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4 CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

7 Of the

8 COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES  
AND ELECTIONS

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13 HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

14 B E F O R E: Karen Koslowitz,  
Chairperson

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COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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18 Speaker Corey D. Johnson  
Adrienne E. Adams  
19 Margaret S. Chin  
Daniel Dromm  
Steven Matteo  
20 Keith Powers  
Deborah L. Rose  
21 Mark Treyger  
Paul A. Vallone

22

23

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2 A P P E A R A N C E S

3 Julio Medina  
4 New York City Board of Correction Candidate for  
5 appointment by the Council

6 Simona Chung Kwon

7 Jenny Low  
8 New York City Board of Elections Candidate for  
9 appointment by the Council

10 Herman Merritt  
11 New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board  
12 Council Candidate for appointment

13 Patricia Marthone  
14 New York City Health + Hospitals Council  
15 Candidate for designation  
16  
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2 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I call this meeting  
3 Rules, Privileges and Elections to order. Good  
4 morning and welcome to the Committee on Rules,  
5 Privileges and Elections. My name is Karen Koslowitz  
6 and I am Chair of this Committee.

7 Before we begin, I would like to introduce the  
8 members of the Rules Committee who have joined us  
9 today or will be joining us. The Speaker Corey  
10 Johnson will be up to vote. Minority Leader Steven  
11 Matteo, Council Member Adrienne Adams, Council Member  
12 Margaret Chin is at another meeting, she will be in.  
13 Oh, she's here. Keith Powers, Council Member Deborah  
14 Rose, and Council Member Mark Treyger, he's not here  
15 yet and Council Member Paul Vallone who is not here  
16 yet.

17 I would also like to acknowledge Rules Committee  
18 Counsel. I'm not going to say his last name. He is  
19 going to say his last name because I always get it  
20 wrong, Lance.

21 LANCE POLIVY: Polivy.

22 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Polivy, okay. And the  
23 staff members of the Council's Investigative Unit  
24 Chuck Davis, Chief Compliant Office and Investigators  
25

2 Andre Johnson-Brown, Alicia Vassell, Desiree Robinson  
3 and Ramses Butten(SP?).

4 We will consider the nomination of Julio Medina  
5 for appointment to the Board of Corrections, Jenny  
6 Low for New York County Democratic Commissioner of  
7 Elections, Herman Merritt for the Civilian Complaint  
8 Review Board, Simona Kwon for the Board of Health and  
9 Patricia Marthone for the Board of the Health +  
10 Hospitals Corporation.

11 Should Mr. Medina be appointed by the Council, he  
12 will be eligible to serve the remainder of a six year  
13 term that expires on October 12, 2026. I need my  
14 glasses. Should Ms. Low be appointed by the Council,  
15 she will be appointed to a four year term that began  
16 on January 1, 2021 and expires on December 31, 2024.  
17 Should Mr. Merritt be appointed by the Council, he  
18 will be eligible to serve for the remainder of the  
19 three year term that expires on July 4, 2023. Should  
20 Dr. Kwon receive the advice and consent of the  
21 Council, she will serve the remainder of a six year  
22 term that expires on May 31, 2022. Should Ms.  
23 Marthone receive MUDR, I lost my place, receive the  
24 designation by the Council and subsequent appointment  
25

2 by the Mayor, she will serve the remainder of a five  
3 year term that will expire on March 20, 2023.

4 Chuck Davis, our Chief Compliance Officer has  
5 briefed all members of this Committee regarding the  
6 contents of each candidates background investigation.  
7 The first topic will be the Board of Elections. The  
8 Board of Elections consists of ten Commissioners, two  
9 from each of the city's five counties. Each  
10 Commissioner serves a term of four years or until a  
11 Successor is appointed. Commissioner's shall be  
12 registered voters in the county for which they are  
13 appointed and registered as a member of the political  
14 party for which they are nominated.

15 Appointment of Commissioners: The New York  
16 County Democratic Committee submitted a valid  
17 certificate of party recommendations on August 25,  
18 2021. If the Council as a whole does not act within  
19 30 days of receiving a valid certificate of  
20 recommendation, the applicable political party  
21 conference within the Council becomes empowered to  
22 approve the recommendation on its own.

23 The BOE functions the Board and its Commissioners  
24 are responsible for the maintenance and  
25 Administration of Voting Records and Elections. The

2 Board also exercises quasi-judicial powers by  
3 conducting hearings to validate nominating petitions  
4 of candidates per nomination to elective office. The  
5 Board is required to make an annual report of its  
6 affairs and proceedings to the Council.

7 Compensation: Commissioners receive a \$300 per  
8 diem for each days attendance at meetings of the  
9 board or any of its committees, with a maximum of  
10 \$30,000 per year. The City Council sought advice  
11 from the New York City Law Department, Board of  
12 Elections, and Conflicts of Interest Board regarding  
13 whether Ms. Low could have simultaneously as the BOE  
14 Commissioner and City Council employee. All three  
15 bodies returned opinions that there were no conflicts  
16 or compatibility of office issues that would prohibit  
17 her appointment to this position.

18 If appointed, Ms. Low would fill a vacancy and  
19 serve the remainder of a four year term that expires  
20 on December 31, 2024.

21 Welcome Ms. Low. Would you please raise your  
22 right hand to be sworn in?

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you swear to tell the  
24 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

25 JENNY LOW: Yes, I do.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Would you like to make an  
3 opening statement?

4 JENNY LOW: Yes, yes sir. Good morning Chair  
5 Koslowitz and members of the Rules, Privileges and  
6 Elections Committee. Thank you for allowing me to  
7 come before you today. I am Jenny Low and I've been  
8 nominated by the New York County Democratic Committee  
9 to serve as a New York City Board of Elections  
10 Commissioner.

11 As an active voter and a former district leader,  
12 I've dealt with the BOE and the cumbersome silos for  
13 nearly 30 years. I've complained about the lack of  
14 language access, insufficient bilinguals workers at  
15 the poll site to help voters. The lack of outreach  
16 and leadership to immigrant and low-income  
17 communities to plan and communicate change like the  
18 ranked choice voting.

19 In order for the public to have confidence in any  
20 election, accurate counting and timely publishing of  
21 results are critical. BOE's weaknesses has been  
22 flawed implementation of new initiatives. This  
23 weakness led to many errors, including incorrect  
24 printing of absentee ballots, ranked choice voting  
25 implementation and counting.

2 If I'm appointed as a Commissioner, I will have a  
3 chance to help fix some of these problems from the  
4 inside. And I have the experience and the skills to  
5 do that. I have a career of proven track records in  
6 leading organizational changes by listening, seeking  
7 input from stakeholders, collectively identifying  
8 solutions and implementing them with stakeholder buy  
9 in. Here at the Council, I managed the  
10 administrative services and community engagement  
11 divisions.

12 Prior to coming to the Council, I had a career of  
13 process improvement, managing departmental operations  
14 at JP Morgan Chase. As a District Leader for 25  
15 years and a former candidate, the BOE would gain  
16 someone with hands on experience in the election  
17 process. We should take the upcoming off year to  
18 adequately plan, utilize best practices and adjust  
19 the weaknesses at BOE.

20 Finally, success requires strong leadership from  
21 someone who has gone through multiple elections and  
22 can work with well with others to fix what's broken.  
23 Our democracy depends on easy voter access and timely  
24 and accurate vote counting. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. I have two  
3 questions. The New York City Board of Elections  
4 became a national embarrassment during this year's  
5 primary election after releasing an inaccurate  
6 preliminary tabulation of ranked choice votes based  
7 on staff error. What steps do you think the BOE  
8 should take to ensure the Board does not make these  
9 mistakes in the future?

10 JENNY LOW: So, as a Practitioner of Process  
11 Improvement, I know that there's always ways to  
12 improve a process. What I believe the Board of  
13 Elections needs to do is double down on quality  
14 control steps. Not just about vote counting and  
15 tabulation and canvassing but in every step of the  
16 process that they face, that handle, administer the  
17 elections.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay, good. If  
19 confirmed, what steps would you take to help improve  
20 the implementation of ranked choice voting?

21 JENNY LOW: As I mentioned earlier, uhm, the  
22 Board of Elections has not done an adequate job of  
23 educating voters and particularly the voters who are  
24 in low-income and immigrant communities and those who  
25 don't have access to the internet. So, one of the

2 first things that we need to do in order for ranked  
3 choice voting to fully allow voters to exercise their  
4 right to vote, is to improve on the education and  
5 outreach by engaging community-based organizations.  
6 Just like what they did with Census, right? We did a  
7 great job with a Census and we can do the same with  
8 educating voters at ranked choice voting, which I  
9 believe I support as a way for us to conduct  
10 elections moving forward.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. I'm going to  
12 now turn it over to Lance to continue asking  
13 questions because my allergies are really bad today  
14 and I have a hard time the mask and talking.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Koslowitz.  
16 The Committee will now recognize Council Members who  
17 wish to ask the candidate questions. We'll begin  
18 with members of the Rules Committee, followed by any  
19 other Council Members who wish to speak. Questioning  
20 will begin with Council Member Adams followed by  
21 Council Member Treyger.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you so much. Good  
23 morning Ms. Low, it is wonderful to see you back in  
24 these chambers, I must say. The Chair just raise  
25 significant questions regarding ranked choice voting,

1  
2 so I won't revisit that. But in 2020, thousands of  
3 voters in Kings County received incorrect absentee  
4 ballots, which was a grave issue for that area and  
5 really for the entire city. So, what steps would you  
6 take to prevent this type of error in future  
7 elections?

8 JENNY LOW: So, effective process and efficient  
9 process is very important in any kind of work,  
10 especially in election. Because in order for the  
11 public to trust our election process, we need to have  
12 very closely monitor quality improvement and quality  
13 control in place and tested before implementation.  
14 That goes for not just the Board of Election  
15 employees and staff but vendors that the Board of  
16 Election engages. We need to look at what is  
17 currently in place with respect to contracts and  
18 accountability. And that we have to demand the  
19 upmost high quality control with every vendor that we  
20 engage in and should I be appointed as Commissioner,  
21 I will make sure that we begin, that has not already  
22 began a process of reviewing all the vendors that  
23 provide services for the Board of Elections.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, thank you. I may  
25 actually revisit a question for ranked choice voting.

1  
2 I've got another question to ask you. We see at many  
3 of our polling sites that lines continue to be very,  
4 very long particularly over the last few elections.  
5 There really hasn't been that much improvement over  
6 this issue at many New York City polling places. So,  
7 what can the Board of Elections do to expand early  
8 voting hours, sites and capacity at existing sites?

9 JENNY LOW: As someone who have waiting in line  
10 in 2020 for hours, so I understand how it feels and I  
11 understand how frustrating it is for voters. In  
12 order for us to improve - increase voter  
13 participation, we need to look at all of what you  
14 just described, which is in particular, in early  
15 voting sites, we need to look at hours of operation  
16 and ease of voting as looking at beyond just uhm,  
17 assembly district, election district by assignment to  
18 poll sites, our early voting poll sites. We need to  
19 look at what is called universal voting centers that  
20 have been implemented in other jurisdictions. We  
21 need to go learn on how that works.

22 And finally, we have to make sure that we train  
23 the staff properly and have the proper equipment and  
24 technology to be able to handle that and that is a  
25

2 way for us to, among other things, to reduce the wait  
3 time for voters to vote.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, thank you. I have  
5 one more question and it will just go back a little  
6 bit to the ranked choice voting issue. We had the  
7 Board of Elections, this Council had the Board of  
8 Elections in several hearings, oversight hearings  
9 prior to the implementation of ranked choice voting  
10 in the city. And for the most part, the questions  
11 that were answered, were answered in the positive for  
12 the most part. And the BOE representation seemed to  
13 double down on a lot of cases in assuring this  
14 Council that the implementation was going well. That  
15 the education was going well. That the structures  
16 would be up to par and completed and approved in  
17 compliance.

18 And we know now that that didn't happen. You  
19 mentioned in your statement the need for language  
20 access, which my District 28 in Southeast Queens is  
21 one of the most diverse districts in the city. And I  
22 can personally concur with you that there is an  
23 extreme language barrier and it presents a tremendous  
24 issue for voters across this city.

2 So, can you just tell us one more time how you  
3 would, in given the light of this era of ranked  
4 choice voting in particular, what changes you would  
5 want to make or what difference can you coming into  
6 the Board of Elections make to penetrate the issue of  
7 language access for voters?

8 JENNY LOW: So, as a teenager, I used this before  
9 language access was available. I used to go with my  
10 grandmother to vote and interpret for her. So, I  
11 have faced that all my life and language access is  
12 most important. Currently, the law requires the  
13 Board of Elections have four languages access but  
14 there are many other languages that needs  
15 interpretation. Many voters whose language, first  
16 language is not English. They need help and a year  
17 or two ago, the Council voted and allocated funding  
18 for additional interpreters to help.

19 I believe we should welcome that and seek the  
20 help and welcome the help of these additional  
21 translator interpreters in languages that are most  
22 spoken in the district where they live. So, that is  
23 one way and I also believe that we need to really  
24 look at training of poll workers, especially those  
25 who will be interpreting, who speaks another

2 language. And look far and wide to recruit those who  
3 speak more than one language in the community where  
4 these languages are spoken.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, thank you very much  
6 for your testimony today. Thank you.

