these critical positions?

23 So, that's one. I know that was a lot.

24 Uhm, the second one, is there... Was just...
25 Just the home delivery meals are RFP? Uhm, in the

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2 midst of the pandemic, uhm, how come it did not take
3 in to account all these additional older adults who
4 are receiving the meals?

5 The next question is, New York's population of
6 older adults is expected to grow more quickly than
7 other age groups in the next decade, what is the
8 city's long term plan to continue meeting the needs
9 of an expanding group of older adults?

10 And, the last question is, does DFTA have a plan
11 for food delivery service past July 1st? I know it
12 was a little bit of back and forth on that. But, it
13 appears that the service start... Uhm, ends June
14 30th. So, just wanted to know how thought out the...
15 the services are, uhm, beyond the June 30th, uhm,
16 fiscal year going in to the new one.

17 So, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Commissioner you have to
19 unmute... (CROSS-TALK)

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The commissioner is muted.

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Mm-hmm, thank you.

22 Could you do me a favor, uh, Councilwoman, could,
23 uh, could you repeat question two? I didn't get
24 question two. I wrote the other ones. I couldn't
25 quite understand to write number two. Thank you.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: I will, uhm, no
3 problem.

4 So, the second one was, there was a just a home
5 delivery meal RFP in the midst of the pandemic,
6 which, uhm, you may recall, and I know you get a lot
7 of letters, but I did send you a letter around that
8 time about the RFP. Uhm, but how come it did not
9 take in to account all of the additional older adults
10 who are, uhm, receiving meals?

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay.

12 Uhm, so, your first one was how do we support the
13 home delivered meals contracts? Right?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, your concern
16 was around the... the allocation. And, obviously
17 the... the... the need for additional drivers.

18 It is... (CROSS-TALK)

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Yes.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: is, uhm, it is...
21 Those are the kind of conversations that we currently
22 have and continuously have with the home delivery
23 vehicle drivers. Alright?

24 Uhm, in terms of the RF... So, it... So, that's
25 an ongoing conversation. There is, uhm, the...

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2 And... And... And you... And, you... And, you'll
3 hear me say, well, you'll hear the department always
4 testify, that the needs outpace, uh, the resources.
5 Alright?

6 But, when we issued the RFP, we issued the RFP
7 with a growth in mind. And, during this pandemic,
8 and I know that there was a lot of discussions about
9 whether we should issue RFP -- shouldn't we? And,
10 I'll... And, I will reiterate why we felt that we
11 did, and we're really pleased that we did. Uhm, it
12 was because the older adults home delivered meals
13 programs, as well as the congregate meals programs,
14 were status quo. They were... They had not changed
15 in 10... some of them 20 years, because they have
16 been contracted extensions. And, they were not
17 meeting the demands of the diverse population and the
18 change... And, the... And, the population and where
19 the growth was occurring.

20 So, that is why we thought it was very important
21 to issue an RFP for the home delivered meals. And,
22 that we could be able to establish 22, uhm, community
23 districts, uh, as service districts for those home
24 delivered meals. Taking in to account that diversity
25 that occurred and that growth that occurred.

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2 Uhm, then what we've... (CROSS-TALK)

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: done... And, then
5 what we... And, then to answer your question about
6 population growth, it is something that we're
7 constantly monitoring and trending -- which is why it
8 was important for us to issue the RFP for the older
9 adults clubs, because when we looked at it and we did
10 the mapping, there were so many service gaps and so
11 many come... Uh, areas where the diversity was not
12 being addressed. So, as we... As I had mentioned
13 earlier, we now have 30... We will now have 31 new
14 programs that can address that... those service gaps
15 and this growing population.

16 And, I'm not sure if I under... So, that's the
17 third... That was the response to the third
18 question.

19 The fourth question, I'm not sure, uh,
20 Councilwoman, can you clarify for me, the July 1st
21 delivery system? Is that the recovery that you're
22 talking about? I'm not sure (INAUDIBLE 01:31:33)
23 (CROSS-TALK)

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: So, the...
25 The... Sorry, the... The food service delivery

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2 that's supposed to end, I think you mentioned it
3 earlier, on June 30th.

4 So, just wanting to understand beyond June 30th,
5 is what is that plan?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, great.

7 Uhm... (CROSS-TALK)

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: (INAUDIBLE 01:31:47)

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, if... If...
10 If... If I... If... If I'm not mistaken, what I
11 was referring to at that time, was this, uh,
12 transition program that was dealing with those older
13 adults who are not interested in going to a senior
14 center, who are not... who are not in... who are
15 deemed eligible for home delivered meals, that
16 transition program, from GetFood Program, uhm, is
17 called a recovery program. And, the plan currently
18 is to have that program in transition from November
19 1st through June 30th.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: And, Just one...
21 Just point of clarification, going back to the
22 earlier... The first question. Uhm, focusing again
23 on the drivers and those positions. Uhm, has there
24 been conversations with the city and ways in which
25 you can attract more drivers? Uhm, like, is there an

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2 incentive pay or recruitment effort that the city,
3 uhm, can work with, uhm, your agency, and uhm, making
4 sure that we are doing everything we can to address
5 the... the... the workforce gap that... that...
6 that's there?

7 Uhm, I... I see that in many factors that there
8 is a workforce gap. Uhm, I'm even willing to... to
9 work with you to do, uh, a job fair around even that.
10 But, like, what is the city doing, uhm, to address
11 this? Because, at the end of the day, we still have
12 our seniors that need this service -- and depend on
13 it quite honestly. And, as, uhm, city, uh, as
14 servants to the community, we need to be doing what
15 we can to be able to connect them to the services of
16 need.

17 And, so, I just want to make sure that we're not
18 leaving any stone uncovered, and making sure that
19 that is something that is prioritized.

20 So, I'm interested in understanding if, uhm, the
21 city is doing anything around that space. Similar to
22 what we're doing to incentivize the vaccine.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, we... We
24 don't have a driver job recruitment program in place.
25 I'd be more than happy to explore that with you, and

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2 with the network of agencies to see how we can design
3 something like that. And, also how we could engage
4 our partners at The Small Business Administration and
5 some of our employment programs to address that.

6 But, that is... That is, uhm, if that is a
7 growing need, it'd be something that'd we'd be more
8 than happy to work with you on.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS - POWERS: Absolutely, I'll
10 have my, uhm, staff follow up with you. Thank you,
11 so much.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure, thank you, so
13 much. We will do that.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Uhm, Commissioner, I just have
15 a couple more followup questions.

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: One is that when you talk about
18 the, uhm, the RFP -- and it's great to hear that it's
19 gonna be 31 new programs -- are there any programs,
20 uhm, that are currently funded? That are... That
21 didn't get through the RFP, or didn't, uh, whether
22 they didn't apply or they weren't selected? How is
23 DFTA gonna make sure that those seniors that they
24 serve, uhm, will be able to get connected to other
25 programs -- that they don't get lost?

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

Well, uhm, with an increase of two... two... from 249 to 272 that likelihood is pretty, pretty min... minimal. Uh, so, what we... We will always look at communities and start looking at where there is a gap in service. Uhm, so much so that we currently, when we looked at this array and this increase, uh, we identified, uhm, anywhere between four and five communities, uhm, I thinks it's four -- Edgar, you'll give me the number -- that we saw that where communities, uhm, that needed additional services for targeted communities for targeted populations. And, one of those, uh, was, like, The Saint George area of Staten Island, so we're looking at how we can address that shortage.