7 JENNY LOW: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member  
9 Adams. We will now hear from Council Member Treyger  
10 followed by Council Member Chin.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you. Thank you  
12 Chair Koslowitz and thank you Ms. Low for being here  
13 today and to answer questions and to just to build on  
14 my colleagues question, the issues of language access  
15 is very personal for me. Being I believe the only  
16 Russian speaking official, city official in New York  
17 and as someone who has fought for a number of years  
18 for language access, not just for the Russian  
19 speaking community but folks who speak also Haitian  
20 Creole. Folks that speak Arabic and other languages  
21 in Brooklyn and across other parts of the city.

22 The Board of Elections has historically moved the  
23 golf post in terms of why they felt they couldn't do  
24 it. First, I was told years ago it was a money issue  
25 and then we in the City Council acted. We said how

2 much do you need? And I do want to give credit to  
3 the former Speaker Melissa Viverito and the current  
4 Speaker Corey Johnson for both committee resources to  
5 tackle this issue and then the excuse shifted again.  
6 Well, technically only the state could require us to  
7 do this and that's why the city had to create its own  
8 language access program to hire interpreters. And  
9 they were forced to sit outside of poll sites in the  
10 rain. In the cold rain, they were forced to sit  
11 outside but they stayed to help voters. Questions  
12 such as what an ED? Where is my table? Because  
13 people the first entry point is the information desk  
14 and that's not where many interpreters are.

15 And I was called to help troubleshoot many times.  
16 This issue is very personal for me. Because many  
17 people historically have been turned away. And then  
18 we complain about turn out not being as high. So, I  
19 think the roles of Commissioners are that much more  
20 important to make sure that we help tackle this  
21 equity issue within the Board of Elections. There's  
22 more work to do in Albany. We need to continue  
23 support in the city but can you ensure that that  
24 commitment and I liked your answer to Council Member  
25 Adams but to double down on that commitment that we

1  
2 internalize this and not to have separate and  
3 destroying the process to language access but to  
4 actually have a one uniform language access program  
5 with interpreters to all communities that need it, in  
6 all zip codes, in all parts of this city. I'd very  
7 much appreciate your answer to this.

8 JENNY LOW: Yes, Council Member Treyger. Like  
9 you, uhm, my first language is not English. So, I  
10 understand and I lived in the community where many  
11 voters whose first language is not English. So, as a  
12 kid, before I was even eligible to vote, I was  
13 helping to register voter to convincing them why  
14 voting is important. And then, helping them make  
15 sure that they go to vote and have access. You know  
16 one thing that uhm, I have not mentioned is uhm, when  
17 we have people working at the poll site and training  
18 them besides the technical skill, knowing how to use  
19 and all of that.

20 One very important element is customer service.  
21 I'm sure we don't need to go over what that means but  
22 uhm, we need to incorporate that into the customer  
23 service mentality because we, as the poll worker,  
24 we're there to serve the voters. They are the  
25 customer. So, like you say, they need a – we need to

1 first do a good job in recruiting folks who can speak  
2 the languages. Whether or not yes, there's state  
3 requirement. As long as we're not violating the  
4 state election law, having poll workers who speak  
5 additional languages other than the four required  
6 languages, I think is a no brainer. But we need to  
7 do a better job in recruiting and in my opinion, as  
8 someone who has worked in the community for many,  
9 many years, that you need to work with local  
10 community organizations who have the trust of the  
11 people and the voters. And recruit from there to  
12 help.

14 There are other ways to recruit poll workers and  
15 I, as a new person coming in, if I should be  
16 appointed, I want to look at all options to recruit  
17 people to be able to better serve the voter. I hope  
18 I answered your question Council Member.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And you did and I  
20 appreciate that answer and your dedication, I would  
21 just close by saying that the Board of Elections you  
22 know says that when poll workers are hired, you know  
23 they're hired, they could speak any language. I  
24 always tell them that you should not only rely on the  
25 poll workers to do that because their job is to staff

2 the table. To make sure that they are protecting the  
3 integrity of the election process as well and it's  
4 not fair to them to be pulled away from the table  
5 back and forth to help address other. There are  
6 dedicated staff just for language access and that's  
7 what's needed.

8 And not to have pull people around back and forth  
9 throughout the day but I appreciate your support,  
10 your commitment and your service and I congratulate  
11 you. Thank you very much Chair for your time. Thank  
12 you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Council  
14 Member Chin followed by Council Member Rose.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Hello, yeah. Hi, Jenny.

16 JENNY LOW: Hi.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Congratulations on your  
18 nomination. I know that you have you know worked so  
19 many years as District Leader. You know all the  
20 problems that exist at the polling site. One of the  
21 issues that I want to raise up is that with Board of  
22 Elections, is really how do they help allow more  
23 people access to voting. I mean, the whole concept  
24 of early voting was great but across the district,  
25 like in my district, there were not sites that were

1  
2 available to neighborhoods. It was like, like there  
3 was no site in Chinatown. There was no site in the  
4 financial district. You got to go and take the  
5 subway or you got to take a bus to get to the polling  
6 site.

7 So, I think going forward, I want to see how you  
8 plan on in terms of working with other Commissioners  
9 to make sure that this early voting process is really  
10 accessible to all. And to be able to identify more  
11 polling sites. And also, look at you know sites  
12 where people - centralized sites where people like in  
13 the commercial area where people work. Make it easy  
14 for people to vote. And I think going forward,  
15 that's something that the Board of Elections should  
16 really focus on. Making this access available and  
17 making it as easy as possible.

18 As my colleague mentioned about language access  
19 but even just physical. Making sure that there are  
20 sites available all over the city and not be  
21 restricted by you know where you live or your ED and  
22 things like that. So, how do you have some idea in  
23 terms of how to really make that possible?

24 JENNY LOW: Yes, Council Member Chin. I remember  
25 because we live in the same district. The first year

2 we had early voting, you remember we only had one  
3 voting site in lower Manhattan, early voting site,  
4 yes. We, in terms of helping to increase  
5 participation and reduce the lines for early voting,  
6 we need to look for more sites as one way to help  
7 that.

8 And secondly, is to be – we need to seriously  
9 explore and find ways to make universal voting  
10 centers happen and start with early voting. Because  
11 you do have many days to do that. And that requires  
12 dedication of equipment and training of staff. And  
13 also collaborating with community organizations to  
14 find the location that would be convenient for  
15 voters.

16 And so, as I mentioned earlier, being able to  
17 vote easily and conveniently is very important in  
18 helping us increase participation for voters. And  
19 particularly, making sure that these vote sites, not  
20 only they are required by law to accessible but  
21 really have to make it easily accessible. Not just  
22 say checking the box for accessibility. So, for the  
23 people in the disability community.

24 And also, what I understand is that many people  
25 have talked about it, the ballot marking devices that

2 we currently use, are very old and they are not able  
3 to accommodate the complication of the ballots that  
4 we have today and also the language that's required.  
5 So, uhm, we need to seriously look at that and look  
6 at technology that can help us do that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, going forward, I  
8 really have high hopes that the Board of Election  
9 will modernize, really utilizing you know, computer  
10 technology. It really doesn't make sense why someone  
11 have to vote at a certain polling site.

12 So, I think you know getting more access to voter  
13 will be an important thing to do. So, I look forward  
14 to working with you and hopefully, you'll be able to  
15 work with the other Commissioner and improve the  
16 Board of Elections. Thank you. Thank you Chair.

17 JENNY LOW: Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member  
19 Chin. We will now have questions from Council Member  
20 Rose.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. It's always  
22 dangerous for me to follow Council Member Chin  
23 because we've been together so long, we kind of think  
24 the same. So, I want to piggyback on uhm, on the  
25 early voting polling sites. One of the issues that I

2 have is that again, is the location. They are not  
3 located in the neighborhoods where people you know  
4 traditionally vote and it causes a great deal of  
5 confusion. On early election, early voting, election  
6 days, I am flooded with calls. Where do we vote?  
7 Uhm, the Board of Elections has to do a better job of  
8 educating voters about you know the difference in the  
9 polling sites and as a result, people don't vote  
10 because they are not aware of you know of where these  
11 sites are. Because they are different from their  
12 traditional voting sites.

13 So, I'd really like to know, I find, this is a  
14 breakdown in the Board of Elections across the board.  
15 We saw with ranked choice voting; we were sure that  
16 you know the public would be educated to what that  
17 process was and it was almost you know several weeks  
18 out from the election before people were really  
19 advised to how ranked choice voting worked.

20 And so, it's the same with these early polling  
21 sites. What can you do to ensure that people know  
22 the difference and that you know these sites are in  
23 their communities so that they can get there?

24 JENNY LOW: Thank you Council Member Rose. I  
25 agree with you 100 percent that all these issues that

2 you mentioned have been problematic for voters. And  
3 so, I say that with vote - poll site locations,  
4 whether they are early vote sites or they are  
5 traditional vote sites, we must make sure that we  
6 have consistent places where people will go to vote,  
7 right? As an early voting site or their regular  
8 voting site.

9 The Board of Elections has to do a much better  
10 job in communicating with the voters early. As I  
11 mentioned early in my opening remark that the lack  
12 and insufficient outreach to communities and  
13 especially in low income and immigrant community  
14 where access to the internet is very limited. The  
15 Board of Elections needs to change the way they  
16 operate and communicate with communities that are not  
17 used to getting on the portal, the website to look  
18 for things. Is to work with local community  
19 organizations and work with them consistently to help  
20 voters understand and know what's going on. Ranked  
21 choice voting in my opinion, if there was any  
22 education at all was click on the website. There was  
23 no in-person, no effort that I have seen to help  
24 voters understand. And I think that has to change  
25 and we need to use this next cycle, which is not

2 ranked choice right? To go out and educate voters  
3 and help them understand what ranked choice voting  
4 means and how they can fully exercise their right to  
5 be able to use all of the choices that they have.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: If you're appointed to the  
7 Board of Elections Jenny, will you become an active  
8 advocate about education. In terms of every time  
9 there is a new initiative, a new machine, a new  
10 process, it doesn't matter what it is, the education  
11 of the public is woefully inadequate. And it creates  
12 systemic issues that or it elucidates the systemic  
13 issues that BOE just can't seem to get a head of.

14 And most of that is because of the fact that  
15 voters are not educated. They don't know what to  
16 expect. What the process is. How to walk through  
17 it. And so, there needs to be adequate funds put you  
18 know, dedicated for educating the voting public about  
19 whatever the changes are. Whatever the new  
20 initiatives are, whatever and we need somebody to  
21 actively, not only advocate but see that this is  
22 something that's followed through. And also, I'd  
23 like to ask your idea about universal voting centers  
24 where we're trying not to disenfranchise voters.  
25 We're trying to encourage them.

2 If we made it easy where you could go to any  
3 voting site and cast your vote, I think the numbers  
4 that we would see on election day would be far  
5 greater than what experience now. So, what is your  
6 feeling about universal voting centers and about  
7 moving this from a concept to making it sort of a  
8 reality? Something that the Board's really going to  
9 consider?

10 JENNY LOW: Thank you Council Member Rose for  
11 your questions. So, I'll address the first part of  
12 your question, which has to do with voter education.  
13 So, I was the first Asian American elected as a  
14 district leader in New York City. So, I served in  
15 that capacity from 1995 to 2021.

16 So, as a District Leader and from an immigrant  
17 community and a minority, I spent all of my time as  
18 District Leader even before that helping voters go  
19 vote and educating them. So, I share your  
20 frustration about the lack of voter education and the  
21 plans to do that ahead of any changes at the Board of  
22 Elections.

23 So, I share that frustration. So, will I be  
24 committed to doing, changing that? Absolutely, yes.  
25 And I will do whatever I can as a new Commissioner to

2 convince the Board of Elections that they have change  
3 and they have to really help voters focus on helping  
4 them vote easily. And that includes education prior  
5 to any changes.

6 With respect to universal voting centers, uhm,  
7 you know we need to go – yes, it's a concept and it's  
8 done in other places. We should go and look at other  
9 jurisdictions of comparable size like Los Angeles. I  
10 understand that they have universal voting centers.  
11 We need to learn what they do. If it's a technology  
12 issue, could we ask them and say, this is what we  
13 need in order to work and have that built for us? Is  
14 it possible to do that? Is it possible for us to  
15 start piloting it by county first? Using early vote  
16 sites to early voting time to do the universal  
17 piloting.

18 I think, one of the things as I mentioned earlier  
19 is that the Board of Elections had had trouble  
20 implementing new initiatives right? It's flawed,  
21 there's errors. I believe we need to be able to find  
22 a better way to implement new processes. In my  
23 career for many years, a process improvement I  
24 believe we need to test out new processes and pilot  
25

2 them before you vote it all to the big – a higher  
3 area, whatever you need to open.

4 So, I hope that helps answer your question. I  
5 believe voting center is what we really need to  
6 seriously look at it and start planning for it.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. Thank you Chair.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member  
9 Rose. We now recognize the Speaker.

10 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: Good afternoon, good  
11 morning. Thank you all for being here. It's such a  
12 great group of nominees to serve our city. Good to  
13 see you Herman. I'm glad you are being nominated for  
14 the CCRB. I have a question for Ms. Low.

15 Jenny, thanks for being here today at this  
16 hearing. You know there has been over many years,  
17 and you have been District Leader during all these  
18 years. You've seen time and again, disfunction at  
19 the Board of Elections over and over and over again.  
20 Whether it be on the lead up to election day or  
21 election day itself or the night of the election or  
22 the days following the election and there has been  
23 talk and conversation in Albany and there's been a  
24 bill that's been around for a while, which would  
25 professionalize the Board of Elections. Which would

2 say the current system the way it is doesn't work and  
3 the only way to change that is through state  
4 legislation. I believe Senator Krueger has a bill  
5 and I think Senator Myrie who Chairs the Committee  
6 has said he's interested in looking at the bill on  
7 changing how the Board of Elections structure exists  
8 in New York City to have more accountability. To  
9 have a better, more responsive Board of Elections for  
10 New York City voters. Is that something you would be  
11 supportive of looking at that bill and figuring out a  
12 way even though you are joining the system as it  
13 exits? But looking at a way to really transform the  
14 system and make real changes in the future for  
15 elections in New York City?

16 JENNY LOW: Thank you Speaker Johnson. I share  
17 with you the sentiment of what you have mentioned  
18 about the disfunction and that frankly, the Board of  
19 Elections in New York City is the laughing stock of  
20 the country. We're one of the biggest ones but we  
21 can't seem to get things right, right? As an outside  
22 observer, I share that frustration with you. Yes, I  
23 am joining if appointed, a ten commissioner board.  
24 We can't continue to function like this today.

2 So, yes, I will support and open to explore ways  
3 to change the culture, the function, the structure,  
4 the way we conduct elections in New York City. That  
5 may include changing the personnel structure but I  
6 think among the most important thing is really  
7 training folks, staff, finding new ways to find poll  
8 workers. Because you do, alright we do have about  
9 tens of thousands of poll workers that we need to  
10 have in place on election day.

11 So, yes, professionalize, whatever that means,  
12 right. Is the most important thing is to not only  
13 both staff and poll workers have the skills and  
14 experience to conduct an election but also, with a  
15 focus; change the focus on customer service to  
16 voters. And if you call that professionalizing, yes,  
17 I'm all for it. I hope I answered your question.

18 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: Thank you and you would  
19 be open to; I know the Board of Elections can't do it  
20 itself and the City Council doesn't have statutory  
21 authority, but you would be open to exploring how to  
22 completely change the structure of the Board of  
23 Elections. Right now, you have you know five  
24 democratic commissioners, five republican  
25 commissioners and it's not really probably the way to

2 get things done. And there are different proposals  
3 on what that should be but you would be open to that  
4 conversation and looking at changes in the structure  
5 of the Board of Elections?

6 JENNY LOW: Yes, absolutely. I look forward to  
7 talking to Senator Krueger and Senator Myrie.

8 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: Thank you very much.  
9 Thank you Madam Chair.

10 JENNY LOW: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Are  
12 there any other – oh, Council Member Powers.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Hi there again Ms. Low.  
14 Congratulations on your nomination and nice to see  
15 you again. Council Member Chin had touched on this a  
16 little bit but it's an issue that I know you know  
17 effects Manhattan so much, which is the early voting  
18 sites and the lack of available sites to accommodate.  
19 So many people want to go vote. We had a very high  
20 turn out last year and of course, we had a  
21 presidential election the year before that and in my  
22 district, they had to open up an emergency site a few  
23 years ago, two years ago because of the long lines  
24 and waiting times. And it feels – and recently in  
25 response we had the Metropolitan Museum of Art become

2 a polling place, an early voting place and we're  
3 looking for more. I know you touched upon this a  
4 little bit but I want to just go back to it because  
5 we're in such dire need down here in lower Manhattan  
6 and all through the borough. Can you outline - so  
7 we've talked about cultural institutions that there  
8 might even be an obligation under I think city law  
9 for them to serve as a polling place. But can you  
10 talk about other places, other types of institutions  
11 that you might feel or other ways that we could  
12 expand on early voting particularly in Manhattan?  
13 And to relief the stress on some of the sites that  
14 leads to long waits and then, leads to of course  
15 people being discouraged when they go to vote?

16 JENNY LOW: Uh, yes. What I understand is that  
17 the existing laws governing certain entities that  
18 they have obligation to provide space for election,  
19 whether it is early voting or on election day. What  
20 I understand is that we, the Board, currently we all  
21 have for whatever reason have not been able to fully  
22 enforce that obligation on entities that are required  
23 to do so. And I think we need to explore that.  
24 There are many places that I believe for example,  
25 public buildings and beside schools, right? We're

2 all familiar with schools but the amount of profit  
3 organizations that also may have space and they are  
4 obligated to allow elections to be conducted in that  
5 location.

6 So, I think we need, the Board needs to really do  
7 a better job and also, perhaps we talk to local  
8 elected officials, like Council Members, right?  
9 Because you know your district well. You know the  
10 organizations and the entity well. Is to work with  
11 folks like you to say, hey, you know we are looking  
12 to such and such a location in your neighborhood, in  
13 your district, can you help us get that ask and  
14 location to benefit your voters, right? And that's  
15 one thing that I think the Board can do better.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: And one of the areas that  
17 I would mention is that last piece which is in some  
18 experience with the Board of Elections, when they  
19 have come to my office to look for locations, we've  
20 been able to help them. But put a little bit of  
21 pressure on it somewhere to serve. I mentioned a  
22 public library system. Your public library is one of  
23 the only systems that does not serve as a - I know  
24 they are probably going to yell at me for saying  
25 this, but they don't serve as polling places across

2 the board. I think there's other places like that  
3 where we would be looking.

4 I know Council Member Adams I think asked a  
5 little bit about ranked choice voting earlier. I  
6 want to just pick up on that. It's something I think  
7 we'll be discussing in the wake of these elections  
8 about what worked, what didn't work. You uniquely  
9 understand that system having gone through it this  
10 year and many of us have opinions on the strengths  
11 and weaknesses of the program.

12 But so we'll be discussing that and I think  
13 you've shared some thoughts on that and certainly in  
14 just in hearing more. But are there other - as we  
15 discuss sort of after these elections next year, we  
16 talk about ranked choice voting, are there other  
17 items you would like to see the City Council take up  
18 or even I suppose a state legislature pickup in terms  
19 of making voting better, easier, different? Other  
20 ways to make the voting experience better and  
21 increase turnout here in the city?

22 JENNY LOW: Well, one thing that has been talked  
23 about is how do we find more readily available poll  
24 workers on election day? And there's been talk about  
25 asking municipal or state workers to make that as

2 part of their responsibility. And other  
3 jurisdictions in the country have done that.

4 So, should that become serious conversation, I  
5 believe we need this Council's support to say we, the  
6 Board of Elections need to have the Council's support  
7 in addition to the Mayor's support to be able to make  
8 that happen. I think if you look at election day  
9 poll workers, they all just come in one day and then  
10 they go. And it's not consistent right. They have a  
11 set of people who work that day but that might be  
12 something and maybe I am like really out there  
13 thinking about this but as a newbie, I think I would  
14 like us to explore all options and learn from other  
15 jurisdictions that have done a decent job and a good  
16 job in running election day, specifically election  
17 day operations.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay thanks. My finally  
19 question. If you can enacted any single change right  
20 now, with the wave of a wand to our election system,  
21 what would that be?

22 JENNY LOW: I'm sorry.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: If you could enact any  
24 single change, if you had sort of the authority to  
25 enact any single change here in our elections here in

2 New York City to improve our elections, what would  
3 that reform be?

4 JENNY LOW: I would say that we need to develop  
5 and properly train everyone. Staff at the Board of  
6 Elections and including poll workers and exploring  
7 ways to be able to – and shift our mentality and I  
8 don't want to say this on the path, our current staff  
9 and poll workers are not good. I'm not saying that.  
10 I think – but it's inconsistent everywhere.

11 So, I think in any place, for any system, any  
12 operation process to work well, the people are the  
13 most critical element of that process. And when we  
14 are able to train and recruit folks who have the  
15 passion to do the work, that shows and when we ask  
16 workers or staff at the Board of Elections, we're  
17 there to serve the voters. So, we need to be able to  
18 have the voters feel that we're there to serve them  
19 and that we need to be able to help make it as easy  
20 as possible. So, I would say training and  
21 development of staff and second with technology and  
22 equipment.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay, thank you. Thanks  
24 to Chair Koslowitz for the time.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member  
3 Powers and thank you Ms. Low. We will now move on to  
4 our candidates for the Board of Correction and the  
5 CCRB. The New York City Department of Correction  
6 provides for the care, custody and control of persons  
7 accused or convicted of crimes and sentenced to one  
8 year or less of jail time. By law, the Board of  
9 Correction or BOC shall have the power and duty to  
10 inspect and visit all institutions and facilities  
11 under the jurisdiction of the department at any time.

12 Evaluate the departments performance, establish  
13 minimum standards for the care, custody, correction,  
14 treatment, supervision and discipline of all persons  
15 held or confined under the jurisdiction of the  
16 department. And establish procedures for the hearing  
17 of grievances and complaints.

18 The Board of Corrections composed of nine  
19 members. Three members are appointed by the Mayor,  
20 three by the Council and three by the Mayor on the  
21 nomination of the presiding justices of the  
22 appellate division of the Supreme Court for the  
23 first and second judicial departments.

24 Members are appointed to six year terms and  
25 vacancies are filled for the remainder and unexpired

1 term. The Mayor designates the Chair of the Board of  
2 Correction from among its members. Although the  
3 board members receive no compensation, they may  
4 however be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the  
5 performance of their duties. Julio Medina is a  
6 candidate for appointment by the Council to the Board  
7 of Correction. If Mr. Medina is appointed, he will  
8 fill a vacancy and serve for the remainder of a six  
9 year term that expires on October 12, 2026.  
10

11 Next, the Civilian Complaint Review Board shall  
12 consist of 15 members of the public. Members shall  
13 be residents of the City of New York and shall  
14 reflect the diversity of the city's population. The  
15 members of the board shall be appointed as follows:  
16 First, five members, one from each of the five  
17 boroughs shall be appointed by the City Council. One  
18 member should be appointed by the Public Advocate.  
19 Three members with experience as Law Enforcement  
20 professionals shall be designated by the Police  
21 Commissioner and appointed by the Mayor.

22 Five members shall be appointed by the Mayor and  
23 finally, one member shall be appointed jointly by the  
24 Mayor and the Speaker of the Council to serve as  
25 Chair of the Board. Herman Merritt, a resident of

2 Kings County is a candidate for appointment by the  
3 Council to the CCRB. If appointed, Mr. Merritt will  
4 succeed Marbre Stahly-Butts and will be eligible to  
5 serve for the remainder of a three year term that  
6 expires on July 4, 2023.

7 Welcome Mr. Medina and Mr. Merritt. Would you  
8 please raise your right hand to be sworn in? Do you  
9 both swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and  
10 nothing but the truth?

11 JULIO MEDINA: I do.

12 HERMAN MERRITT: Yes.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, Mr. Medina do you wish  
14 to make an opening statement.

15 JULIO MEDINA: Yes sir, I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please go ahead.

17 JULIO MEDINA: Good morning and thank you to the  
18 Committee Chair and members of New York City Council  
19 for allowing me the opportunity to be heard in this  
20 forum. My name is Julio Medina, I am a Native New  
21 Yorker and a proud Borough President. I am the  
22 Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Exodus  
23 Transitional Community and I'm a candidate for  
24 appointment for the New York City Board of  
25 Correction. Engaging in this New York City Board of

2 Correction appointment as somebody impacted by the  
3 justice system at times feels surreal, yet I've come  
4 to realize that my personal experience coupled with  
5 my education and professional experience makes me a  
6 strong candidate worthy of consideration.

7 These combined experiences guide me as I work to  
8 identify opportunities for change within individuals,  
9 communities and systems. Regardless of the outcome,  
10 it has been an honor and a privilege to be considered  
11 for this appointment. As I mentioned, I'm the  
12 Founder and CEO of Exodus Transitional Community.  
13 Since opening our doors in 1999, we've served over  
14 25,000 individuals impacted by the legal system.  
15 Each day I witnessed firsthand incarceration ravages  
16 under resourced communities comprised of Black,  
17 indigenous and people of color.

18 Our current system strain already fragile family  
19 and community dynamics inflicting additional trauma.  
20 I am proud of the strides we've made as a city to  
21 lessen our confinement footprint. I am hopeful as we  
22 work towards closing Rikers that save a smaller,  
23 safer community borough based jails while recognizing  
24 there is so much agents face urgent work to be done.

2 At Exodus, I now have over 30 staff members  
3 working on Rikers Island daily. I visited Rikers  
4 Island on Tuesday. Exodus has facilitated its  
5 services on Rikers Island working with people who  
6 have obtained employment upon release.