We're also looking at that in Corona. Uh, so, there've been, uh, some programs... I mean, some community districts that we've already identified, uh, that are going to need... the, uh, need for, uh, commune (SIC)... That are emerging communities, and that we need to address. So, we're looking at ,you know, either addressing those through existing means, or issuing an RFP for those targeted communities for those targeted populations.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, that... I... Oh, I mean, that's good to know. I mean, the other thing that I concerned about, is that some of the centers -- that did not get funded -- some of the older adult center that did not get through the RFP. I mean, at least I know that, as you mentioned earlier, that the contract was extended until the end of the fiscal year pretty much. So, there is a transition time to make sure that these... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: senior knows that if their center is not gonna be running, that there's another option for them. Uhm... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Another center in the neighborhood that they could join.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right, there is going to be 31 new options for them to explore should that... If in the event, that one program does not get... get, uh, funded.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: My last question is on, you know, with senior centers are beginning to open, but not every senior is coming in for a congregate meal.

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And, I know some centers are providing the grab-and-go.

But, what about the seniors who are not able to come and do the grab-and-go, and they're not coming in for the congregate meal? Are the provider given support? I mean, are they gonna be able to do delivery to them? Because, these senior might not qualify for the home delivered meals. Because, that was the... That was the issue in the beginning of the pandemic.

Like, how were these centers... How are they gonna be able to deliver the meal to their members who... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: If I understand...

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: They don't want to come in?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: If I understand the question correctly, that is why we are... We have the benefit of this recovery program for this transition period -- precisely for that.

Uh, until we get more cl... More, uh, new guidance on the size, the... the limitations are lifted on the number of adults that can go in to a senior center, until we... un... Uh, or until we

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2 get a vaccine mandate, that recovery program serves
3 exactly that purpose during this transition.

4 So, uhm, it is very important for us, you know,
5 in terms of services, we had one of the greatest
6 expansion in innovation in virtual programming. And,
7 as a result of that, in responding to that, we had
8 a... A ten thousand tablet program with NYCHA. We
9 just are unfolding and, uhm, and... and are rolling
10 out another ten thousand tablet programs with our
11 senior centers, uhm, I see the continue... that
12 continuity of virtual programming.

13 Uhm, so, we think that we're at the end of the
14 pandemic, we don't know. And, so, these provisions
15 give us the opportunity to have some defaults and to
16 continue some of the best... best practices, I
17 believe. I don't think we'll ever not have virtual
18 programming again. That's how effective it was.

19 You know, so it will be a comb... a combination
20 of both.

21 Uhm, I think... I hope that I've... I've...

22 (CROSS-TALK)

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, the virtual programming was
24 great. I mean, I think with that... (CROSS-TALK)

25 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I mean, that you and I talk
3 we... we have to see how we can get some of those...
4 those nice ,you know, virtual programs, on a regular
5 television ,you know, public access. So... (CROSS-
6 TALK)

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, yes! Yes,
8 because, I forgot about that... (CROSS-TALK)

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, so not everybody... to
10 use the computer... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: will be able to, uh, do that.
13 I mean, like, channel 13 has a lot of programs, but
14 we... city has the public access channels that...
15 (CROSS-TALK)

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: we should be able to utilize
18 those also.

19 But, I think for the... You can't deliver food
20 virtually, so we just want to make sure that the
21 seniors who are not... (CROSS-TALK)

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, that's why we
23 have the recovery program... (CROSS-TALK)

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: going... (CROSS-TALK)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: for now. And, that's... I think that... That, you know, I really thank OMB, and, uh, our deputy mayor for allowing us even, uhm, evolve this recovery program for transition program, offer a transition period, precisely, because of what you've just mentioned, Councilwoman.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, in the recovery program, you're gonna work with contractors that was previously with GetFood? Are they gonna be...

(CROSS-TALK)

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We're... We're working out some of those details now. But, because those con... It would make sense for us, in the sense that those particular contractors, uh, had, you know, knowledge and had delivery routes. And, so, to the extent possible, where it makes sense, we would subcontract with those contractors and retain some of them. You know, as... As long as they are culturally confident and, you know, can meet the religious needs and the cultural ,you know, the cultural pallet of... of many of our older adults. We will do our... Our... You know, when... while looking at all of those subcontractors.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. Well, we just...

(CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, all of those contractors as possible subcontractors -- using our network of agencies.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Chair Chin, this... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes (INAUDIBLE 01:41:37)...

(CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Just... Something came to mind, Commissioner, while we were talking. Maybe, you know, if you had such great success with getting in to the... in to the homes of seniors, we've seemed to hit, like, a plateau or a wall with the amount of senior vaccinations. Is there any thought maybe of doing a, uh, a combined pilot program, uh, with maybe DOH, for it... for those who may want to entertain the thought of getting vax... a vaccination with a home meal? Some... Maybe the... Maybe the fear of the... the disability of getting to some of our over... over 85 seniors who haven't partaking yet of a vaccination. Maybe there's a way, because there's a trust already with that

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relationship. Maybe we can partner and do something with the vaccination.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The... The dept... We partnered with the, uhm, Fire Department, Department of Health, and our network of... Of... Of, uh, we had an excellent in home vaccination program. And, I believe that, you know, obviously the demand for that has, uh, diminished. But, uhm, we're looking at that. Is that something that we should, you know, consider building back up? It's never ended. But, it's just, you know, do we bring back up to... to the... But, it... it... It's a combination, right? There has to be demand, you know, so that we... Because, that is a very, uh, labor intensive operation... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: It is... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You know, and... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: How many... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And, the Fire Department were... were excellent partners in getting a... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-Hmm.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Core group of people to do
3 that of anyone who... And, what we did, was we would
4 vaccinate anybody who was in the home.

5 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Right... (CROSS-TALK)

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-HMM.

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Home attendant, a...
8 a child. You know, we... I mean, not a child...
9 anybody who was over 12. Anybody who was in the home
10 who was eligible for a vaccination can get vaccinated
11 during that process. So, that was great.

12 And, we continue, I mean, our... Our
13 relationship with the vaccine command center, I mean,
14 we've continued to beat the drum on, you know, mobile
15 vaccinations, you know, designating sites, uhm,
16 senior sites as... (CROSS-TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-Hmm.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: as... Even bringing
19 all kind of outreach and activities to get people
20 vaccinated.

21 Uhm, the vaccine... Uh, vaccine command center
22 and The Department for the Aging, have not lacked
23 creativity in trying to get as many people, uh,
24 vaccinated over the age of 60, as well as other
25 senior centers staff. So, uhm, and ,you know,

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we're... too are concerned about the plateau, which is why we're constantly in conversations with... with The Department of Health to come up with some kind of remedies of mitigation. Uhm... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Maybe, just a thought, you know, there's such a relationship there with the home delivered meal and the trust, maybe in a... in a... a non-large, uh, ,you know, robust plans, I think, but in a quiet winter program, say listen, while you're getting your meal, we're now offering an additional vaccination if you need it.

Who knows, maybe that will get us some additional seniors... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, and that... And, everything and anything is worth the conversation. I agree with you.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Chair, thank you Commissioner.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, thank you, Commissioner, I mean, the... The vaccination program got started slow, but I think it... it really picked up. And, a lot of the senior centers... were... were sites that seniors can get, uhm, the vaccine in the... in the van. And, I think that... Because, we kept

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2 pushing it. We said, what about the seniors? You,
3 know what about the... (CROSS-TALK)

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, we did, and
5 before you knew it, we had mobile vans and onsite
6 visits, and lots of all of those things.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, so we will... I don't
8 see, does any other council member have questions?