7 As I said earlier this week, I visited Rikers  
8 with my staff. Like most people, we've been  
9 following the tragic reports in the news. Lives are  
10 still being unnecessarily lost on Rikers Island.  
11 Understaffed, Correction Officers are working double,  
12 triple shifts. The number of incidents of violence  
13 on the rise. The atmosphere weighed tense and heavy.  
14 One thing was extremely clear that change is  
15 necessary.

16 I believe that as a person with lived experience,  
17 a nonprofit leader dedicated to serving individuals  
18 impacted by the legal system, an advocate for  
19 systematic change, a believer in a person of  
20 transformation and a person committed to faith, I  
21 offer a unique perspective. I feel that my  
22 appointment will be a compliment and asset to the  
23 existing members of New York City Board of  
24 Corrections.

2 I appreciate your time and consideration of my  
3 candidacy for appointment.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Medina. Mr.  
5 Merritt, would you like to make an opening statement  
6 now?

7 HERMAN MERRITT: Yes. Good morning Chairwoman  
8 Koslowitz and esteemed members of the Committee on  
9 Rules, Privileges and Elections. My name is Herman  
10 Merritt and I'm being considered to be a member of  
11 the board - a Board Member of the Civilian Complaint  
12 Review Board. This process was a time for reflection  
13 for me. I am a first generation Native New Yorker  
14 born to migrate to Mississippi. My parents moved  
15 from the deep south trying to escape the segregation  
16 in Jim Crow that was legal when I was born.

17 They did medio but honest work and raised me to  
18 try to help those who need assistance. That message  
19 was reinforced when I won a Martin Luther King  
20 scholarship to attend NYU. It was during the Vietnam  
21 war and as a college student, I was part of the  
22 antiwar and civil rights movement. I dedicated  
23 myself to public service at this point.

24 After college, I became a teacher and worked at  
25 the Department of Education for 36 years. I had the

2 good fortune to teach in Fort Greene before I became  
3 the Assistant Principal in East New York and finally,  
4 I was appointed a Principal in Bedford Stuyvesant.

5 My years in public education were quite  
6 rewarding. I felt that teaching was one of the most  
7 noble things that you could do. You had the  
8 opportunity to nurture the hearts and minds of the  
9 youth and ultimately change society.

10 My last six years at the DOE was as a mentor and  
11 an intervener in the Supervisor Support Program. I  
12 received superior training and was exposed to  
13 emotional intelligence. I was enrolled in a program  
14 in Hunter College where I was trained to understand  
15 my EQ, Emotional Quotient to help understand myself  
16 better and be sensitive to the emotional needs of  
17 others.

18 I had the opportunity to work with the diverse  
19 group of supervisors assigned throughout the five  
20 boroughs. Visiting so many schools around this city,  
21 I was able to see the direction we are moving around  
22 the city but instructive on what we need to do.

23 When I left the school system, on one hand I was  
24 dismayed because as a group, most of the districts  
25 where I worked were still considered failing

2 districts. But examining the problem from before,  
3 you can see the successes that you had. Anecdotally,  
4 every educator can give you success stories and feel  
5 optimism for the future.

6 The numbers may not show it but we know that with  
7 the application of all the new research and changes  
8 in technology, we are on the verge of great progress.  
9 I feel this way about the CCRB. Tasked with  
10 monitoring the behavior of law enforcement personnel  
11 in the era of poor community police relations, it is  
12 imperative that the CCRB continue to practice the  
13 moto of my former school district, We Learn and We  
14 Grow.

15 It appears that the CCRB is focusing on  
16 continuous improvement. There are many programs such  
17 as the Blake Fellows, the Youth Advisory Council that  
18 bring the energy of the interns and young people to  
19 have input in life experience in the CCRB. Drawing a  
20 parallel to my life, I was an adult before I had the  
21 opportunity to interact with police officers.

22 Public safety is probably the most essential need  
23 of New Yorkers. So many things decide what type of  
24 environment we live in but this energy of various  
25 agencies working together can make things better. It

2 is important when the CCRB asks the NYPD to train  
3 officers on the difference between policing adults  
4 and policing youth and to keep better data on school  
5 safety officers, since there was no independent  
6 oversight of SSO's. These are small steps, but these  
7 recommendations come directly from the Youth Advisory  
8 Council.

9 I am humbled at the possibility of serving on the  
10 CCRB. I understand the difficulty of this task but I  
11 am prepared to use the skills learned in my career  
12 and the wisdom obtained from being a Native New  
13 Yorker to further the mission of the CCRB. Thank you  
14 for your consideration.

15 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. I will now  
16 ask you a few questions and then invite other members  
17 of the Committee to ask questions.

18 Mr. Medina, Rikers Island and the other  
19 Department of Correction in New York City are  
20 currently in crisis. The conditions are inhumane and  
21 there are mass staff shortages which have led to  
22 increasing deaths of incarcerated individuals.

23 Yesterday, the 12<sup>th</sup> incarcerated individual died  
24 in DOC custody at the barge. If confirmed, what will  
25 you do to address these disturbing issues?

2 JULIO MEDINA: You know, this is a humanitarian  
3 crisis at the moment. As I mentioned, I was on  
4 Rikers Island on Tuesday. Uhm, when we are talking  
5 about addressing these issues, this is not something  
6 that happens single handedly. This is something that  
7 has to happen with all of us being part of this  
8 process.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I can't really hear you.

10 JULIO MEDINA: Oh, can I remove this? No?

11 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: No.

12 JULIO MEDINA: Uh, let me start this again. Any  
13 better?

14 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Yes, I believe so.

15 JULIO MEDINA: Thank you. Uhm, to answer your  
16 question, I think some of the things that I would do  
17 is, you know we have the -- first of all, something  
18 has to happen with the union and try to get  
19 correction officers back to work. Nowhere in the  
20 country can someone miss two months of work and three  
21 months of work, four months of work and still have a  
22 job.

23 So, I think it's important that those that can  
24 come back to work do come back to work. You also

2 have to have some type of programmatic plan to get  
3 programs back into the facilities.

4 As I mentioned, I was in there Tuesday and  
5 there's a lot of work that has to happen. I mean,  
6 from food arriving on time to cells that stood on  
7 clothes so people can runaround and don't feel safe.  
8 Again to officers working double and triple shifts.

9 And I think so some of those things, we have to  
10 immediately adjust. This is not something that  
11 should - politics cannot get in the way of this.

12 There are close to 6,000 people on Rikers Island that  
13 need help now.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: What steps would you take  
15 to increase vaccinations among correction officers  
16 and individuals in DOC custody?

17 JULIO MEDINA: You know vaccination is you know  
18 across the country, this has been a hot button topic,  
19 so it's difficult to come up with one single plan. I  
20 think we just have to continue to encourage. When  
21 you walk onto the island, there's vaccination sites  
22 right on there so officers can come on. We try to  
23 provide incentives. One officer said you know, give  
24 me a week off or something and I'll think about it.  
25 I'm sure that was a joke but I think we have to be

2 kind of creative on how we get officers vaccinated,  
3 just as we're doing with school teachers across the  
4 country as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay, and Mr. Merritt,  
6 how do you think the CCRB can help to improve  
7 longstanding issues with policy and community  
8 relations?

9 HERMAN MERRITT: I think the CCRB has the more -  
10 a little bit more decentralized in the sense of  
11 bringing their work into the communities. It's a lot  
12 to ask citizens with a problem to come downtown to  
13 make a complaint. I think there needs to be a lot of  
14 outreach with - you know, I'm a school veteran and I  
15 think schools are such a central part of the  
16 community. I think you know through Parent  
17 Associations, parent meetings, and community  
18 education councils, this information should be  
19 brought to the people in the community.

20 The union where I worked, CCRB did a presentation  
21 for our members a few years ago, and uh, our members  
22 are principals and assistant principals and a lot of  
23 them were not aware of all the things that the CCRB  
24 does. So, it has to be a big outreach to inform  
25

2 people and get people to know that by working with  
3 the CCRB, by making complaints, things get better.

4 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay. I would now like  
5 to recognize any Council Members who wish to ask the  
6 candidate questions. We will begin with members of  
7 the Committee followed by any other Council Members  
8 who wish to speak.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Members signed up are  
10 Council Members Powers, Adams, Chin, Rose, Treyger  
11 and Dromm. We will start with Council Member Powers.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you and  
13 congratulations to everyone on your nominations  
14 today. Uh, Mr. Medina, I wanted to just ask you a  
15 few questions as the Chair of the Criminal Justice  
16 Committee when it comes to the Board of Corrections  
17 in the state of Rikers Island.

18 Council Member Dromm and I were there last week  
19 and I don't want to summarize his feelings on it but  
20 I think it's fair to say we were quite horrified by  
21 what we saw particularly in the intake units there  
22 and in the clinic as well. I'm sure you saw those  
23 areas when you were there. The Mayor has put out a  
24 plan with the Department of Corrections to address  
25 the conditions, the overcrowding, the safety issues,

1 the staffing, medical conditions in clinics. Can you  
2 comment your thoughts on that plan? Are there  
3 changes you would make to that plan? Are there  
4 changes you would make to that plan? Are there  
5 weaknesses that you see in it? And where would you  
6 as a member of the Board of Corrections recommend  
7 changes to that – the plan that's been released over  
8 the last two weeks? I'm sure there will be more  
9 items to it but how would you – what would be your  
10 critique of that and how would you improve it or  
11 change it relative to what he's asking for?

12  
13 JULIO MEDINA: Sure, uh, thank you. I think one  
14 of the things is let's – all this should be couched.  
15 When we're talking about using NYPD officers to bring  
16 some folks to court. Let's couch all of this for the  
17 sense of urgency. I think, you were there last week,  
18 I was there on Tuesday. I got the brief yesterday.

19 Just a sense of urgency that we have to make sure  
20 that we are all speaking at the same time. Twelve  
21 deaths on Rikers Island in the last nine months is  
22 fully unacceptable. I think the Mayor's plan in  
23 trying to get people moving, it's difficult moving,  
24 you know we're moving 40 people, sentenced people  
25 upstate to upstate facilities. It's difficult when

1  
2 someone has 13 days left on their sentence. You know  
3 to go upstate to try to figure out and navigate an  
4 upstate facility and come back. So, I would - some  
5 of the things I would do to basically try to make the  
6 Mayor's recommendations a little more effective is  
7 maybe find different units to put folks in as opposed  
8 to moving them to upstate facilities. I don't think  
9 that solves the problem.

10 And I think just one of things we have to do is  
11 get providers on Rikers Island. There is no one on  
12 Rikers Island right now. We need to get providers in  
13 there. We need folks in there to really begin to do  
14 some of the basic humanitarian work around getting  
15 people food.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you and I agree on  
17 the populations been transferred and folks that are  
18 facing a short sentence remaining. One of the  
19 questions in the book here was about the recently  
20 passed rules regarding solitary confinement and in  
21 punitive segregation really in the city jails. And,  
22 as you said, you do support the banning of solitary  
23 confinement in the city jails. Something that I have  
24 also called for and then the replacement of the Board  
25 of Corrections. If you remember I had voted on and

2 did rule making on was around the RMAS units, which  
3 we also saw last week. And the question was, do you  
4 believe to end solitary confinement and your answer  
5 is yes.

6 One of the criticisms that I think folks have had  
7 and the implementation of that is that while the  
8 rules themselves reflect a desire to exit from the  
9 old way of punitive segregation, that some of the  
10 units being utilized are still one single unit with a  
11 long duration for an individual to be in those  
12 without recognizing all the other stuff that one  
13 might need while in custody.

14 So, I wanted to just ask just a follow up  
15 question on your answer about the solitary  
16 confinement which is, do you believe that the current  
17 implementation of RMAS and solitary confinement?

18 JULIO MEDINA: Do I believe? I'm sorry.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: The current  
20 implementation of the RMAS rule making and solitary  
21 confinement?

22 JULIO MEDINA: Uhm, my personal feeling is there  
23 shouldn't be solitary confinement at all. So, let me  
24 just give you my personal feelings around it. I was  
25 in that facility. I am a person that's justice

2 impacted and the horrors that one faces when they and  
3 we call it the box in my days at SHU. It's horrible.  
4 Sensory deprivation and all those other things that  
5 happen, do not make a good fit for a young person.

6 With that said, I think there's alternatives that  
7 we can do. I mean, there was a lot of progress with  
8 what we were able to do. Right now, limiting terms  
9 of solitary confinement.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Can you hold the mic,  
11 just hold the microphone close?

12 JULIO MEDINA: With limiting terms of solitary  
13 confinement, so there were some things that we were  
14 able to do that you know again, personally, I still  
15 think there's more we must do but uh, to be in a  
16 space where we are now, where we've definitely  
17 reduced peoples time in solitary confinement I  
18 support. If that's the answer to your question.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay, one of the units  
20 there is at NIC and it's where they are hosted and  
21 that's I think there's concerns from folks that it's  
22 sort of keeping the old system in implementation.

23 I'll just move on to my last question here, which  
24 is just about staff working there today. We have the  
25 uniformed staff and the medical staff who are I think

1  
2 it's fair to say overworked, understaffed and facing  
3 a public health crisis in COVID and of course a  
4 safety crisis often when it comes to – and  
5 understaffing. When we were there, we saw units that  
6 were woefully understaffed. In some cases, didn't  
7 have staff at all or were being double – you know  
8 staffed two units at a time by one individual. How  
9 does the Board of Corrections help the department?  
10 Or what are the steps that the department should be  
11 taking to look at how to address violence against  
12 staff and to ensure that when there's, as we sort of  
13 take the sort of emergency steps here to address the  
14 crisis at Rikers Island, that we are also looking at  
15 the long term? Use of force, that has gone up and  
16 has been criticized by the Monitor but also, to look  
17 at the uh, you know attacks on folks that are working  
18 there and the safety issues that we heard from both  
19 uniformed staff and nurses and doctors when we were  
20 there last week.

21 JULIO MEDINA: Uhm, I think as a member of BOC,  
22 if that would have happened – I think some of the  
23 things we have to do is just be very transparent on  
24 what's taking place. They're conditions that have  
25 been created for people to act out. And when I was

1 there, and you know we were in RNDC and I visited all  
2 the units as well and we were talking to you know 15  
3 young kids who were saying, I just need to get to the  
4 law library. That's all I'm trying to do Julio.

5 But I've been in my cell for the last ten days.  
6 I haven't showered in seven of those ten days. Uhm,  
7 and when you create conditions where people become  
8 explosive, I think it's important that that be  
9 addressed as well. Even prior to thinking about  
10 okay, how do we get Health + Hospitals? How do we  
11 get everybody else on board?

12 You know, again in my visit, someone not taking  
13 their schizophrenic medication since September 1 is  
14 unacceptable. It doesn't matter if there's one  
15 person from Health + Hospitals that's working.  
16 There's absolutely for someone not to have that  
17 medication, I think it's troubling. But more  
18 importantly, what I'm seeing Council Member is some  
19 conditions that are happening that unfortunately, are  
20 resulting in violent behavior. I think if we can  
21 address those immediate conditions, we can see some  
22 of those changes happening as well.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Great, thank you. Thanks  
24 to Chair Koslowitz. Thanks.  
25

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member  
3 Powers. We'll now hear from Council Member Adams.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you very much Mr.  
5 Medina. Welcome. And you and I did chat yesterday  
6 and I thank you for taking my call. I expressed to  
7 you that I have particular interest in this  
8 appointment because of my background with  
9 Commissioner.

10 I believe I explained to you, my mother was a  
11 retired captain in correction. The issue surrounding  
12 the current state of correction is very, very  
13 personal to me. Uhm, so, I'll just ask a broader  
14 question. Due to the current crisis on Rikers Island  
15 right now, some of my colleagues in government other  
16 than this body, feel that all detainees should be  
17 released immediately. Other feel that the jail  
18 should be closed immediately so that the shift to  
19 borough-based jails can take place even sooner. In  
20 your estimation, is there any hope for the successful  
21 operation of Rikers Island at this point?

22 JULIO MEDINA: Uhm, I'm the full optimist, so  
23 yes. I believe if we can get people back in, I  
24 believe if some of those basic needs are met, we can  
25

2 at least begin to deescalate so much that's happening  
3 there.

4 And again, just being there uh, again Tuesday and  
5 getting a report yesterday on some of the conditions  
6 that are saying, Julio, we are just looking for white  
7 paper to write a letter out of the facility. Uhm, I  
8 think could make a difference as we begin to look at  
9 smaller, safer jails.

10 I was part of the Lippman Commission, we did a  
11 lot of that work. I believe small and safer jails can  
12 be the answer. I think we also have to look at our  
13 culture and begin to look at how do we change the  
14 culture? At one point, it existed around systematic  
15 violence, to now something can't be very productive  
16 and rehabilitative.

17 Uhm, so the answer to your question, yes, I do  
18 believe that we could sustain Rikers if there's a lot  
19 of changes immediately. Until the smaller, safer,  
20 borough-based jails are built.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: If you had the ability to  
22 make those decisions right now today and I believe my  
23 colleague used the expression, wave a magic wand.

24 JULIO MEDINA: Come on, give me that wand.  
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: If you had the ability to  
3 wave that magic wand right now over this facility  
4 that I consider a hell hole, to tell you the truth.  
5 What would your top three solutions be in priority to  
6 rid ourselves of the horror, the death, the disease,  
7 the lack of discipline, you name it. The gang  
8 housing, I could go on and on. But just give us  
9 three. What would your top three solutions be?

10 JULIO MEDINA: Sure. Uh, solution one is, we  
11 have to get correction officers back in the facility  
12 to work. They are needed at this point. Movement,  
13 nothing is happening. I had a crew in there  
14 yesterday, they waited 15 minutes right at the door  
15 to try to get out. They couldn't get out. A fight  
16 broke out. Some of my team got maced, so I think the  
17 first thing would be how do we get correction  
18 officers back to work?

19 Point two is, we have to get innovative  
20 programming back on to Rikers Island. People are  
21 desperate for an opportunity to do something  
22 different with their lives. Again, I was RNDC, C74  
23 18 to 21 year old's. I met with about 15 crips. The  
24 only reason we can meet with crips as you know is  
25 because the houses are all separated. They're all

1  
2 gang, different gang houses. They want the same  
3 thing everybody else wants. Julio, I need a law  
4 library. Julio, I need books to read. Julio, I need  
5 a bible. I mean we're talking about some basics.  
6 Point two, is definitely get some programs in there.  
7 Some innovative stuff so people are feeling the  
8 humanitarian spirit once again. Rikers Island should  
9 not be a place of horror but should be a place where  
10 people kind of you know, get an opportunity to  
11 reflect. Figure out what they did wrong and become a  
12 rehabilitative model, not only for New York City but  
13 for the country. So, I think two is, how do we get  
14 programs back in.

15 And three, there has to be some complete  
16 transparency and accountability. Let's stop pointing  
17 figures that it's this persons fault, it's this  
18 person fault. I think as a community, we failed our  
19 justice system. Our justice system should be  
20 rehabilitated. Our justice system should talk about  
21 this young kid who committed a crime at 17-years-old,  
22 at 18-years-old, should be able to get a second  
23 chance. And we have to be able to look at it through  
24 that lens as people that, at least New York, I  
25

1 believe should be leading the country when we think  
2 about justice.  
3

4 But to have an eye sore as Rikers Island as some  
5 of the horror stories that we're hearing, doesn't fit  
6 with our progressive client ideology that we bring  
7 from New York City. So, those would be the top three  
8 things then.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you. I wouldn't  
10 disagree with anything that you said at all. I might  
11 add, COVID testing upon entry and release and  
12 possible vaccination mandating but we won't even  
13 mention that word mandate right now. But thank you  
14 very much for your answers. I appreciate it.

15 JULIO MEDINA: Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Mr. Merritt, if I may, as  
17 Chair of Public Safety and having oversight over the  
18 NYPD and CCRB, I welcome you to this hearing this  
19 morning. Just a couple of questions for you. I'm  
20 sure that you are aware of the discipline matrix for  
21 NYPD?

22 HERMAN MERRITT: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: What are your thoughts on  
24 the discipline matrix for NYPD as it relates to the  
25 CCRB?

2 HERMAN MERRITT: I'm hoping that it will be  
3 reformed with the new administration in 2022. The  
4 CCRB should have more teeth and be able to make  
5 recommendations that mean something.

6 When you look at the small percentages of cases  
7 that move forward, some people feel it's worthless.  
8 It's not good enough. I've heard the word toothless  
9 used about CCRB but I know that every change is  
10 important. The small changes sometimes can have a  
11 ripple effect and as more – republic relations, as I  
12 said before, transparency and accountability. I  
13 think that it will make a big difference if the CCRB  
14 is allowed to have some teeth in what they do.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I would definitely agree  
16 with you there. I will also ask you your feelings on  
17 this because some people do feel that the CCRB should  
18 be an elected body, instead of an appointed body.  
19 So, what are your thoughts on that?

20 HERMAN MERRITT: I've had a lot of experiences  
21 working in elections and if you want to have – you  
22 have a better chance of getting a represented body by  
23 having good Council people appoint people they know  
24 can do the job in election. Because with elections  
25 come money, comes political support, and you're not

2 going to get the person that's possibly on the ground  
3 and knows what's most important. I don't think that  
4 elections would solve that problem.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, thank you for your  
6 thoughts. Thank you very much.

7 HERMAN MERRITT: Okay.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member  
9 Adams. We'll now hear from Council Member Chin.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. I have a  
11 question for Mr. Medina. How are you?

12 JULIO MEDINA: Wonderful, thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Congratulations on your  
14 nomination. I mean looking at your personal and  
15 professional experience, I think you will be able to  
16 add a lot to the New York City Board of Corrections.

17 JULIO MEDINA: Thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And really work on some of  
19 the horrible, horrible you know problems that we've  
20 been seeing right now on Rikers Island. And I think  
21 from your experience, I know that you did mention the  
22 borough-based jail. And in the Council, we worked  
23 very hard to get that passed and especially in my  
24 district. I had to overcome a lot of opposition.  
25 Because we truly believe that that is the way to go.

2 To really give the detainee an opportunity to get  
3 support and be able to go back into society and make  
4 their contribution.

5 So, maybe you could elaborate a little bit more  
6 in terms of how do you see you know going forward  
7 having you know smaller borough-based jails that are  
8 safer to really help you know mitigate some of the  
9 you know really serious and unfortunate you know  
10 incidents that were seeing right now on Rikers and  
11 why it needs to be closed.

12 JULIO MEDINA: Wonderful and thank you so much  
13 for all of your support around smaller, safer jails  
14 and Lippman Commissions recommendations.

15 So, I was part of the Culture Committee on both  
16 the Mayor's Taskforce and on Lippman Commission. I  
17 think one of the things that when we think about  
18 smaller, safer, jails that are under 1,000 people  
19 that will be in for the boroughs. We can really look  
20 at how do we specifically become transparent. Work  
21 in small modules, so we're working with people on an  
22 individual basis. And get some of this work done  
23 where people are really looking for the second  
24 chance.

2 So, the way the design alone as you all know,  
3 doesn't feel like a prison. You're walking into a  
4 regular building and it feels good and the courts is  
5 right next door, so it saves everyone's time.  
6 There's not a lot of travel going to the one court  
7 room from Rikers Island. People are right in their  
8 districts. Families can visit. So, now you remain  
9 connected to the person. You know it's really  
10 difficult around visits when you have to go across  
11 one you know, tiny bridge to get to Rikers Island and  
12 you know, you're coming from a different borough.

13 So, I think you know, when we think about  
14 visitation, when we think about some of the programs  
15 that were created, that we are creating to go into  
16 the smaller, safer jails. When we think about the  
17 design, being an educational design, being a design  
18 that's transformative, that thinks about second  
19 changes. That's taking all of this into  
20 consideration, I think we can really lower our jail  
21 population. We can make our city safer. Of course,  
22 there will be a small percentage of folks that you  
23 know, unfortunately we probably can't reach. But I  
24 think our statistics as a city will be so much  
25 greater and we'll have a rehabilitative model in

2 place with smaller, safer jails. I know it carries  
3 a hefty price tag but I believe the numbers said you  
4 know in ten years; we'll be able to recoup and we end  
5 up saving actually in the long run.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Great, thank you. Thank  
7 you Chair.

8 HERMAN MERRITT: Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member  
10 Chin. We'll now hear from Council Member Rose  
11 followed by Council Members Treyger and Dromm.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. I have just one  
13 question for Mr. Merritt. Your reputation proceeds  
14 you, you know here today as a stella and engaged  
15 educator. And I'm really concerned about how you  
16 would go about getting the public to know or  
17 understand or be better informed, about the function  
18 of the CCRB. I have a CCRB uhm, I make arrangements  
19 to have CCRB in my district once a month and we  
20 advertise it every week in my eblasts. And I rarely  
21 get anyone you know to come. And what I hear is that  
22 they really don't know about the CCRB or its  
23 function.

24 Council Member Adams and I fought really hard to  
25 get additional funding in the budget this year for

2 community education and community engagement. And  
3 uhm, and when I watch the CCRB proceedings, often at  
4 every meeting, there are people there that say, I  
5 didn't know about the CCRB. I don't know what the  
6 CCRB does. And that's really distressing to me  
7 because of the high incidents of community police  
8 incidents that you know we see in New York City.

9 So, how is it or do you think that we could  
10 better inform the community about the CCRB and its  
11 functions? Thank you.

12 HERMAN MERRITT: I hear you saying that you have  
13 these hearings in your - are these meetings in your  
14 district every month.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: That's just an ancillary  
16 thing. We just make, we try to make it convenient  
17 for people because as you know, Staten Island is not  
18 one of the boroughs that people are flocking to. But  
19 we have an arrangement with the CCRB to provide  
20 services to my constituents at least once a month.  
21 And the problem is that people don't come because  
22 they don't know or understand the function of the  
23 CCRB.

24 Although we advertise it every week in my weekly  
25 eblast and that the service is available. And then

2 when I watch or participate in the monthly board  
3 meetings of the CCRB, people are always, there's  
4 always people who open their remarks with. I did not  
5 know about the CCRB or I don't know what they did.

6 And so, I want to know you know what can we do  
7 with all the efforts that we've made to you know to  
8 better inform the public about CCRB and its  
9 functions.