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I see no additional hands
10 raised, Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I mean, we have other
12 questions that we... that we wanted, uh, information
13 on. I guess we'll send you the list, uhm... (CROSS-
14 TALK)

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay... (CROSS-
16 TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, uhm, and, then we'll...
18 (CROSS-TALK)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And... And... And,
20 let me know if there are GetFood questions, uhm, so
21 that I can direct those to The Mayor's Office of Food
22 Security or Food Policy, and also to the Deputy
23 Commissioner of... of Sanitation. Uh, because
24 they're... They are really responsible for those
25 operations.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean, we just want to make sure that the seniors know that this program is... The GetFood program is gonna come to a close, and they need to be connected. And, I... I hope that the communication that these seniors are getting, are in languages they understand, and not just, you know, robocall in English or English flyer. So, we want to make sure that everyone know that, if they want to be connected, they can contact their older adult centers, 3-1-1, I mean, all... all that, uh, information should be in place.

And, I guess, Commissioner, we will follow up with you, uh, on some of the statistics. And, we'll probably... We'll try to meet with you again to find out, you know, all of the, uh, updates of the new centers, and the new NORCS, and... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right, and I... And, I... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, some of the other ones that are supported, or that started by The City Council. So, we're very happy to see some of them, uh, become regular... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, and... and... And, redirecting some of those discretionary

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2 resources that now are baseline, you know, there is a
3 lot of ways that we could continue the conversation.
4 And, I thank you for that.

5 And, I want to... I... I know, I... I just
6 have to mention that, OMB has been a good partner
7 during this transition period, and, uh, will
8 continuation to... Uh, to be a partner in the...
9 And, the discussions are ongoing.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I'm glad they're listening.
11 But, we just want to make sure there's adequate
12 funding for the home delivered meals. \$16.6 might
13 not be enough anymore.

14 So, we'll... We'll continue... We'll continue
15 to work with you to advocate, to make sure that
16 they... They come through with their promise. Uh,
17 right Council Member... Chairperson Vallone? Right,
18 we're gonna make sure the money gets to the DFTA. In
19 to the... (CROSS-TALK)

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Absolutely. The team...
21 Our mighty tag team is back in full force.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, great. Uh,
23 it's gotta happen before you leave in that... in
24 that robe. So, uhm... (CROSS-TALK)

25 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yep.

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COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, uhm...

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We only have a short period time, so we got to make it happen.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright, thank you all... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, Commissioner, yeah, thank you for your partnership, and... And, thank you to your team. Uhm, and, uh, Director MacKenzie from the GetFood Program. Uh, and, uh, Deputy Commissioner from Sanitation for all your, you know, hard work on the GetFood Program, uhm, supporting our senior and people in need.

And, we just want to make sure that everyone, uhm, continue to get to the services if they still need it.

Uhm, so, thank you for testifying today. And, uhm, have a wonderful day, and we're gonna call the... the next panel.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Great, thank you all again.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Commissioner, and thank you Chairs.

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Uh, we will now turn to public testimony.

I'd like to remind everyone that, unlike in our typical council hearings, we will be calling individuals one by one to testify. Each panelist will be given five minutes to speak.

Please begin your testimony once the sergeant has started the timer.

Council members who have questions for a particular panelist, should use the Zoom Raise Hand function, and I will call on you in the order that you raised your hand after the panelist has completed their testimony.

For panelist, once your name is called, a member of our staff will unmute you, and the Sergeant At Arms will set the timer and then give you the go ahead to begin. Please wait for the sergeant to announce that you may begin before delivering your testimony.

Uh, I would now like to call Carlyn Cowen, followed by Tara Klein, and then Katelyn Andrews to testify.

Uh, Miss Cowen, you may begin with the sergeants call time.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Uh, will the muter please
unmute Carlyn Cowen, Uhm, it appears she's having
(MUTED) (INAUDIBLE 01:50:05)

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SERGEANT SADOWSKY: You're on mute, Alex.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, uh, it appears
Carlyn's having some technical difficulties as
apparently I was, too.

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Uhm, we will next hear from Tara Klein, and then
Katelyn Andrews, and then Kevin Jones.

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And, we will loop back to Carlyn Cowen, uhm, once
her technical difficulties are fixed.

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Uhm, Miss Klein, you may begin as soon as the
Sergeants call time.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

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KATELYN ANDREWS: Great, thank you so much, uh,
Chairs for hosting today's really important hearing.

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My name is Tara Klein, I am a senior policy analyst
with United Neighborhood Houses, the policy and

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social change organization that represents 44
neighborhood settlement houses, including 40 in New
York City.

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Uh, 9 UNH members have home delivered meals
contracts, either as contractors or subcontractors.

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We have many other members with senior centers. And,

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most of our members have served as GetFood enrollers throughout the pandemic.

So, as the administration prepares for winding down the GetFood program, what... we really appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on the impact of transitioning these contracts to ensure that homebound older adults are still able to receive meals, including through DFTA's home delivered meals program.

First I want to note that despite some challenges with this administration, GetFood has been a tremendous pandemic program that has helped countless people. Especially older adults who have faced senior center closures and home delivered meals programs that were over capacity.

We understand that GetFood Funding is running out, and enrollment has dropped, so we do need to make some changes. And, we appreciate that the city knows we need a strong transition plan to be in place.

Above all else, moving forward, we urge the administration to prioritize working with its existing network of nonprofit providers to ensure

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2 homebound older adults can continue to receive meals,
3 which includes increased financial support.

4 I'd like to focus a little bit on the home
5 delivered meals program. These programs have been
6 operating continuously throughout COVID-19, while
7 seeing program demand explode. The pandemic really
8 underscored the crucial wrap arounds supports that
9 home delivered meals clients receive, including case
10 management, regular contact from drivers, who are
11 trained on how to work with older adults, and,
12 tailored and nutritionally appropriate meals.

13 We know that GetFood does not provide the social
14 supports that many people needed. And, that home
15 delivered meals is going to be a key component of
16 recovery.

17 However, we also know that home delivered meals
18 programs can't handle all of the additional GetFood
19 capacity as they are set up now without additional
20 financial support.

21 Despite its overwhelming success in maintaining
22 health and nutrition throughout the pandemic and
23 beyond, the home delivered meals program has been
24 significantly underfunded for years with DFTA
25 contracts failing to cover the full cost of providing

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2 those meals. This longstanding under funding has
3 only been made more acute by the increased demands
4 during COVID-19. Ultimately, this underfunding
5 undercuts the quality and availability of services
6 for the older adults who rely on these meals.

7 I want to talk a little bit about the \$11.78,
8 figure that we've been talking about today. Uh, this
9 number is the average cost for a home delivered meals
10 for urban areas in the United States -- this was in
11 2015. Uhm, according to a report by Mathematica
12 Policy Research.

13 Uh, as we know DFTA'S current across the board
14 rate of \$9.58 per meal that is; therefore, about 20%
15 below the national average for urban areas for cost
16 of a meal.

17 While we're encouraged today to hear The
18 Commissioner mention she's pursuing a \$10.52 rate
19 with OMB, it's not enough to meet the need.

20 Uh, UNH, along with LiveOn New York and
21 assistance from SeaChange Capital Partners, has
22 conducted an independent analysis of the true cost of
23 this program. And, has confirmed that \$11.78 is
24 actually very close to the actual true cost of a home
25 delivered meals in New York City -- though individual

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2 rates did vary by a provider. This analysis entailed
3 working with current contractors and subcontractors
4 to develop standardized categories and budgets in
5 calculating average costs. It, uh, considered raises
6 to minimum waged level staff, and notably, uh, I
7 wanted to raise that New York City's minimum wage is
8 higher than many other urban areas. And, that's
9 important to consider when we're talking about scale
10 and costs.

11 And, the analysis also considered OTPF costs that
12 are generally not included in contracts, like parking
13 tickets and uniforms for staff, as well as indirect
14 costs.