10 HERMAN MERRITT: Well, simply we just can't give  
11 up. We have to try new methods and avenues. You  
12 have the churches, young people; I was particularly  
13 impressed when I read a lot about the YAC, the Youth  
14 Advisory Council. I believe there are only 19  
15 throughout the city, 19 students who are involved.  
16 But it seems if they were, if we could expand that  
17 and have more young people talking about it, that  
18 would make a difference.

19 In terms of adults being involved, I don't know  
20 but in terms of young people not having this negative  
21 view of police officers. People you know want police  
22 out of the schools. While police have to be in the  
23 schools just to learn kids and kids to learn them.  
24 So, that the children don't look at police officers  
25 as people on the other side.

2 The more interaction you have with police  
3 officers and citizens and their positive  
4 interactions, things begin to change. I think that  
5 we – success stories of the CCRB. When people make a  
6 complaint and they feel that their complaint was  
7 heard, people – those things have to go out. Looking  
8 at the commercials, they do these commercials every  
9 day about the vaccinations. And you hear people  
10 telling their testimonial about, I didn't want to do  
11 that vaccine. I had to take – I took it and it  
12 works, please do it.

13 You know, maybe if we had that kind of PR  
14 Campaign, if somebody that went to the CCRB and how  
15 it worked for them. I know that this couldn't be  
16 done but I think it works the other way too. When  
17 police officers are – when a charge is not  
18 substantiated, you know, they will believe that oh,  
19 this works. You know, it works for both sides.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I would just appreciate if  
21 you would advocate for a robust public campaign,  
22 public education campaign. And I do believe that  
23 that means uhm, advertisement and posters and things  
24 on public conveyances. So that people in New York  
25

2 City actually know that they have an advocate or an  
3 agency by which to go to – to address those issues.

4 I want to see a more aggressive outreach and  
5 education you know effort made and so, I'd like for  
6 you to take that challenge on if you are appointed to  
7 this board. Thank you.

8 HERMAN MERRITT: I agree with you Councilwoman  
9 and I promise that I will.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now have questioning  
11 form Council Member Treyger.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you. I just want  
13 to speak very briefly in support and also appreciate  
14 for Mr. Merritt, who I've known for a number of  
15 years. And you know, I, many folks who know me know  
16 I am also a former educator but Mr. Merritt when on  
17 to be a principal and a great leader in labor as  
18 well.

19 I actually think this makes sense on many levels.  
20 Mr. Merritt, who is at a time a principal, was  
21 actually in charge of the safety of students and  
22 staff in a school building. And he has always seen  
23 this issue through a lens holistically, which I  
24 actually think we need a whole lot more of.

2 Very much noted with procedures, while also  
3 having to advance you know instructional agendas in a  
4 school. I want to say that in my district, before my  
5 tenure, when there would be issues or meetings about  
6 public safety, it would be mainly just police and a  
7 precinct counsel. But during my tenure, I actually  
8 invited principals to meetings. I invited community-  
9 based organizations to meetings and other  
10 stakeholders and looked at the issue holistically.

11 And we've actually been able to tackle many root  
12 issues that have been plaguing residents for many  
13 years. So, I actually think educators and school  
14 leaders, particularly those who were actually  
15 responsible for safety day to day functions, bring a  
16 real interesting, unique skill set with fresh eyes  
17 and familiarity with procedures.

18 And to my colleagues point, Council Member Rose,  
19 excellent point about Public Awareness Campaign. I  
20 also would appreciate you know; this is my final year  
21 in the Council. But I believe that more  
22 collaboration even with policy makers about things in  
23 cases that you see that you come across, experiences  
24 you come across to make recommendations. What can we  
25 do better? What more resources to communities are

2 needed? What policy changes? We need to communicate  
3 and collaborate and get things done on behalf of the  
4 people we serve.

5 So, Mr. Merritt, I want to thank you for your  
6 leadership, for your partnership. Always looking at  
7 things through a lens of equity. Holistically,  
8 meeting the needs of people, meeting them where they  
9 are at and I am in full support and appreciation for  
10 your nomination. Thank you. Thank you Chair for  
11 your time. Thank you.

12 HERMAN MERRITT: Thank you Councilman.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member  
14 Treyger. And finally, we'll hear from Council Member  
15 Dromm.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very much. Last  
17 but not least and I want to thank the Chair for  
18 allowing me to speak, although I'm not actually part  
19 of this Committee. I want to congratulate Herman  
20 Merritt as well and I just want to reiterate the kind  
21 words that Chair Treyger said, Chair of the Education  
22 Committee.

23 I also, when I was Chair of the Education  
24 Committee, had the opportunity to work closely with  
25 you on many issues as they effected our public school

2 system and deeply appreciate all of your support and  
3 the work that you've done.

4 So, I congratulate you and support your  
5 nomination. I want to thank Jenny Low as well. I  
6 know her well. I worked with her closely here in the  
7 Council and I'm very supportive of your nomination as  
8 well.

9 Dr. Kwon and Ms. Marthone, I don't know you but  
10 congratulations on your nominations and good luck.  
11 And I do want to just talk with Mr. Medina as well.  
12 I am proud to have worked closely with the Speaker to  
13 place your name in nomination for this position.  
14 Working along with the Chair of the Criminal Justice  
15 Committee Keith Powers as well. I have heard  
16 tremendous things about the work that you have done  
17 with Exodus and with the folks that come into the  
18 program there. And so, I think because of your lived  
19 experience as having been formerly incarcerated, also  
20 having the voice of somebody who has been formerly  
21 incarcerated, who has been through the system, is  
22 really important to understanding the system and  
23 knowing what's going on. I was proud to support  
24 Stanley Richards, I know he is a friend of yours and  
25 he highly recommended you for this position as well.

1  
2 So, I'm thankful to Stanley for the work that he's  
3 done. He's now left the Board of Correction and he  
4 has gone over to the Administration and is doing a  
5 superb job there. And as well Anisha Raldy(SP?) also  
6 and they have many challenges but I do believe deeply  
7 in both of them.

8 One of the things that the advocates do bring up  
9 and I heard what Council Member Powers was saying as  
10 well about the BOC plan regarding punitive  
11 segregation. You know and the implementation of  
12 their rules. I have legislation before the City  
13 Council in regard to punitive segregation. It's a  
14 bill that kind of reflects what the BOC has done but  
15 advocates are saying to me, they would like to see  
16 more out of cell time.

17 You know, currently it is at about ten hours of  
18 out of cell time. Advocates are advocating for 14  
19 hours and I'm wondering if you could comment on what  
20 you feel is an appropriate amount of time to be out  
21 of cell?

22 JULIO MEDINA: Sure. Thank you as well and let  
23 me just say you know again; I was remiss in not  
24 talking about the leadership at Rikers Island. That  
25 has changed with the New Commissioner Vinny

1 Schiraldi, Stanley Richards as First Dep. that I  
2 think part of my reason why I think Rikers could  
3 change. Actually a large reason, a large part of my  
4 reason is because of the leadership and their  
5 transformative approach to looking at changing some  
6 of the conditions. So, I just wanted to start with  
7 that.

9 Yeah, social isolation doesn't work. We all know  
10 that. I think 14 hours, if not more is a fair amount  
11 of time, so people can get out of their cells. So,  
12 people can do things. So, people can socially  
13 interact with each other. I think social interaction  
14 is a huge just aspect of normalizing the conditions  
15 that one lives in when they're in Rikers Island.

16 I know there's been kind of a lot of push back  
17 and forth, you know, we just have to become more  
18 creative in how we think about punishing young people  
19 who commit an infraction. Who already are in jail  
20 and we're going to even tighten it more by finding  
21 these restrictive measures. So, yes, 14 hours would  
22 definitely be a step in the right direction.

23 Again, I believe we have some more creative  
24 programming and different orgs going in and really  
25 thinking creatively about what we can do. You know,

2 one of the things that we're doing is, we have a  
3 music studio and you know all these kids think they  
4 can wrap. So, what we've done was you know, we have  
5 a Latin King, crip, a blood and every other little  
6 gang on the same song because if you can get on the  
7 same song together and not kill each other, that's  
8 the first step in recognizing each other's humanity.

9 So, I think we have to just continue to think  
10 differently and one day probably we can just do away  
11 with any form of restrictive segregation.

12 COUNCIL MEMEBR DROMM: And I know you are highly  
13 regarded by those who have been effected by the  
14 justice system as well and to hear you say that I  
15 think it's really important for us all to take note  
16 of.

17 And I think you're right in terms of the  
18 programming. It really, really counts for the  
19 programming. When Keith, excuse me, when Council  
20 Member Powers and I visited Rikers last week actually  
21 on Thursday, we saw the intake unit horror. Like  
22 something out of the middle ages, literally.  
23 Horrible, horrible probably the worst human rights  
24 abuses I've ever witnessed with my own eyes. I was  
25

2 so effected by it; I almost couldn't complete the  
3 visit there because it was just so overwhelming.

4 With that being said, you know, these are people  
5 that are in need of help and deserve help and also,  
6 have not for the most part, except for those who are  
7 serving up to a year or so, been convicted of a crime  
8 yet. And I think that's something we have to take  
9 into account. We also visited the cells that they  
10 are using for punitive segregation. Which is a cell  
11 and an extended half of a cell, which is not really  
12 acceptable either but I think for right now, it's the  
13 best we can do at this point. But in the long wrong,  
14 hopefully we can correct that situation also.

15 My last question is really more to do with how do  
16 we change the culture on Rikers Island? That I think  
17 is also key. How to we get to the Correction  
18 Officers to understand that what we're trying to  
19 accomplish here is also going to make life better for  
20 them there. And if we can do that, I think that's  
21 where the real change will occur.

22 JULIO MEDINA: Fully agree. I think you know,  
23 even when we were thinking about the smaller, safer  
24 jails and we're building smaller jails, you know we  
25 don't want to create four small Rikers Islands right?

1  
2 The goal is to again be transformative in our  
3 approach. And I do think it begins with correction  
4 officers. I would love to see something in the  
5 training academy happen. I believe 600 officers are  
6 going through the academy as we speak. I think one  
7 of the things we do is what are the trainings that  
8 are happening right?

9 There are community members, correction officer  
10 and neighbors. And what's happening in this process  
11 where the disconnect becomes us against them? This  
12 adversarial relationship that's been inherent in the  
13 criminal justice system for the last you know, 50  
14 plus years. I think we have an opportunity to change  
15 with our smaller, safer jails but some of those  
16 things have to happen collectively, with COBA and the  
17 unions and really working together in this  
18 transparent format to say, I can recognize the  
19 humanity in that person that's locked up and that  
20 person can recognize the humanity in that officer  
21 that has a job to do and wants to go home safe to  
22 their families. I think those collective goals are  
23 going to be important if we are to move and begin to  
24 change the culture that right now as you saw, as I  
25

2 saw, as the news is reporting daily is inhumane and  
3 something needs to happen immediately.

4 So, thank you for all that you've done this far  
5 as well. It means a lot.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you. You know and I  
7 think you're right. I think you know with Stanley  
8 and Vinny Schiraldi, are focusing on in many ways is  
9 also supporting those corrections officers, giving  
10 them some extra support. You know, opening up a  
11 garden and a place to eat and you know, dealing with  
12 the overtime that they're being forced to do etc.

13 And one of the things I think and I think Chair  
14 Powers would agree with me that I felt at this visit,  
15 because I've been visiting for almost 12 years at  
16 Rikers. But this time around, I felt there was more  
17 transparency and I think that that came because the  
18 leadership is saying, tell the real deal. Tell us  
19 what's really happening here.

20 Because in my conversations with both the  
21 Corrections Officers and with the medical staff, the  
22 doctors and the nurses there, I felt that they were  
23 really giving us the information we needed as a  
24 Council to be able to support the change that's  
25 needed to change that culture on Rikers Island.

2 So, thank you for coming in. Thank you for your  
3 leadership. Thank you for what you've done at Exodus  
4 and I look forward to continuing to support your  
5 nomination to the board.

6 JULIA MEDINA: Thank you so much.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Congratulations, yeah.

8 JULIA MEDINA: Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member  
10 Dromm. We will now move to the Board of Health and  
11 Health + Hospitals Corporation. First, we will  
12 consider the nomination of Simona Kwon to the Board  
13 of Health.

14 The primary function of the Board of Health is to  
15 legislate and oversee the New York City Health Code,  
16 which encompasses the rules governing all matters and  
17 subjects within the jurisdiction of the New York City  
18 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

19 The Department of Health's jurisdiction is among  
20 the most extensive and varied of all the city  
21 agencies from communicable diseases and mental health  
22 to food safety and even veterinary affairs. The fact  
23 that the Health Code rules have for the force and  
24 effective law and cover such an extensive range of  
25 measures aimed at improving the physical and mental

2 wellbeing of New Yorkers, highlights the importance  
3 of the work of the Board of Health and consequently,  
4 the vital need for crucial consideration of all  
5 potential appointees.

6 The Board of Health's 11 members serve six year  
7 terms without pay and cannot be dismissed without  
8 cause. Simona Kwon's name has been submitted by the  
9 Mayor for appointment to a vacancy on the Board of  
10 Health. If she receives the advice and consent of  
11 the Council, she will be eligible to serve the  
12 remainder of a six year term that expires on May 31,  
13 2022.

14 Next, we will be considering Patricia Marthone  
15 for the Health and Hospitals Corporation. HHC is a  
16 public benefit corporation charged with the duty of  
17 providing high quality, dignified and comprehensive  
18 health care and treatment to the public. Especially  
19 to those who cannot afford such services.

20 The Health + Hospitals Corporation Board of  
21 Directors consists of 16 members. Included within  
22 the Boards membership in addition to five ex officio  
23 members are ten appointees of the Mayor, five of whom  
24 are designated by the Council for consideration by  
25 the Mayor.

2 The term of office for directors is five years.  
3 With a vacancy filled under the terms of the original  
4 appointment. Directors are not compensated but are  
5 reimbursed for actual expenses. Patricia Marthone, a  
6 resident of Kings County is a candidate for  
7 designation and subsequent appointment by the Mayor  
8 to Health + Hospitals. Her appointment is contingent  
9 on receiving clearance by the Conflicts of Interest  
10 Board. If appointed, Patricia Marthone will fill a  
11 vacancy and serve the remainder of a five year term  
12 that will expire on March 20, 2023.

13 Welcome candidates, would you both please raise  
14 your right hands to be sworn in? Do you both swear  
15 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but  
16 the truth?

17 SIMONA KWON: I do.

18 PATRICIA MARTHONE: I do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: First, Simona Kwon, do you  
20 wish to make an opening statement?

21 SIMONA KWON: Good afternoon. I am Dr. Simona  
22 Kwon. Thank you to Chair Koslowitz and the members  
23 of the Rules Committee for considering my nomination  
24 to the Board of Health.  
25

2 I am a Health Disparities and Health Equity  
3 Public Health Researcher at the NYU Grossman School  
4 of Medicine and the Department of Population Health  
5 Section for Health Equity. My ties to New York City  
6 are deep. I have lived in the City since 1997 with a  
7 three year gap when I was at Johns Hopkins University  
8 in Baltimore doing my post-doctoral fellowship.

9 My parents immigrated to the U.S. from South  
10 Korea landing in New York City in 1972. During that  
11 period, my father completed his fellowship and  
12 training in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at  
13 Brookdale Hospital in Brooklyn and practiced for  
14 several years at the New York City Children's Center  
15 in Jamaica Queens.

16 I earned my doctorate at the Columbia University  
17 Mailman School of Public Health, with a focus on  
18 examining health disparities in communities who are  
19 medically underserved. Since 1997, I have worked on  
20 engaging community leaders and community-based  
21 organizations in the city to collaboratively develop  
22 and implement meaningful and sustainable health  
23 promotion and disease prevention programs and  
24 strategies within community settings. With a focus  
25 on racial ethnic minority and immigrant populations.

2 While at Columbia University, I directed the New  
3 York site of a National Cancer Institute Special  
4 Populations Network project, funded in 2000 to engage  
5 Asian American immigrants through community  
6 partnerships to promote cancer awareness research and  
7 training. This was one of the first initiatives in  
8 New York City focused on building a Pan-Asian  
9 American Coalition to advance health outcomes. And  
10 during this time, I helped establish one of the first  
11 Asian American health conferences in the city,  
12 bringing together community organizations, health  
13 centers, health care providers, and academic  
14 researchers and developed and oversaw a coalition  
15 representing over ten local Asian American serving  
16 community-based organizations across the city.

17 Inclusive of larger social service groups and  
18 smaller issue specific organizations. Upon  
19 completing my doctorate, I accepted a post-doctoral  
20 fellowship at Johns Hopkins in the School of Public  
21 Health to advance scholarship and community-based  
22 participatory research.

23 CBPR is a partnership approach to research that  
24 equitably engages community members and a  
25 collaborative process. Recognizes the unique

2 strength that each brings to advance social change  
3 and improve community health and eliminate health  
4 disparities. CBPR and coalition building across  
5 communities and stakeholder groups is the foundation  
6 of my research to exam health disparities and  
7 implement meaningful, culturally adapted, evidence  
8 based strategies and programs and to policy and  
9 practice, to ensure reach to all populations.

10 With a focus on groups that are socially and  
11 economically marginalized, including racial ethnic  
12 minority communities, immigrant communities and  
13 limited English proficient populations.

14 Currently I am an Associate Professor in the  
15 Department of Population Health. I serve as  
16 Associate Director for the section for health equity  
17 and I lead or Co-lead the community engagement and  
18 outreach corps for several national institutes of  
19 health centered grants. Working to develop  
20 sustainable and by directional partnerships with  
21 under resourced communities to advance inclusion and  
22 representation of all communities and research and  
23 the translation of research into policy and practice.

24 I can't think of a higher calling than to serve  
25 the public as a member of the New York City Board of

2 Health. To apply best practices for inclusive  
3 engagement and outreach of all communities, and  
4 evidence-based strategies translated into practice to  
5 advance health equity for all New Yorkers. Thank you  
6 for this opportunity and I look forward to your  
7 questions.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ms. Marthone,  
9 would you like to make an opening statement?

10 PATRICIA MARTHONE: Yes. Is it on? Can you hear  
11 me? Oh okay. Good afternoon Chair and Council  
12 Members. I am grateful for this opportunity to come  
13 before you today and I don't wish to repeat my CB,  
14 rather with great humility and vulnerability, I want  
15 to share why I want serve as a board member for New  
16 York City Health + Hospitals Corporation, H + H.

17 I earned a medical doctorate degree MUTER, from  
18 Child's University and have spent most of my life  
19 volunteering for marginalized populations. And  
20 taking on responsibilities to care for others. I am  
21 one of four children, married, raised two children,  
22 cared for my elderly mother and two aunts in this  
23 great city that never sleeps. That grows our dreams,  
24 that respects our differences, and that strives to  
25 care for us all.

2 Yet, when I closed my eyes on Wednesday night, I  
3 would hear a visitor rummaging through my recycling  
4 bins on the curb. One night, I met a middle aged  
5 Black man toting his life in a shopping cart.  
6 Clothes tattered and disassembled hair, searching  
7 through our recycling.

8 When his face came through the light, I was  
9 convinced I was staring at my father. I said, good  
10 evening sir. And he completely ignored my call. His  
11 indifference and the way he pulled his cart back and  
12 walked off, deepened my resolve to uncover whether  
13 his was a case of homelessness, mental illness, or  
14 addition gone awry.

15 He didn't afford me another opportunity to engage  
16 him. Though I was ready to put him in touch with the  
17 right services through H+H and New York City, with  
18 referrals to community outreach programs.

19 As a child, I heard that my father roamed the  
20 streets for a while with his paranoid schizophrenia.  
21 And though this man was not my father, he could be  
22 someone else's or their brother or son or be alone in  
23 this world.

24 I would be negligent not to mention that as a  
25 daughter of immigrants that left the Island of Haiti

2 seeking the American dream, how appalling it is to  
3 learn that others are being denied the right to  
4 dream. Monday's inhumane images from Texas,  
5 resembles pictures from Southern slavery.

6 The Department of Homeland Security was enforcing  
7 racist public health policies for COVID-19 on  
8 Haitians waiting to apply for political asylum.  
9 Should they survive, yet another nightmare, they will  
10 need trauma counseling and health care.

11 Emma Lazarus wrote it best on the Statue of  
12 Liberty that lives in the water surrounding our great  
13 city. In the New Colossus, the last line reads, "I  
14 lift my lamp beside the golden door." Their journey  
15 will be well met to find themselves become New  
16 Yorkers because we have H + H that can provide them  
17 with these services and a New York City that can help  
18 restore their dreams.

19 I have a deep rooted believe that health care is  
20 a human right. And when offered appropriately should  
21 be culturally competent, have no barriers to  
22 timelessness and affordability, timeliness, forgive  
23 me and affordability.

24 We have gold standards and most importantly,  
25 provided with dignity. H + H is where social

2 determinants of health meet the biocycle social model  
3 in providing care for New York City.

4 And it would be a privilege for me to safeguard  
5 and to serve our New York City as a Board Member of H  
6 + H. Thank you for your time.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I will now ask a few  
8 questions. Dr. Kwon, what public health approach  
9 will you recommend to address ongoing vaccine  
10 hesitancy?

11 SIMONA KWON: Thank you for that important  
12 question. Vaccine hesitancy is something that we're  
13 continuing to see across communities and there is -

14 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Can you talk a little  
15 closer to the mic?

16 SIMONA KWON: Oh, sure, sorry.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you.

18 SIMONA KWON: Maybe I should take it off too.  
19 Vaccine hesitancy, we have evidence based tools and  
20 strategies to impact vaccine hesitancy. We need to  
21 target and tailor messaging. There are already  
22 strong efforts in place to create community  
23 partnerships with trusted community leaders and  
24 community based organizations. These are groups that  
25 embedded in communities. They are trusted by

2 communities for language, for English, limited  
3 English proficient populations. They are already  
4 doing the work of translating and getting information  
5 out to these populations.

6 I would like to see formal, much more formal  
7 partnerships uhm, with these community networks that  
8 are already serving in this role. Often in informal  
9 ways. There are ways to amplify those relationships  
10 to provide resources and continuing support to them  
11 and to really make sure that these strategies and  
12 tools that are being developed at the city agency  
13 level are really making it to all communities.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Do you support the  
15 vaccine mandates?

16 SIMONA KWON: I think that there are very strong  
17 multilevel strategies in place for addressing COVID.  
18 I think that vaccines are the backbone of that. I do  
19 understand though that there is still communities  
20 that may not be being reached by all the information  
21 that they need. And I think that there is an  
22 opportunity to look at and monitor and track how  
23 we're doing on existing guidelines and policies.  
24 Identify with a health equity lens, communities that  
25 we are missing if there are gaps in enforcement and

2 how to strengthen those enforcements of existing  
3 strategies. And also room to really suggest and  
4 recommend innovative, equitable, strategies to help  
5 amplify and reach communities.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. Dr. Marthone,  
7 COVID-19 has highlighted long standing health  
8 inequities within our city. How would you like to  
9 see the city better address the health needs of the  
10 most marginalized New Yorkers?

11 PATRICIA MARTHONE: Thank you for that question.  
12 I think it would be great to see New York City have  
13 specialty clinics to support those that are  
14 marginalized. Often it is very difficult to even  
15 keep a doctors appointment and once you're there,  
16 it's very important to capture especially a long  
17 hauler, and allow for them to receive any extended  
18 care that they might need.

19 And sometimes it means not only giving them the  
20 referral and making sure they leave with all the  
21 documentation that they need, so that they can carry  
22 out that referral and speeding up the process, so  
23 that the appointment can happen soon. But it might  
24 also mean having just the clinic next door that  
25 specializes and brings all of those individuals

1  
2 together. All those specialists together or have a  
3 primary care provider that specializes or deals with  
4 just all the things that surround or that you see  
5 with COVID specifically.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. And what  
7 other steps could Health + Hospitals take to help  
8 address mental health and mental illness issues in  
9 New York City?

10 PATRICIA MARTHONE: I'm sorry, can you say that  
11 again?

12 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Hmm?

13 PATRICIA MARTHONE: I did not hear you.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: What other steps could  
15 Health + Hospitals take to help address mental health  
16 and mental illness issues in New York City?

17 PATRICIA MARTHONE: Oh, so, mental health. I've  
18 seen a lot done with mental health in New York. And  
19 I'm proud to say that we've come a very long way from  
20 the days of when for example, Kings County was  
21 infamously known for patients in the waiting room not  
22 being cared for. That's not the same Kings County  
23 anymore. They have great CPAP which is psychiatric  
24 emergency room and there is a lot things that are  
25 done right now to even feel the gap, including New

2 York City Well. I think we're doing an excellent job  
3 in trying to attack it.

4 But keeping providers is a problem. Having  
5 counselors is a problem. Not having enough people to  
6 provide the services is an issue for New York. We  
7 have a huge population. So, we definitely need to  
8 make sure that we can have the funding to continue  
9 these services.

10 Additionally, out of some of the great things  
11 that we've put in place to help individuals with  
12 psychiatric and psychological issues, you will find  
13 that they might not be able to offer them all day  
14 long. There is now a mobile unit that could be  
15 called to go to people's homes for example, or  
16 wherever the crisis is happening to help them. It  
17 runs from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Sunday.  
18 So, every day of the year however, from 8 p.m. to 8  
19 a.m., they are not available.

20 And if anybody has ever dealt with anybody who is  
21 in a crisis, you would know half the battle is  
22 getting them to leave where they are and get to an  
23 emergency room or where the care can be provided.

24 And that mobile unit, may have physicians on it.  
25 Nurses, counselors, so those are the kind of things

2 that we really need to provide our marginalized  
3 communities with. Where you bring the care to them.  
4 Others can afford to have that brought to their  
5 doorstep. We need to make sure that we can continue  
6 to do better with those things and sometimes it takes  
7 more funding. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. I would like  
9 now to open it to my colleagues for any questions.  
10 Council Member Chin?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you Chair. First, I  
12 want to congratulate both of you on your nomination.  
13 Especially with Dr. Simona Kwon, hi. I had the  
14 pleasure of working with you before I joined the  
15 Council and I think that the experience that you will  
16 be able to bring to the Board of Health would be  
17 tremendous. And I think all the research that you  
18 have done with the Haitian American and immigrant  
19 community, that would really help us in terms of  
20 getting more access to quality health care services.