15 UNH has been calling for an additional 16.6
16 million dollars to be added to the home delivered
17 meals program of which will address longstanding,
18 underfunded contracts, uh, by increasing the rate to
19 \$11.78 per meal, while also meeting that growing
20 program demand that we've seen lately.

21 Additionally, if the city is to truly invest in
22 home delivered meals programs, it must consider
23 existing infrastructure and capital needs. Including
24 needs for new vans and vehicle repairs, kitchen
25 equipment -- that is often breaking down, and needs

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2 to be repaired and expanded -- as well as building
3 repairs, like leaking roofs, and much more.

4 We know that many of these, uh, repairs are slow
5 to receive approval from the city. And, the city
6 must consider the human infrastructure that's needed
7 to operate and strengthen these programs. Currently
8 program staffing is difficult due to low contract
9 rates that necessitate the low salaries. Yet another
10 reason that contract rates need to be increased.

11 Uh, and remain concerned about transition time as
12 GetFood... (Cross-Talk)

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 TARA KLEIN: winds down with less than a month
15 left.

16 We hope the city will work closely with nonprofit
17 providers to make sure this happens the right way --
18 Having conversations to see exactly what those
19 providers need and moving beyond surveys and data.

20 And, finally, it's important to remember this is
21 happening in October at the same time as the new
22 older adult center and NORC contractor... contracts
23 are still expected to begin.

24 It's news to us today that, uhm, as well as to
25 providers, that October 1st is no longer the start

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2 date. Uhm, it... You know, which is, uh, 11 days
3 away. Uhm, we appreciate the comments that
4 transition planning's important, and remain concerned
5 that doing so, even by November 1st, is not
6 sufficient at transition... transitioning these
7 contacts with such a tight turnaround is really close
8 to impossible -- especially while responding to the
9 ongoing pandemic and the changing GetFood program.

10 So, we reiterate our call that DFTA much delay
11 new contract start dates to allow this type of
12 careful planning. Uhm, as we know, contracts are
13 currently extended through June 2020. So, the start
14 date delay really should not be a problem even if it
15 stretches beyond this calendar year.

16 So, thank you very much, and I am happy to take
17 questions later.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Miss Klein, I'll
19 turn it back to Chair Chin.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, we've been joined by, uh,
21 our Borough President, Gale Brewer. So, Gale would
22 you like to speak?

23 MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT, GALE BREWER: Thank
24 you very much, Madam Chair Chin, and I am outside, so
25 I hope you can hear me.

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2 Uhm I am very appreciative of you and of Peter
3 Vallone and the committee, and the work that you're
4 doing. Because, it sounds like as a result of this
5 hearing, uh, you're getting lots of answers that we
6 needed.

7 I think, you know, that we have been focused on
8 this issue of local food for vulnerable and low
9 income populations all during the pandemic -- and
10 even before.

11 I do want to thank DFTA Commissioner Lorraine
12 Cortés-Vázquez, uh, Kat MacKenzie, and The Mayor's
13 Office of Food Policy, and, of course the former food
14 czar, Sanitation Commissioner, Kathryn Garcia.

15 Uhm, I think also, you know, all of the senior
16 centers and NORCS, and my favorite LiveOn New York
17 and United Neighborhood Houses. Everybody has been
18 helping.

19 But, we know that there are 18 thousand older
20 adults, plus and additional six thousand in GetFood,
21 and I think they still need assistance. And, we know
22 that there may be an extensive, but a program is
23 scheduled to end October 15th, and that's very, very
24 soon. Although I know everybody's working together
25 to figure out the transition.

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2 Uhm, and, we know that there are older adults,
3 this is, uh, ,you know, they call us, because they
4 get texts or recorded messages about the emergency
5 food distribution ending, but they don't really know
6 about the... What that means. They worry about
7 unfamiliar phone calls, spam calls. And, that's how
8 they're learning about the GetFood closure. Or,
9 they're learning it through staff -- Like, our staff
10 or your staff. And, that's not how to do it

11 So, I am concerned, and I think you are also,
12 about how all the agencies are giving out the list of
13 enrollees to notify them about the closure of the
14 program making sure nobody falls through the cracks.
15 And, I think it's the same thing we've been saying
16 all through the pandemic. What is the role of senior
17 centers? We don't want to make the same mistakes of
18 past GetFood transitions. At that point, the senior
19 center staff was excluded from accessing critical
20 member information. And, I assume that's not gonna
21 happen again. But, we all worry.

22 I also... The other under... Other issue that
23 you know about is the home delivered meals providers
24 who really are rock stars. But, when they were...
25 It's restricted in FY 21 and 22 from adding new

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enrollees to the home delivered meals programs that was a problem. Uhm, now these adults are enrolled in the GetFood Program, which is ending.

So, are these adults eligible for home delivered meals? I assume they are. Are they in need of the food and case manages, uh, services that the amazing senior centers provide? What's the capacity of the home delivered meal program? And, of course making sure that case management is everywhere particularly now.

Uhm, we know that the DFTA recovery meals program... I've been... Saw so many frigging, uhm, acronyms in my life. But, that's government, I know. We know that it's projected to serve those needing a better fit than some of the center congregate, grab-and-go, and the Eat Well, and some of these other programs. But, what is the cap... The capacity of the RF programs? How can pro... providers be expected to prepare and deliver... And, this is what came up earlier, healthy, religiously and culturally appropriate meals, and the reimbursement of \$9.58? As you heard earlier, and others know better than I we need \$11.78 -- at a minimum.

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And, then, of course, is the plan for providing the RM and HDM, home delivered meal participants, with the weekend and holiday meals. We all love City Meals on Wheels, but they have to be funded to provide those services. And, we also have to think about an individual's meal allocation being reduced from 12 meals per week to five per week without the investment in weekend meal service -- all of which you know.

So, I'm here to say that we have to figure out also the businesses that are operating as GetFood program vendors, they somehow, from my understanding, they got reimbursed after two weeks. We have to make sure that our not for profit get the same support.

The lesson of this pandemic, it it's nothing else, it's food access, it's access of vaccines, and, we know the city can't do it alone. It doesn't happen without a network of trusted, not for profit partners.

And, I always think we have the best in the city of the New York. But, you have to coordinate the planning. You have to make sure those isolated residents aren't lost in the transition. And, of

1

2 course, we have to make sure that they're all funded
3 so that we can be a great place to age.

4 And, I thank you so much. And, I'm sorry I'm
5 sitting out on a bench.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, I'm glad you can join us,
7 and thank you so much, Borough President, always for
8 your advocacy... (Cross-Talk)

9 MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT, GALE BREWER: Thank
10 you (INAUDIBLE 02:02:07)

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: For our older adults.

12 I remember we had conversation in the beginning
13 of the pandemic about how to make sure all the
14 seniors get connected to food and... And, the
15 problems in the beginning. And, yeah, so, we
16 gotta... We gotta continue to work closely with DFTA
17 to make sure that there's adequate funding, and the
18 advocates have to speak... You know talk about the
19 \$16.6 million that we need.

20 I don't think that's enough, and this is a good
21 chance to... For us to really get more, because of
22 the... the number of... of seniors.

23 And, so, we're gonna continue to advocate, and to
24 make sure the resources are there for all the great
25 providers. So, thank you... (Cross-Talk)

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MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT, GALE BREWER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Borough President, for joining us.

MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT, GALE BREWER: Thank you. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Madam Borough President, and thank you, Chair Chin.

MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT, GALE BREWER: Thank you. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we will hear from Katelyn Andrews, followed by Kevin Jones, and then Carlyn Cowen. Uh, Miss Andrews, you may begin when the sergeants call time.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

KATELYN ANDREWS: Hello, my name is Katelyn Andrews, Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and thank you to the Borough President for joining. It's always wonderful to have your voice on these issues.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 100 community-based nonprofits that provide core services to older New Yorkers, including home delivered meals providers, senior center providers, and case

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2 management providers, which are all critical to the
3 success of our nutrition system for older adults.