21 My question is that you know the Haitian American  
22 immigrant community is just so diverse. But still  
23 the issue right now, like with mental health  
24 wellness. Like, how do you see in terms of the role  
25 in Board of Health to be able to have - create more

2 access for mental health services for the immigrant  
3 population?

4 SIMONA KWON: I think that especially with  
5 the impact we're going to see of COVID, that mental  
6 health and wellbeing is going to be an even more  
7 challenge and something that we need to address.  
8 There are really good evidence informed, data driven  
9 community based strategies that we can implement that  
10 will address certain language challenges around  
11 access. We need to engage our very strong community  
12 partners, community centers. There are programs  
13 where we can train lay health workers to be that  
14 frontline. They're already in the communities and  
15 can serve as a very strong bridge to clinic settings.

16 So, really investing in that community clinic  
17 linkage, either through recognizing the role of lay  
18 health workers or community health workers as part of  
19 a health care team. Embedding them in these  
20 community settings and collocating services within  
21 community settings, I think is really going to be  
22 important to reaching all New Yorkers. And using an  
23 equity lens to really address what we are seeing  
24 already that's going to just continue to be  
25 amplified.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Patricia  
3 Marthone, congratulations also. You know HHC is such  
4 an important institution in our community. The  
5 facility and I think with this administration, they  
6 have put in a lot more support. And my question to  
7 you is that, how being on the Board of HHC, how do  
8 you see in terms of creating more opportunity for  
9 access to health care? Like, more neighborhood you  
10 know health center, having services from HHC within  
11 our schools, within our senior centers? Especially  
12 on this mental health wellness issue?

13 And in your testimony, you talk about you know  
14 homeless and right now, the majority of the homeless  
15 population, half is mental health you know, wellness  
16 issue. And so, how do we make it more accessible so  
17 that people can access the service? I know in HHC in  
18 the past, they had crisis mobile van that can go into  
19 the neighborhood with professionals that can help  
20 individuals.

21 So, how do you see in terms of your role on the  
22 Board of HHC to make this possible?

23 PATRICIA MARTHONE: Thank you for that question  
24 Council Member Chin. You know, I often do think  
25 about that individual that I spoke about because for

2 me, it is very hard to put a stop gap measure in  
3 place for someone that one, you don't know. You  
4 don't know where they live. They are not living in  
5 the same place all the time. And trying to figure  
6 out how best to facilitate, making sure that there is  
7 always care available to them, or that they know how  
8 to access care.

9 And if we've been telling people where care might  
10 exist and they're not showing up, then ultimately we  
11 have to go to where we know they are. I have seen  
12 people go around the city on trains before, speaking  
13 to homeless individuals. You know, we have a whole  
14 homeless unit and they can also be part of the  
15 process on engaging these individuals on the care  
16 that's available to them.

17 So, I mean and the schools. We've done a decent  
18 job on that, on making sure that parents have an idea  
19 that there is other types of health care available.  
20 And even one of the questions that's provided on the  
21 blue cards or the green cards every year is, do you  
22 have health insurance, right? That's one of the  
23 things, the first things that's asked on those cards,  
24 you know.

2 So, we do - do somethings to try to figure out  
3 where it is needed and I think we need to just go  
4 back over and look at every single location in the  
5 community where we want to make sure we fill those  
6 gaps and try to make sure that we are putting  
7 resources there, to help make sure that they know  
8 where to find us.

9 I have to tell you; I get a lot of phone calls  
10 from people asking about mental health. They do not  
11 know that HHC or New York City provide the services  
12 they provide. When I tell them, take your child to  
13 Kings County Hospital, they are like, you got to be  
14 kidding me. And I'm like, absolutely. It is an  
15 awesome experience and I; you know using that word  
16 awesome for something like that. People - when you  
17 have a child in a psychological or psychiatric  
18 crisis, you're thinking, why would I take them to  
19 Kings County?

20 And when I start to explain what the process is  
21 there, where they have them now. How they are  
22 located, people are shocked and they did not know  
23 that this existed in their own neighborhoods.

24 So, I agree, we have to do better but not only  
25 word of mouth. We have to look at where the

2 resources need to start from, where people need them,  
3 and start educating people from the outside. Even  
4 using CBO's. Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Thank you  
6 Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. Council  
8 Member Treyger?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you Chair. And I  
10 also again congratulate all of the nominees today. I  
11 just want to also particularly give thanks and  
12 appreciation to Dr. Marthone. Someone with an  
13 incredibly strong health background and I'm going to  
14 again underscore the equity lens.

15 In an issue that and I'm going to keep saying  
16 this. Our public hospital systems don't get enough  
17 credit. Particularly in the moment that we're in.  
18 When it was impossible to get a vaccine appointment  
19 in my district, in my part of town and I'm sure in  
20 other parts of the city, it was Coney Island Hospital  
21 that stepped up and proactively helped many people  
22 break down language barriers. Also, there were  
23 seniors who could not wait until two in the morning  
24 to search for vaccine appointments online. So, they  
25 went directly to the community, they broke down those

2 barriers, and they helped save thousands and  
3 thousands of lives and they still do that every day.  
4 They don't get enough credit for it.

5 The issue that I've also helped tackle during my  
6 tenure in the Council is the issue of staff  
7 retention. I learned for example during a budget  
8 meeting with the hospital that they were requesting  
9 certain robotic surgery technology that would  
10 modernize their surgery rooms. But would also have  
11 the effect of attracting and keeping medical students  
12 coming out of schools where their training in medical  
13 schools with this modern technology.

14 But when they come into our hospital system,  
15 we're using stuff from the '80's. And we lose them  
16 to the private sector. And I again, want to  
17 underscore the word equity. That regardless of what  
18 zip code you're from, what neighborhood you live in,  
19 you deserve the very best. And our public hospitals  
20 open their doors to everyone, everyone.

21 And so, I of course worked with and thanks to  
22 Speaker Johnson, we secured money to get state of the  
23 art technology but it shouldn't be that way. This  
24 should be standard. This should be the norm. And  
25 so, that is going to actually help them not just

1  
2 modernize improve outcomes, it also helps attract and  
3 retain staff that's needed from medical schools.

4 And so, I'd like to hear your thoughts about what  
5 other ways can we do to make sure that we level the  
6 playing field and help address the issue of equity  
7 and address disparate health care outcomes that we  
8 saw even prior to the pandemic that certainly has  
9 been exacerbated by this pandemic?

10 And I again, thank you and congratulate you on  
11 your nomination Dr. Marthone. Thank you so much.

12 PATRICIA MARTHONE: Thank you for that question  
13 Council Member Treyger. So, oh, wow, that's a two  
14 part question. So, allow me to start with recruiting  
15 medical students. Even after COVID, it's difficult  
16 to get people to consider going into medicine  
17 nowadays. It was a big turnoff, they started pulling  
18 people in their third and fourth year to you know,  
19 they ended medical school early to come and help in  
20 the hospitals and the experience alone turned some  
21 people off.

22 So, one that has to be addressed in the future  
23 that to really ensure people that this is not what  
24 medicine looks like, especially if that was your  
25 first experience.

2 In a place like New York City where we were  
3 devastated by COVID in the middle of the crisis,  
4 right.

5 Two, I think it's important in training that you  
6 have both types of training, right? Because you  
7 never know when you will or will not have the  
8 equipment and COVID has not taught us anything. That  
9 is an excellent example of not having equipment  
10 available to you. And positioning people instead of  
11 relying solely on equipment that was coming but  
12 didn't get here. When it got here, it couldn't be  
13 used etc., right?

14 So, there does need to be a combination of that.  
15 So, I don't think all together that's just the only  
16 answer, the technology. But I do believe that we do  
17 need to put money into modernizing where we feel we  
18 can keep people recruited in the future of New York  
19 City. And don't allow the brain drain that happens  
20 in New York to happen too much.

21 I actually started in this statement writing  
22 about how I speak to so many professionals about  
23 coming back to New York. People that I grew up with  
24 constantly. I'm like, you need to come back. You  
25 need to come back to our communities and you need to

2 work here. And I think we should not allow brain  
3 drain to happen and we should try to make sure we  
4 keep people invested in places they grew up because  
5 they are culturally competent a lot of times and they  
6 might speak the language right, of the community.

7 So, I think those are some very important things  
8 that we should keep in mind. I think the state had  
9 the right idea with excelsior(SP?) and some of the  
10 other funding things that they wanted to do. Where  
11 if you earn up to like a \$100,000 or \$115,000 or  
12 \$125,000 a year as a parent, then your child doesn't  
13 have to pay. But the child has to stay in New York.  
14 It's something to that effect.

15 But we need to get creative, even more creative  
16 around medical school in that aspect because we  
17 really need to bring health care providers back and  
18 keep them here, incentivize to stay here.

19 I do not remember what the second question was.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I think you actually  
21 help tackle a whole bunch of questions.

22 PATRICIA MARTHONE: Okay.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: With that great answer  
24 and thank you again. Thank you.

25 PATRICIA MARTHONE: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay, thank you. Council  
3 Member Rose?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. Both of your  
5 credentials are very impressive, so I don't really  
6 have a question, I just have a general statement that  
7 I want to call your attention to.

8 We all know that the COVID pandemic you know laid  
9 bare multiple health care disparities and inequities.  
10 Uhm, and we know that there is really a crisis in New  
11 York City in terms of maternal health care and mental  
12 health.

13 And uhm, I'm asking that both of you view your  
14 tasks through an equity lens. Uhm, cultural  
15 competency is extremely important, especially in  
16 these communities that are marginalized, under  
17 resourced or no resources. And so, I find it  
18 important to me that appointees approach you know the  
19 goals of both of these very important health care  
20 agencies through an equity lens and one that  
21 recognizes that there are communities that are  
22 working from way behind, that the bar has never been  
23 equal or the playing field has never been equal.

24 I want to say about H + H, Staten Island still  
25 does not have an H + H hospital. But we do have a

2 Gotham Health Center and when there are these health  
3 issues that arise and H + H realizes that there is a  
4 need to give more resources to put more professionals  
5 on the ground, I would hope that Staten Island in  
6 lieu of the fact that we don't have a hospital, that  
7 our Gotham Center could be put into play in terms of  
8 providing those services.

9 And I never want to see Staten Island again be  
10 the last place that has testing. That has access to  
11 PPE and uhm, I just want to make sure that we're  
12 always there in that room. And it's really important  
13 because when the pandemic began, uhm, I had the  
14 hardest time trying to talk with the Department of  
15 Health, with H + H about the lack of resources that  
16 we had on Staten Island. Because there is no city  
17 facility that's recognized in terms of health.

18 So, I just want to congratulate you both. You  
19 bring a wealth of experience to these positions and I  
20 will gladly you know vote to confirm both of you, as  
21 I will all of the candidates here today. You are all  
22 awesome and I think that you will be wonderful  
23 candidates for us. So, thank you.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay, thank you. I just  
3 for on the record want to say the Conflict of  
4 Interest Board okayed Dr. Marthone.

5 PATRICIA MARTHONE: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Okay, uhm, I will now  
7 open up the floor to the public for comments.  
8 Comments to two minutes per person. Are there any  
9 members of the public present who wish to speak?

10 Seeing none, I will now call on Billy Martin to  
11 take and announce the results of the vote.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk  
13 Roll Call Vote Committee on Rules. All the items are  
14 coupled. Chair Koslowitz?

15 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: I want to congratulate  
16 everybody. I know that you will all do a very, very  
17 good job for us keeping us healthy and helping us in  
18 the Corrections Department. And of course our own  
19 Jenny who will do a great job for the Board of  
20 Elections I am sure. I vote aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Chin?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Congratulations again to  
23 all the nominees and uh, I vote aye on all. Thanks.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: Rose?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Congratulations and I  
3 proudly vote aye on all.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Treyger?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Congratulations to all.  
6 I vote aye.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK: Adams?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I am so impressed by this  
9 group today. Thank you for hanging in there in spite  
10 of the lateness and our questions. I proudly vote  
11 aye and congratulate each and every one of you. I  
12 vote aye on all.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: Powers?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: A very big  
15 congratulations to all of you and thank you for being  
16 here today and answering our questions. With that, I  
17 vote aye.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK: Matteo?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: I'm voting yes on M327  
20 and no on the rest. Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Okay, by a vote of -

22 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Wait, the Speaker is  
23 coming up.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: Speaker Johnson?  
25

2 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: I vote aye on all.  
3 Congratulations.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: M327 is adopted by the  
5 Committee with a vote of eight in the affirmative,  
6 zero in the negative and no abstentions. And M's  
7 326, 330, 331 and 332 are adopted by the Committee  
8 with a vote of seven in the affirmative, one in the  
9 negative and no abstentions. All items have been  
10 adopted. Madam Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOSLOWITZ: Today's meeting of the  
12 Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections is  
13 hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date October 27, 2021