4 During the COVID pandemic, food insecurity was
5 exacerbated by issues economic as well as access.

6 In response, the city's emergency GetFood
7 programs scaled rapidly to meet the growing need for
8 nutritional assistance. Yet, this represented a
9 temporary solution to a more systemic hunger problem.

10 Today GetFood is poised to come to a close with
11 preparations underway for clients to transition to
12 alternative or existing meal programs.

13 For the more than 16 thousand older adults still
14 receiving meals through GetFood, the success of this
15 transition will be critical to their ability to
16 remain nourished.

17 It's critical that the city go beyond ensuring a
18 short term continuity of service to instead executing
19 long term investments and at rooting out older adult
20 hunger more holistically. Reaching this goal cannot
21 be done without making immediate and significant
22 investments in the nonprofit home delivered meals
23 system this is best positioned to make meaning
24 strides towards this goal.

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2 With this in mind, LiveOn NY recommends the
3 following:

4 Within the November plan, the Administration must
5 invest \$16.6 million, at a minimum, to serve existing
6 clients within the traditional home-delivered meal
7 system as well as much as needed to ensure this rate
8 can also be reflected any additional clients that
9 providers might take on.

10 Currently, the reimbursement rate for home-
11 delivered meals is capped at \$9.58, an arbitrary rate
12 that's irreflective of the verified average
13 reimbursement rate for urban areas of \$11.78. This
14 rate was determined in 2015. We know costs have gone
15 up since then, so \$11.78 is really a baseline of what
16 we need.

17 The current rate represents... creates really
18 challenges, leaving barely enough for providers to
19 offer delivery drivers minimum wage -- though they're
20 competing in the same market for drivers as Uber,
21 which pays roughly \$48,685 annually.

22 The effect? Only a quick search on Indeed will
23 bring you 18 ads currently available for delivery
24 drivers within the city's home delivered meals system
25 -- that means many of LiveOn NY's members are

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2 spending time unsuccessfully attempting to hire home
3 delivered meal drivers due to low wages set by
4 government contracts. Those 18 current vacancies
5 represent 18 meal routes that somehow still need to
6 be staffed, and exist at a time when these contracts
7 are about to absorb upwards of 16,000 additional
8 clients. Quite simply, not investing in this system
9 is a recipe for disaster.

10 I heard in the earlier testimony that there's
11 discussion of... between DFTA and OMB on raising the
12 rate to \$10.52. This is a start, and... towards
13 what we need, and I'm hopeful that this will be
14 realized in the November plan, which is the last
15 opportunity for the administration to move the needle
16 on this issue.

17 In addition, we recommend investment in capital
18 needs, specifically vans.

19 I'm pleased to hear of the 44 replacement vans
20 being purchased, and hopeful that this will be
21 expeditiously executed.

22 In addition, I would estimate that many current
23 contract holders need two vans on average to add to
24 their fleet to meet the rising demand -- which we
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know is only going to continue to grow as we have a growing older adult population.

We also need expanded investments in case management to ensure all clients can be screened for eligibility to receive this critical service. This is important, because traditionally we have a waiting list for case management.

Year after year, the city council, led by Council Member Chin and Vallone, need to request money to fill the need for waiting lists for case management. And, now, we have about 18, 000 individuals that really should be screened for this service to determine if they should have case manager... case manager long term.

Beyond this, and this is a part of the funding issue, the city must begin including COLAs and inflation factors in human services contracts. Part of the reasons we are struggling to hire drivers is that we enter in to RFP's for contracts that don't include cost of living adjustments as a normal course of business -- which means that the city is consciously entering in to contracts that will not include raises for predominantly Black and brown

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2 workforce that is what makes up our home human
3 services providers system.

4 The recommendations above are not "nice to have"
5 solutions to hypothetical issues, they are the
6 reality of what New York City needs to commit to
7 ensure that no individual opens an empty... (Cross-
8 Talk)

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 KATELYN ANDREWS: cupboard in the richest City in
11 the world.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Miss Andrews.

15 Next we will hear from Kevin Jones, followed by
16 Carlyn Cowen, and then Jeremy Kaplan.

17 Mr. Jones, you may begin with the sergeants call
18 time.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 KEVIN JONES: Good afternoon, Chair Vallone and
21 members of the City Council Committees on The Aging
22 and Economic Development.

23 My name is Kevin Jones I am the Associate State
24 Director for AARP New York, representing 750,000
25 members of the 50+ community here in New York City.

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Thank you for pro... Uh, for allowing the opportunity for me to testify in today's hearing.

Though we all hope that we are moving past the peak of this pandemic, we know that food insecurity across New York City remains high, as does the vulnerability of older New Yorkers.

We're grateful to be a part of this conversation about how to bring seniors currently receiving emergency food in to the DFTA food programs.

We believe that now is the time to think about how long term food security for seniors can part of the city's long term COVID recovery plan.

One in five older adults in New York City lives in poverty, and the rates are much higher among older people of color than older white people. This same group has been disproportionately impacted by the COVID pandemic.

In addition, as many of you already know, older adults are one of the fastest growing populations in New York City and will continue to make up a greater share of the City's residents in the coming years.

Despite the growing need for aging-related services throughout New York City, DFTA'S programs remain chronically underfunded. One of the most

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2 important programs to the health of older New Yorkers
3 are DFTA'S meal programs, and it is critical that the
4 city invest more money in them to expand their
5 capacity.

6 We need the city to not only reach more home-
7 bound seniors with their meal delivery program, but
8 to double down on the amount of food that
9 participants receive. Right now,

10 GetFoodNYC participants receive about three meals
11 a day as part of the emergency services. But, regular
12 meal delivery clients only get one meal a day.

13 These are folks who have been determined to be
14 unable to feed themselves otherwise, for various
15 reasons. The meal delivery is often the only thing
16 they eat each day, which is not enough for those
17 folks whose health is vulnerable.

18 So, I also want to mention, uhm, I didn't want to
19 list them all, but we also support the budget asks
20 that were referenced by, uhm, my friends Katelyn and
21 Tara at UNH and LiveOn NY as well, so I won't go
22 through those. Uh, but I want to just overall, in
23 addition to that urge the city to prioritize funding
24 for senior meal services as we plan for our long term
25 COVID recovery.

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2 And, thank you for your time. And, I am happy to
3 take any questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Mr. Jones.

6 Next we will hear from Carlyn Cowen, followed by
7 Jeremy Kaplan, and then Rachel Sherrow

8 Carlyn Cowen, you may begin with the sergeants
9 call time.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 CARLYN COWEN: Good afternoon, thank you so much,
12 Chairs Chin and Vallone, and the council members here
13 today for the opportunity to testify.

14 My name is Carlyn Cowen, pronouns they and she,
15 and I'm testifying on behalf of CPC, The Chinese-
16 American Planning Council.

17 CPC is the nation's largest Asian-American social
18 services agency reaching over 60,000 Asian-American
19 immigrant and low-income New Yorkers -- in all five
20 boroughs each year.

21 Over the course of the pandemic, over the course
22 of the last 18 months, CPC has been on the frontlines
23 assisting our members from relief application
24 assistance, to wellness checks, and meal deliveries.

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Seventy percent of our community members have lost jobs or income as reported in our wellness checks, and we have found consistently that food insecurity is the number one problem reported by our community members.

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In fact, we found that 33% of our seniors specifically requested food delivery from the City's GetFood NYC program.

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Uhm, while this has been an important holdover program, as you have heard from many of the other advocates here, we are very concerned -- as it comes to a close -- about making sure that our seniors, and indeed all New Yorkers, have access to sufficient food, that is also culturally competent, and meets all of their needs.

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It is therefore critical that we invest in our nonprofit home delivered meals programs, as well as more robust solutions to address hunger across New York State.

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CPC is a proud member of both LiveOn and United Neighborhood Houses, and we support all of the recommendations that have been made, uh, by those two testimonies today.

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Home delivered meal programs are not simply just meals that are 70% of our community member's nutritional value for the day. Although, of course, they are that, and primarily, most importantly, that. They're also a wellness a check to see if community members have other needs, whether it be a COVID outbreak in their home; whether something is going wrong, uh, with their physical living facilitates, or whether they need enrolling in other benefits.

Our home delivered meals programs are also, uh, sometimes the only social interactions that community members have, in the language that they speak, during the day or during the week.

These are critical programs, and that is why it is so important that they be housed in these nonprofit organizations that have established trust in the communities, and are able to connect our community members to other services beyond just the home delivered meals that they have been receiving.

Many of our community members, for example, expressed hesitancy in getting services from the city's GetFood program, because they were concerned that opening the door for city workers might lead to a contact with ICE, which could lead to their

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2 deportation -- Putting our seniors in the position of
3 feeling like they had to choose between getting food
4 and their family's own safety.

5 Of course, that's something that nonprofits can
6 work with community members, that they have trust,
7 with to express that programs like GetFood are in
8 fact perfectly safe for our community members to take
9 a part of.

10 Community members also reported that they were
11 receiving meals that were not nutritionally
12 appropriate for them or culturally appropriate for
13 them. Which is, again, why it's critical that home
14 delivered meals come from nonprofits that are able to
15 deliver culturally competent meals that meet the
16 needs of our community members.

17 And, in addition to making sure that these meal
18 programs are sufficient in terms of each individual
19 community member's needs, we actually need to make
20 sure that they're investments are significant enough
21 to meet hunger needs across the city for all of our
22 seniors, and in fact, all of our community members.

23 Over the past 18 months, CPC has, in addition to
24 the meals that we've already delivered through city
25 contracts, delivered almost 500 thousand pounds of

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2 fresh food and 200 thousand pounds of meals that we
3 worked other small businesses, nonprofits, and
4 individual donors to source.

5 What this ultimately means is that we're not
6 doing it just because we care about our community
7 members --because we do, of course -- but, that
8 there's a need in our community beyond what city
9 investments are providing for -- that nonprofits have
10 to make up, on top of what is already underfunded,
11 within our organizations.

12 So, when we think about the investments that are
13 needed in home delivered meals and senior services
14 programs, it needs to be even more to make up for all
15 of the meal delivery and all of the food security
16 work that is happening that is not even being funded
17 by the city right now.

18 So, I know you've already heard these
19 recommendations from both our... our allies at
20 LiveOn and UNH, but just to quickly review -- we want
21 to make sure that the administration invests at least
22 \$16.6 million to serve clients within the traditional
23 home-delivered meal program in the November plan --
24 To make sure that funding for those programs happens

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2 at the higher rate, uh, in order to ensure that there
3 is continuity, and to make a...

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 CARLYN COWEN: \$3.6 million capital investment in
6 van purchases.

7 Right now we have vans sitting in lots that we
8 cannot afford to repair, and we're delivering meals
9 on foot.

10 These are absolutely critical to make sure these
11 investments happen in the November plan, because our
12 community members cannot wait for food support. It
13 is urgent, and it is literally a matter of... of life
14 for them.

15 So, thank you so much, uh, council members, for
16 your work on this, and we appreciate the opportunity
17 to testify today.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Miss Cowen.

19 Next we will hear from Jeremy Kaplan, followed by
20 Rachel Sherrow, and Shubhra Datta.

21 Mr. Kaplan, you may begin with the sergeants call
22 time.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 JEREMY KAPLAN: Good afternoon council members,
25 and thank you, Chairs Chin and Vallone.

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2 My name is Jeremy Kaplan and I am the Executive
3 Director at Encore Community Services, a nonprofit
4 serving seniors on Manhattan's Westside.

5 Encore is a home-delivered meal provider through
6 DFTA and Citymeals on Wheels. And, between that, and
7 our senior center, we provide over half a million
8 meals to Older New Yorkers each and every year.

9 Even before the pandemic, 1 in 4 older adults
10 living at home were nutritionally at risk. And, then
11 COVID created a crisis uniquely devastating for
12 seniors, and exacerbated food insecurity across the
13 city.

14 We were extremely glad to hear that the city
15 extended GetFoodNYC through recovery meals.
16 Continuing the program into 2022 creates a longer
17 transition period for the many thousands of seniors
18 currently receiving emergency food.

19 That said we believe the City must take this time
20 to plan for long-term recovery and further reduce
21 food insecurity among older New Yorkers. This will
22 require significant and long-term investment—
23 including additional funding for DFTA, -- which we
24 all know is one of the lowest funded city agencies.
25 It will require improved flexibility with contracts,

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2 and an emergency food plan to ensure that all older
3 adults have uninterrupted access to food.

4 The city needs to invest more money in meals for
5 older New Yorkers who are not able to cook for
6 themselves. Not only are there people who we are not
7 yet reaching, we desperately need to expand food
8 access for seniors who already receive services.

9 DFTA meal delivery clients are only allocated one
10 meal per day -- GetFood was three -- And, it's often
11 the only meal that they're going to eat. While those
12 meals are nutritious and high quality, one meal just
13 is not enough.

14 For Encore and other organizations to truly meet
15 the nutritional needs of seniors, we need the City to
16 make capital investments, including new vans; -- by
17 the way, it takes over a year for a van to get
18 procured right now, because of the backlog -- funding
19 to rent space to cook and store more meals; and
20 flexibility to be reimbursed for the full need.

21 As a city, we need to be more nimble in response
22 to the next emergency. It is often seniors who are
23 most vulnerable. One way we can do this is with more
24 flexibility in city contracts to expand to meet the
25 short and long term needs. With more flexibility and

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2 infrastructure, our city's senior service providers -
3 - rather than for profit vendors -- could have
4 provided emergency food services all throughout the
5 pandemic.

6 Encore, as do all of our home delivered meal
7 providers, stand ready to collaborate with the city
8 to address senior hunger.

9 We hope the city considers these investments.

10 Thank you to council members for your time today.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Mr. Kaplan.

12 Next we will hear from Rachel Sherrow, followed
13 by Shubhra Datta.

14 Miss Sherrow, you begin when the sergeants call
15 time.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 RACHEL SHERROW: Thank you, my name is Rachel
18 Sherrow, and I am the Associate Executive Director at
19 Citymeals on Wheels. And, I'd like to begin by
20 thanking you for holding this important hearing;
21 although, I am left with more questions now than when
22 I woke up this morning.

23 Home delivered meals is essential in ensuring at
24 least one nutritious meal a day is available to
25 consume. Reliance on home delivered meals has only

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2 increased since the pandemic, and has reassured many
3 new recipients that they're not forgotten and will
4 have food.

5 With the end of the GetFoodNYC program, and a
6 continuation of services only through the end of the
7 fiscal year, what do we think will happen July 1,
8 2022? Will people who are hungry the day before, be
9 satiated in the new fiscal year -- able to access
10 food when necessary -- the right kind of food they
11 need?

12 We must look at this moment as an opportunity to
13 support Aging Services and Food Service in
14 particular. Home delivered meals has been a
15 successful safety net for tens of thousands of older
16 New Yorkers throughout the city. Why not expand the
17 service to more of those in need? We know they're
18 out there -- the pandemic only highlighted this fact
19 for us. This city must invest in the infrastructure,
20 technology, wages, and their own Department of the
21 Age... For The Aging, in order to be able to serve
22 in a proactive and considered way.

23 This system has been reactive for decades, and
24 while not for profits have collected pennies on the
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2 dollars to do this work, there is a breaking point.
3 The pandemic also highlighted this fact.

4 People who have been on the frontlines are burned
5 out. They're dealing with their own marginalization.
6 As a society we need to better, much better -- Invest
7 in home delivered meals and other aging services in a
8 really significant way. Starting with increasing the
9 reimbursement rate to at least \$11.70 per meal.

10 Ensuring that our meal recipients have food
11 throughout the week is what the partnership between
12 Citymeals and The Meals on Wheels provider network
13 does. Without Citymeals, tens of thousands of
14 currently over 20 thousand folks, would no longer
15 receive meals on weekends, holidays, or in times of
16 emergency.

17 Citymeals, as a not for profit, will continue to
18 work hard to raise private dollars in order to try to
19 meet the needs of our partners and our recipients in
20 the years to come.

21 However, we also desperately need the support of
22 our partners in city government to help us reach all
23 of those consistently in need without a disruption in
24 service.

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This kind of partnership is even more crucial during times of uncertainty or when facing potential crisis like COVID, or Hurricane Ida, and climate change.

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We hope you, are partners in city government, will help us to continue to advocate on behalf of those who are often forgotten and marginalized -- and demand increased support for senior services and emergency meals funding for Citymeals on Wheels.

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Thank you.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Miss Sherrow.

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Next we will hear from Shubhra Datta, uh, as reminder, if you have not testified and still wish to do so, please raise your hand in the Zoom Raise Hand function.

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Uhm, Shubhra Datta, you may begin when the sergeants call time.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Uh, we've also been joined by Council Member Eugene.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

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SHUBHRA DATTA: Good afternoon, I want to thank you, Chair Margret Chin, Chair Paul Vallone, and members of The Committee on Aging for giving the opportunity to Indian Home to testify today.

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2 I am Shubhra Datta from India Home, uhm, Program
3 Manager. India Home is the largest nonprofit
4 organization dedicated to serving New York City's
5 South Asian older adults.

6 Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been
7 providing culturally competent Halal home-delivered
8 meals to the seniors across Eastern and Southeastern
9 Queens. With DFTA funding we have been able to
10 continuously provide meals without a gap, without a
11 limitation, and seniors have been depending on these
12 meals as a regular part of their routine. With the
13 growing South Asian population in the city, this has
14 been an essential for the community's older adult
15 population.

16 Our clients have appreciated these meals, and
17 their nutritional value, and many tell us that this
18 is the only nutritious meal they have access to in a
19 given day.

20 Though there were delays in contracts and
21 reimbursement of our discretionary funding in the
22 last fiscal year, we were able to provide over 17,000
23 home-delivered meals to roughly 300 unique
24 individuals, and unique older adults, and a total of
25 over 21,000 home-delivered meals until now.

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2 Earlier this year, we were quickly directed to
3 open our centers at limited capacity, with strict
4 COVID-19 restrictions. Our seniors were eager to
5 return, and we created a system through which given
6 capacity restrictions, as well as the amount of
7 people that can... are in the center, we were
8 feeding as many as people as possible through the
9 Grab-and-Go meal service as well as the home delivery
10 service.

11 Currently, we are running four centers in
12 Jamaica, Ozone Park, Jamaica Estates, and Kew Gardens
13 for five days a week. All these locations provide
14 Halal home-delivered meals or Hindu vegetarian meals,
15 as well as breakfast.

16 Until now we have provided over 3,500 Grab-and-Go
17 meals at our centers across Queens. Our seniors have
18 provided, uhm, depend on us for this culturally
19 competent and healthy food that we have providing.

20 We were also not contracted to provide home-
21 delivered meals at the beginning, and never provided
22 them prior to the pandemic. But, given the need, we
23 created the capacity and made it happen. We have
24 seen that providing one meal per day, three times a
25 week, has made a difference for a lot of our seniors.

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2 Seniors like Mr. Khan, who I was speaking to a few
3 weeks ago, is a disabled, unemployed individual and
4 fully dependent on these cooked meals for these three
5 days, or he has to go to the food pantries to find
6 for himself. It is seniors like Mr. Khan that we
7 continue to go above and beyond and provide both
8 home-delivered meals and Grab-and-Go meals, to ensure
9 that no senior is left behind in the city.

10 Without funding available, we would not be able
11 to accomplish what we have, uhm, done so far,
12 including serving over 800 unique seniors with the
13 unique emergency meal services, and 25,000 home-
14 delivered meals. So, we need continued and increased
15 support to make sure that our program stays as we are
16 doing at this point. We are dependent on
17 discretionary funding from DFTA for the funding to
18 provide those meals. While our work has been focused
19 primarily in Queens, with the funding and
20 continuation of this funding, we hope to expand the
21 services to communities and other boroughs as well.

22 Please help us continue doing emergency need
23 assistance for these seniors. And, hopefully we'll
24 be able to move forward with those seniors.

25 Thank you.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Mr. Datta.

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Uh, once more, I would just like to say if there is a panelist who still wishes to testify, but has not had an opportunity to do so, please use the Zoom Raise Hand Function now.

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Seeing no hands raised, I'll turn it back to the Chairs for closing remarks.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Uh, before I close, I... I do have a couple of questions for the... the panel.

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Uhm, you know, thank you all for your testimony and your advocacy all these years. Uhm, and, you're the pro... You know, the service provider that's been tremendous, you know, uh, during this pandemic.

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And, we just to make sure that as we transition out of the GetFood program, that none of the seniors will get lost.

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Uhm, so, I know that we've been advocating for that \$16.6, and we just didn't get it. Uhm, we would... We're not gonna give up, because my... As I said, earlier, uhm, when we talked with the administrative and OMB, they just didn't get it. They just think that, "Oh! Senior Center's gonna be opening. Seniors will be able to go back and get the ... their congregate meals." It's, like, these are

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2 homebound seniors! Uhm, that's what... That's what
3 home delivered meal is about -- so homebound senior,
4 we need that extra money.

5 Uhm, I was also glad to hear that the
6 commissioner said they're looking at, you know,
7 increasing the rate to \$10.52, though I think we need
8 to, uh, to just to get them up a little bit more,
9 uhm, with OMB.

10 And, I don't think \$16.6 is enough. So, I would
11 appreciate, you know, some of the advocates, Tara,
12 and (INAUDIBLE 02:29:31) talk to the service
13 provider, uh, and see, you know, what additional, uh,
14 funding, uh, we should be advocating for.

15 For the longest time, I... I really don't
16 understand why it's only one meal a day. And, that's
17 why... And, only five days a week. And, that's why
18 in the council, you know, we have fought to have an
19 initiative for the six meals program added. And, I
20 think it was picked up by the administration later
21 on. It was Council Member (INAUDIBLE 02:29:38)
22 was... was the... the lead on that... on that
23 initiative.

24 So, I think going forward, we always compare, the
25 GetFood that's three days... three meals a day, and,

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2 then home delivered meal in still only one meal a
3 day. So, I think we... we need to really continue
4 to... to advocate on that.

5 But, I have a question for the provider. Uhm, I
6 think, Jeremy, uh, when you were talking, uhm... Can
7 you just maybe go a little bit further in terms of
8 your capacity? Are you a, uh, the... The prime
9 contract for home delivered meals in your area? Or,
10 are you a subcontractor? So, can you... Can we
11 unmute Jeremy, Sergeant?

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: It's unmuted, Chair. There we
13 go.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah.

15 JEREMY KAPLAN: Uh, thank you, uh, Chair Chin
16 for... for the question.

17 Yes, Encore is the lead contractor for, uh, for
18 (INAUDIBLE 02:30:43) four, five, and seven.

19 Uhm, the question was go... go a little bit
20 deeper in... in to our... in to... in to our
21 capacity?

22 Uhm, Encore currently has the capacity with, uhm,
23 with little to no infrastructure, uhm, enhancements
24 to... increase the number of meals that we're
25 preparing and delivering by about five... give or

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take 500 meals a day. That would be possible if the cap, uh, on our contract or home delivered meals contract were lifted by that amount.

Uhm, with additional infrastructure investments, we of course would be able to go... go beyond that. And, those infrastructure investments would require, as I mentioned, uh, vans, space to... to store meals, uhm, and, uh, and of course staff, you know, staffing.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: During the pandemic, did DFTA talk with you about increasing your capacity? The home delivered meals?

JEREMY KAPLAN: There were conversations early on. In the... In the early days of the pandemic, back in April of 2020, Encore went from... from cooking and delivering for about 11 hundred, uhm, homebound seniors a day to 16 hundred, uhm, a day. Uhm, and we... And, we made that transition in about a week in... in direct response to the calls that we were getting. Uhm, there were conversations about lifting the capacity, but then the GetFood program was initiated. And, so, it all went over to The Department of Sanitation.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, you didn't get the support
3 that... If you had... I mean, if you had gotten the
4 support, uhm, you would be... You would... Would
5 have been able to continue serving... (Cross-Talk)

6 JEREMY KAPLAN: We would have been able continue
7 at least... at least those additional, uh, 500, uh,
8 folks a day, uh, prior to... to GetFood launching.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But, then you didn't get the
10 funding or the resources?

11 JEREMY KAPLAN: No.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: They just say, "Oh, send those
13 clients over to GetFood."?

14 JEREMY KAPLAN: Yes, that is correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, you just... They... DFTA
16 just asked you to assign the -- what? -- the 500 or
17 so seniors to the GetFood program?

18 JEREMY KAPLAN: Well, there was natural attrition
19 that happened. Uhm, so... So, we allowed for
20 natural attrition, and some of those folks that
21 dropped off of the program transitioned over to
22 GetFood.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

24 JEREMY KAPLAN: I don't know... I don't know the
25 number of folks that... that went over to GetFood

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2 from that attrition, but I, uhm, I would imagine that
3 it was quite high.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, because the... The sense
5 we were getting, uhm, from the administration, and
6 also from DFTA, was that they really don't want to
7 kind of touch the home delivered meal program,
8 because it was functioning and would obviously
9 increase demand. They just didn't want to mess with
10 it. And, that's how it kind of like went over, uh,
11 to GetFood. Which is unfortunate. I mean, we kept
12 saying that if you had given the provider the support
13 and the... and, the... and, the money that they
14 need, they could... they would have the capacity to
15 expand. But, that... that didn't happen. Uhm...

16 JEREMY KAPLAN: I agree, and... and, I think
17 we're in that moment now where we have that
18 opportunity again. Uhm, because there are ten
19 thousand people now who we're estimating are...
20 (Cross-Talk)

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm

22 JEREMY KAPLAN: are going to continue with the
23 program. And, we know that many of them are going to
24 qualify for home delivered meals. And, so, the time
25 to make that infrastructure investment is right now.

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2 Uhm, and we know what those infrastructure needs
3 are across the network.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Mm-hmm

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JEREMY KAPLAN: As Kaitlyn will surely tell you.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes. Well, that's what we're
7 gonna be, you know, advocating for.

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And, I think with this rate increase, I think
9 what we also heard is from the subcontractor. Uhm,
10 because, you know, if they're not the prime
11 contractor, and there's a subcontractor, they get
12 even less reimbursed money. So, I think it's really
13 critical, uhm, that we increase that rate.

14

Because, they'll... Often times, the
15 subcontractor are the ones that also doing the...
16 the culturally, you know, sensitive meals, and...
17 and have the capacity of really reaching a more
18 diverse, uhm, population of seniors.

19

JEREMY KAPLAN: Absolutely.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, that is something that...
21 that we hope, you know, will be, uhm, improved upon.

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So, I know that the... As... As Kaitlyn and
23 Tara mentioned, I mean, the November plan, is really
24 the last opportunity in... in this budget to really
25 push. So, we definitely will be working on to make

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2 sure that we get the... that increased funding, uh,
3 for the home delivered meal.

4 I... I think with the capital need, that...
5 that should be easier. Uhm, but definitely getting
6 the... the \$16.6 and more, uhm, this is a good...
7 This is a good time to push.

8 We have not... We have not stopped pushing for
9 the \$16.6 since the adoption for the budget. You
10 know, every chance we get, we still... we're still
11 pushing on that. So, we're gonna seize this
12 opportunity to, uhm, to continue to do that. Uhm...

13 JEREMY KAPLAN: Well, thank you, Councilwoman.
14 And, we know... We that you are one of our biggest
15 advocates in the sector, so we appreciate that.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: You're welcome! I mean, I
17 think this budget, we got to about half a percent of
18 the city's budget, right? Before it was always less
19 than half a percent. I think we finally got to the
20 half a percent mark. And, maybe... Maybe even a
21 little bit more than half a percent. So, I think
22 that's... That's really good.

23 And... And, I think the other accomplishment
24 that we were able to do through this budget was also
25 increased, uhm, mental health services for our

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2 seniors. I mean, that... That's, uh, a lot of, uhm,
3 got more funding that we were able to... to
4 allocate.

5 And, I think with the new RFP, uhm, the increased
6 number of, uhm, older adult center, our senior
7 center, and NORC program, I think that... that is
8 something that, uhm, that we should very proud of.

9 And... And, thank you to all of you for your
10 advocacy. Uhm, and, I really urge you to continue,
11 because we got to make sure it happens, uhm, in the
12 November plan -- that this additional money, uhm, is
13 added.

14 So, what you could do on your end, uh, would be
15 greatly appreciated.

16 JEREMY KAPLAN: Point noted... (Cross-Talk)

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Vallone...

18 Yeah. Oh...

19 Chair Vallone? Do you have some closing remarks?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I think the Chair is muted.

21 Let me just try to unmute him here.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh. Yea,

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah. Apologies.

24 There we go.

25 Oh, Chair, you're muted again.

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CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I am so sorry. I'm multitasking. I'm figuring out what time to pick up my son.

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5

Thank you, Chair Chin. Uh, it has been... I have no questions for these great panelist. Uh, but I do thank them for all their amazing work. Because as you say, we learn through their advice and through their testimony. That's how we develop our legislation and the budgets.

10

11

So, thank you very much.

12

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I mean, once again, thank you to all of you, uh, for testifying.

13

14

And, I know that congratulations to India House on getting more funding, and... And, I heard from The Commissioner, uhm, I don't have all the details, but she couldn't share at the hearing, but some of the... the NORC program and The Senior Center for Immigrant Population, that the council has been funding all these years, uh, did get in to the award, you know, for the... the new RFP's. So, I think that's... that's something that we're very, very proud of -- that that's what we did with the initiative. You know? We want to get them started, and we want to get them in to DFTA'S portfolio.

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And, we heard that some of them did make it. So, I think that's... that's really great.

And, uhm, Rachel, thank you for your... The Citymeals on Wheels. We gotta continue to advocate and make sure it is seven days, uh, at least to start.

So, thank you again for being here today. And, thank you for all your work for our older adult population.

So, uh, with that, our hearing is adjourned.

Thank you to all the sergeants! For your help.

[Automated]: Recording stopped.

SARA LISS: The recording has ended.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

SARA LISS: Thank you, everyone.

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 October 8, 2021